

FINAL REPORT

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LESSON PLAN

TITLE: Enhancing students' communicative competence through communicative language teaching (CLT).

CONTEXT: Level: 4th& 5th Grade beginners
Class size: 6 students
Textbook: National Geographic (Starters)
Time: 100 minutes, 1 class per week

PROBLEM:

Although the students' communicative competence has gradually progressed in a positive manner, they had yet to be able to increase student-student interaction and generating more real information exchange. Also, it is a challenge to create a student-centered communicative class given the students extreme difference of the high and low level of English ability.

GOAL:

The goal was to facilitate learning by enhancing students' communicative competence through a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. Also, the sub goal is to develop student's communicative competence to achieve a student-centered, all English classroom.

WHAT I DID:

- I redesigned the layout of the activities and worksheet to make it more student-centered and communicative.
- I tried to create a much more interesting curriculum which would provide the students opportunities to share their opinions with each other.
- I shared the purpose and the benefit of each activity with the students to build students' awareness of the purpose of what they do.
- I tried to match my goals for each lessons with the students' abilities and needs by simplifying the games and activities as not to overwhelm the students.
- I emphasized on the students interaction by beginning of the lesson with daily pair conversation and ending each class with an active, information exchange.
- I tried to find more chances for the students to be placed in the center of our activities and kept track on the percentages of class was student-centered.
- I gave the students a variety of task and communicative activities that would provide them a chance to learn the language actively instead of the common passive manner.
- I had utilized flash cards and picture with different communicative activities in the lessons having considered the students' different levels of learning ability.
- I provided students with tools such as communication strategies in order to keep the interaction going and to be capable of participating in different conversation.
- I had implemented a step-by-step scaffoldings to give the students sufficient practice of the targeted sentence and questions while providing the students with opportunities for more authentic speaking and greater retention of the subject matter.
- Students were given more opportunity to work with a pairs by switching partners for more than two times.

- I had the students to do the routine instead of doing them myself, to allow more negotiation of meaning among the students.
- I have set a different time limit in each section of the activities for fluency purposes.
- I had the students to do self evaluation after each lesson.
- I conducted a speaking test and assessed the students during the final speaking performances.
- I conducted a post speaking test to measure the students' retention abilities after two weeks.

WHAT I LEARNED:

- Although the students had very short focus span, they enjoyed the activities topic and activities that I had implemented in the lesson.
- Simple phrases such as, 'So do I' and 'Me neither', 'How about you?' are very effective in increasing interaction among the pairs.
- The students seemed to like the idea of having small talks in each lesson and they are less nervous now about interaction with their partner at all levels.
- The students showed more enthusiasm when the purpose of each activity had been shared with them
- Pair work specifically switching pair provided the students with more practice of recycling the targeted vocabulary
- It is important to provide students with appropriate communication strategies for repairing breakdowns in communication to allow them to complete information gap activities at beginner level.
- It is important to share the final task or final goal with the students as they could understand why they were doing the activities and their improvements

FURTHER ISSUES:

- I would like to monitor the significant difference of student- centered and teacher-centered activities and find more alternatives to turn the class over to the students.
- I would like to investigate further the reason for the students to be much less nervous in term of interacting compared to June.
- I would to investigate further the extent to which providing students with communication strategies serves to repair communication breakdown which occurs.
- I would like to have a good balance of input and output activity in class during each lesson.
- I wish to motivate the students further with the usage of simple communication strategies during interaction.
- I am trying to arrange a suitable time whereby I could conduct more speaking test s and show to the students their progress after using Cs.

1. RESEARCH ISSUES

- a. Are the students able to understand their partner through pairwork and scaffolding?
- b. Their positive reactions toward the usage of communication strategies during interaction.
- c. They like using English in interaction more now.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. How did Japanese students' communicative ability in English develop through participating in a CLT-based classroom in a private English language school?
- b. How did the use of communication strategies improve students' participation in communicative pair task?
- c. What attitude did the students displayed towards participating in a CLT-based class?

3. INTRODUCTION

This year, my group was a group a group of six students with mixed levels, beginners, intermediate and advance ability English class. Two thirds of the class had some experience in learning English while one third did not have prior experience to the language learned. I narrowed down the focus of my action research in the second year on developing private language school students' speaking proficiency through a CLT-based classroom setting with communication strategies as the main focus. As I learned in the program, setting a measurable final goal first for the students is important. In addition, I incorporated the basic communication strategies to assist the students at maintaining the conversation, keeping up with the interactions during pair work and as a tool to solve communication breakdowns between the partner and the interlocutor. Also, I created rubrics for all the final tasks such as a final small talk task rather than final performance test with a longer speaking time period and less pauses.

4. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss related literature to provide the theoretical background to this research. This chapter consists of four topics:

- 1) Communicative Language Teaching (CLT);
- 2) Student-centred classrooms;
- 3) Conversation Strategies; and
- 4) Interaction.

i. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the concept of developing a learner's communicative competence (Savignon 2002). CLT has evolved many years ago and it was found out that this is theoretically rich compared to ALM the Audio Lingual Method. ALM focus on form while CLT focus on meaning; ALM does not allow error but CLT does; Negotiation of meaning happens in CLT but not with ALM; Although the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Audio Lingual Method (ALM) have prevailed in English teaching, they are not effective for learners to be able to use the target language for communication (Lightbown & Spada,2006; Savignon, 1997; Lee & VanPatten, 1995).

Taking this into account, CLT began to receive attention after 1972 study by Sandra Sauvignon which demonstrated its effectiveness. Savignon's (1972) study included 48 students who were studying French at an American university. Through an experimental approach, she compared three groups of first-year college students. All of the students received training in the previous pedagogical standard known as the ALM, four times a week. For the fifth class of the week, one group received further ALM training, one group received cultural studies training and one group received communication training. The last group showed similar or slightly better results on the tests measuring listening, reading and oral skills; however, very much better results

on the tests of communication competence. Sagvignon (1972) summarized her findings by stating, “[t]hose students who had been given the opportunity to use their linguistic knowledge for real communication were able to speak French. The others were not” (as cited in Brown 1983, pp.78-79).

ii. Student-Centered Classroom

There are many means to overcome the issue of insufficient student-student interaction in the classroom. However, making the class more students-centered is definitely one of the most effective approaches to generate more interaction amongst students. Lightbown and Spada (2006) stated, “[i]f the activities are well designed and learners are appropriately matched, pair and group work provides far more practice in speaking and participating in conversations than a teacher-centered class ever could” (pg.191). In other words, interactions among students can increase by turning the classroom over to the students.

Ellis (2008) makes a distinction between instructional discourse and natural discourse. He states that:

[i]nstructional discourse arises when the teacher and the students act out institutional roles, the tasks are concerned with the transmission and reception of information and are controlled by the teacher, and there is a focus on knowledge as a product and accuracy. Natural discourse is characterized by more fluid roles established through interaction, tasks that encourage equal participation in the negotiation of meaning, and a focus on the interactional process itself and on fluency (Ellis, 2008p. 793).

This discussed that in teacher-centred classes, the onus of controlling the conversation falls on the teacher. Hence, a student-centered classroom also leads to different types of output to teacher-centred ones in terms of the increased amount of output by students.

iii. Conversation Strategies

Although student-centered classroom has the potential to generate more interaction amongst students especially for more authentic speaking but the difficulty of creating this situation when students L2 ability is low and far from perfect is undeniable. Therefore, providing students with tools such as communication strategies is vital in order to keep the interaction going. When learners are beginners and grammar is to be taught communicatively, they need to be equipped with the skills on how to keep the communication channel open. A great deal of researchers has pointed out the effectiveness of providing learners to improve their strategic competence. Savignon (1983) claimed that strategic competence plays a bigger role when learner’s language is limited.

iv. Interaction

Interaction is often attributed to play a vital role in a CTL-based classroom. Also, interaction best occurs in the classroom by the way of communication between two learners rather than simply the learners and the teachers. According to Long and Porter’s study (1985), they demonstrated the positive effect that student-student interaction could bring out. They carried a study on the number of grammatical and vocabulary errors that occurred during the interactions. They found that the intermediate-level learners did not make any more errors when speaking with advance level students. They concluded that although two learners speaking together might not always be able to provide each other with accurate input, they could offer each other with communication practice which

included negotiation of meaning. The finding of this study indicates that simultaneous student-student interaction may attribute more output than in teacher-centred classes.

5. Results

i) Regarding Issue No. 1: Are the students able to understand their partner through pairwork and scaffolding?

I UNDERSTOOD MY PARTNER	VERY MUCH	SO SO	NOT SO MUCH
JUNE	3	1	2
JULY	4	2	
AUGUST	3	3	
SEPTEMBER	4	2	
OCTOBER	4	1	1
NOVEMBER	3	1	
DECEMBER	5	1	
FEBRUARY	5	1	

Figure 1

Based on the data collected from June to February, there is a significant increase of participants in terms of understanding their partner. The number of participants who chose Very Much has remained stable and the number of those who chose SoSo decreased. The participant who answered Not So Much in February has disappeared. In comparison of the data, from June to February, the participants were able to co-construct to negotiate the meaning, making their input more comprehensible and have come to better understanding through pair work.

CONTENT	GOOD(3)	MEDIUM(2)	WEAK(1)
SPEAKING TEST 1	3	1	
POST SPEAKING TEST 1	4	2	
SPEAKING TEST 2	4	2	
POST SPEAKING TEST 2	5	1	

Figure 2

According to the results for Speaking Test 1 Figure 2 (a total number of 4 students and 2 absentees), 3 students scored the highest score of 3 points and one student scored the second highest score; 2 points for the “Content” category. In addition, for Speaking Test 2 result (total number of 6 students), 4 students scored the highest score of 3 points and 2 student scored the second highest score; 2 points. Thus, the data shows that the students understood their partners and managed to give

related answers with sufficient information. Also, for Post Speaking Test 1 and 2, the results revealed that students from the private English language school showed positive feedback for their retention abilities and had acquired the communicative skills considerably with satisfactory conversation content and structures learned by the end of the research.

Selected students’ responses about their English ability:

PARTICIPANTS	STUDENTS’ RESPONSES
S1	<i>I thought it was difficult in the beginning, but it is easier.</i>
S3	<i>I like using English to ask question</i>
S4	<i>I know more about friends, I want to talk more in English.</i>

Figure 3

ii) Regarding Issue No. 2: Their positive reactions toward the usage of communication strategies during interaction.

I SPOKE IN A LOUD VOICE	VERY MUCH	SO SO	NOT SO MUCH
JUNE	4	1	1
JULY	4	1	1
AUGUST	4	2	
SEPTEMBER	5	1	
OCTOBER	5	1	
NOVEMBER	4		
DECEMBER	4	2	
FEBRUARY	5	1	

Figure 4

According to the data collected from Figure 4 for speaking in loud voice, the number of participants who chose ‘Very Much’ and ‘So So’ increased. On the other hand the number of participants who chose ‘Not So Much’ was negative. Thus, it had proven that the participants had gained more self confident in terms of speaking upon the introduction of using the communication strategies in their interaction. In addition, one extremely shy and low self

esteem student who chose ‘Not So Much’ in June had changed to ‘So So’. The basic communication strategies such as openers, showing interest and closers had helped the participants’ communicative ability and strengthen their confidence. This is clearly proven by the significant increase of volume and awkward silence was not seen during interaction.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES	GOOD(3)	MEDIUM(2)	WEAK(1)
SPEAKING TEST 1	3	1	
POST SPEAKING TEST 1	5	1	
SPEAKING TEST 2	5	1	
POST SPEAKING TEST 2	5	1	

Figure 5

Based on the Speaking Test 1 result in Figure 5 (a total number of 4 students and 2absentees), 3 students scored the highest score of 3 points and one student scored the second highest score; 2 points for the “Communication Strategy” category while for Speaking Test 2 result (a total number of 6 students), 5 students scored the highest score of 3 points and 1 student scored the second highest score; 2 points for the “Communication Strategy” category. In relation to that, the results remained the same in both of the post test for Speaking test 1 and 2. The results show that the students used more CSs in December than in September and suggest that students were using CSs more frequently repairing communication breakdowns and keeping the conversation going. In short, the students have shown considerably good reactions towards the usage of CSs during their interactions.

Selected students’ responses about their participations:

PARTICIPANTS	STUDENTS’ RESPONSES
S2	<i>I want to speak more in English now.</i>
S4	<i>English conversation is easy with CSs. Let’s do it.</i>
S6	<i>I am able to speak without long stops and make a good English conversation.</i>

iii) Regarding Issue No. 3: They like using English in interaction more now.

I MADE GOOD EYE CONTACT	VERY MUCH	SO SO	NOT SO MUCH
JUNE	3	2	1
JULY	3	2	1
AUGUST	3	3	
SEPTEMBER	4	2	
OCTOBER	6		
NOVEMBER	4		
DECEMBER	4	2	
FEBRUARY	4	2	

Figure 7

In Figure 7 for I made good eye contact attached below, it is stated that the participant who chose ‘Very Much’ had a satisfactory increase, the participants who chose ‘So So’ increased to a total of one participant while the participants who chose ‘Not So Much’ disappeared. The data is in agreement that the participants were showing more interest during their interaction now by taking into consideration the importance of making good eye contact. Also, their willingness to provide more attention and efforts on non verbal expression such as smiles and spontaneous eye contact had indicated that they like using English in interaction more now.

ATTITUDE	GOOD(3)	MEDIUM(2)	WEAK(1)
SPEAKING TEST 1	3	1	
POST SPEAKING TEST 1	5	1	
SPEAKING TEST 2	4	1	1
POST SPEAKING TEST 2	6		

Figure 8

Speaking Test 1 result claims (a total number of 4 students and 2 absentees), 3 students scored the highest score of 3 points and one student scored the second highest score; 2 points for the “Attitude” category while for Speaking Test 2 result (a total number of 6 students), 4 students scored the highest score of 3 points and 1 student scored the second highest score; 2 points and 1 student scored 1 point for the “Attitude” category. Also, in Post Speaking Test 2, the students showed remarkable attitude changes with 6 students scored the highest points in which suggests the instructions this year improved the students’ attitude towards learning English to be more positive.

Selected students' responses about their perception towards the activities participated:

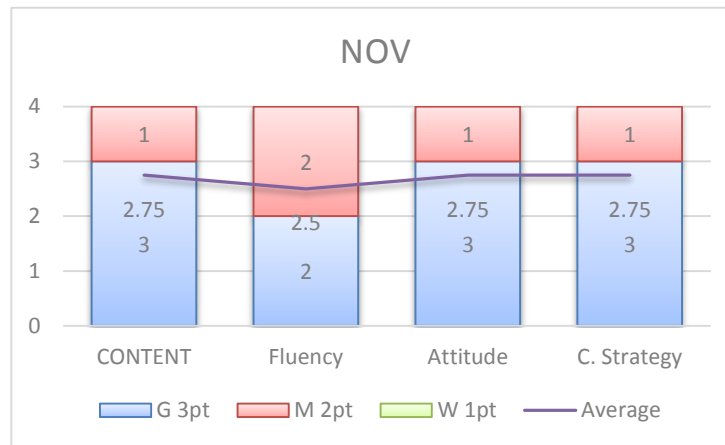
PARTICIPANTS	STUDENTS' RESPONSES
S1	<i>Now English is fun,</i>
S3	<i>I want to challenge myself with more English conversation.</i>
S5	<i>I am happy to be in Clara's class this year. It is so fun.</i>

Figure 9

6. SPEAKING TEST RESULTS

SPEAKING TEST RESULTS 1

LESSON: Birthday lunch

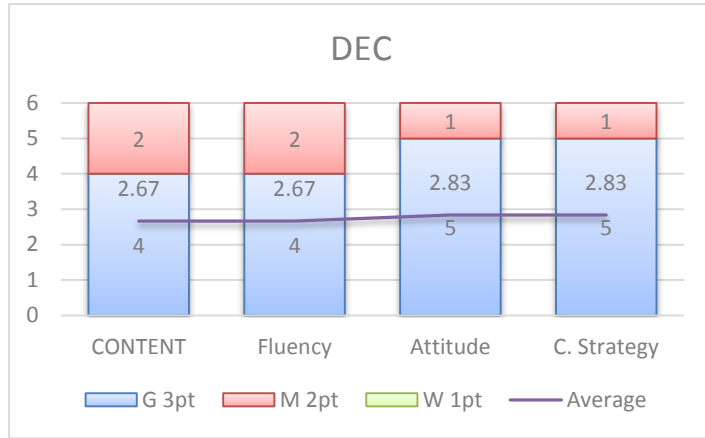


4th and 5th GRADERS [n=4][two absentees]

Figure 10

POST SPEAKING TEST RESULTS 1

LESSON: Birthday lunch



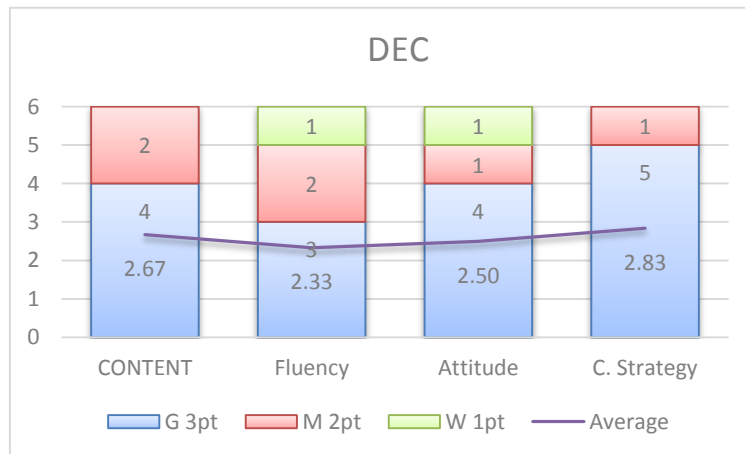
AVG	2.66	2.66	2.83	2.83
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4th and 5th GRADERS [n=6]

Figure 11

SPEAKING TEST RESULTS 2

LESSON: Christmas shopping



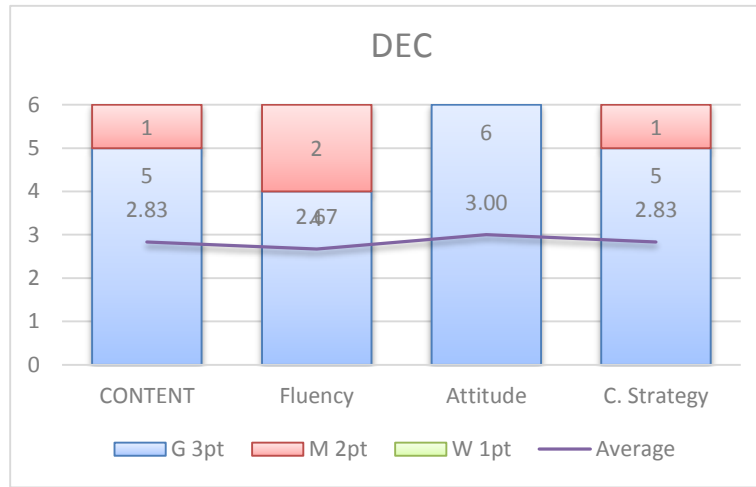
AVG	2.66	2.33	2.5	2.83
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4th and 5th GRADERS [n=6]

Figure 12

POST SPEAKING TEST RESULTS 2

LESSON: Christmas shopping



AVG	2.83	2.66	3	2.83
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4th and 5th GRADERS [n=6]

Figure 13

7. DISCUSSION

i) Regarding Research question a: How did the private English language school students develop their speaking proficiency in a CLT-based classroom?

There have been significant improvements seen in the participant's communicative ability. At the very beginning the participants showed a lot of uncertainty. Their volume was very low and awkward silence was seen during at the very beginning of the research. Referring to the sections my theoretical background the after creating a more student-centered classroom whereby the activities were carefully designed and participants were well matched in terms of their abilities, the participants had more scaffoldings of interaction. The simultaneous student-student interaction increased more output. Also, the students were able to negotiate to solve problem and avoid misunderstandings. Now, at the end of February after sufficient scaffoldings between the students, they are seen to be able to be engaged in the interaction naturally.

ii) Regarding Research question b: How did the use of communication strategies improve students' participation in communicative pair tasks?

Many participants have been seen to be able to use the communication strategies successfully in a natural manner. Based on my theoretical background section on conversation strategies, Canale and Swain includes that the strategic competence component as "verbal and 'non-verbal communication strategies that may have been called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence" (Canale & Swain, 1998

p.30). Referring to that, upon the introduction of basic communication strategies such as openers, showing interests, and closers the participant with very beginner levels showed positive effects in terms of their ability to interact more. Also, their independence during the interaction to compensate breakdowns and minimize outside help from the teacher, were detected in each interaction occurrence. Responses from the student as stated above suggest that CSs played a vital role in repairing communication breakdowns and keeping the conversation going. The usefulness of CSs became more obvious when the understanding of the term of CSs also made it possible for the students to notice them during their conversations and reflect on their own use.

iii) Regarding Research question c: What attitude did students displayed towards participating in a CLT-based class?

The participants had no prior experience to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) prior to this class. At the very beginning, the participants were taken aback and apprehensive towards this approach. That became an issue and was detected during the start of the research. In relation to that, the activities conducted were different from the usual classroom activities held in this school. However, in a course of ten months up to date now, the participants' attitude significantly changed. A majority of participants had shown interest and much desire and motivation to engage themselves more in the activities conducted. They have unanimously expressed increased confidence and communication improvements in their self evaluation and comments. The participant liked the fact that they were given sufficient student-student interaction in the class. The pair work activities had definitely promoted more interaction compared to their previous experience with a teacher-student interaction. As Lightbown and Spada (2006 p.191) claimed, "[i]f the activities are well designed and learners are appropriately match, pair and group work provides far more practice in speaking and participating in conversations than a teacher-centered ever could". Also, the participant had come to like it more because they could communicate more although their English level was limited.

8. Conclusion

As an overall conclusion based on the surveys and data accumulated from the targeted group, a CLT-based classroom in an private English language school setting had an effective result on the students' communicative ability in the language learned. However, this study was conducted only for the period of over 10 months and the data collected was only based on their self evaluation surveys, students' responses and 4 speaking tests. Therefore, in order to have a much more concrete prove of the effectiveness and the conclusion to this study, a longitudinal research or study is needed. Also, to investigate further on how the Communicative Language Teaching helps the students' communicative competence and changes their perception towards English learning, more speaking tests are needed to gather sufficient the students language samples. These language samples will be analyzed in detailed analysis to obtain triangulated data to the research issues.