

## Action Research Final Report

### **Overall Teaching Goal**

My goal as a teacher is to enhance my students' English skills through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in an integrated reading class.

### **1. Teaching Context**

Level: High School (first year)

Class size: 35

Time: 50 minutes, 2(3)/week

Textbook: Provision 1 (Kirihara Shoten Ltd)

Simple Background :

This school is a humongous school which has more than 13 to 19 classes each class. Most of the students came to this school because they could not go to public schools due to entrance exams. Some students who got recommendation from junior high schools came here because they want to succeed as athletes. The level varies greatly but a lot of them do well and have good attitude toward learning.

This year I have been at the guidance and counseling department while teaching first and second years. Because there are classes for speaking in the first year, I decided to do AR in one of the first year classes. Although native teachers teach how to present in English, it seems to be easier to do speaking tests and fun essay compared to second years.

The class has been very energetic and friendly all year. There is one student who is a bit Most of the students are eager to study English. They interact with each other and the teachers quite often.

Problems:

The levels vary from students to students. Although motivated, many feel hesitant to use English in fear of making mistakes.

Also, many students expect what they learn will be useful for the entrance exams.

### **2. Theoretical Background**

**Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Communicative Language Teaching, also referred as the “Communicative Approach”, highlights the importance of real communication and interaction for the learners to acquire the language. It focuses more on the communication comprehension compared to accuracy of the structures and forms.

Historically, CLT has been born in the 1980s as an alternative approach to the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), which aims to enable students to use the targeted language automatically and precisely.

Brown (2007) suggested the four principal characteristics of CLT in the following terms:

1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of CC (communicative competence) and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.
3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complimentary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.
4. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts. (p.241)

### **Communicative Competence**

Michael Canale and Merrill Swain defined these four components as communicative competence.

(1) Grammatical competence includes knowledge of phonology, orthography, vocabulary, word formation and sentence formation.

(2) Sociolinguistic competence includes knowledge of sociocultural rules of use. It is concerned with the learners' ability to handle for example settings, topics and communicative functions in different sociolinguistic contexts. In addition, it deals with the use of appropriate grammatical forms for different communicative functions in different sociolinguistic contexts.

(3) Discourse competence is related to the learners' mastery of understanding and producing texts in the modes of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It deals with cohesion and coherence in different types of texts.

(4) Strategic competence refers to compensatory strategies in case of grammatical or sociolinguistic or discourse difficulties, such as the use of reference sources, grammatical and lexical paraphrase, requests for repetition, clarification, slower speech, or problems in

addressing strangers when unsure of their social status or in finding the right cohesion devices. It is also concerned with such performance factors as coping with the nuisance of background noise or using gap fillers.

### **Integrative language teaching**

An integrative language teaching is a method of teaching the four macro language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) concurrently. It can be seen as a natural way of learning a language as language skills are rarely used in isolation in the real life communication. For example, to engage in a conversation, one needs to be able to speak and comprehend at the same time (Jing, 2006).

As it also focuses on realistic language, it develops learners communicative competence in English (Jing, 2006).

### **Three part framework**

In order to make reading classes more communicative, the classes can be divided into 'pre-reading', 'while-reading', and 'post-reading' stages. Pre-reading stage aims to activate readers' schematic knowledge which will help them understand the text. While-reading is when students do activities based on what they read. Although reading itself is a solitary act, collaborative activities can be done. Post-reading helps learners tell others what they read about orally or in written forms.

Explanation:

As my class is based on CLT, which is an approach in teaching language that emphasizes authentic communication from beginning of class (Horwitz, 2008), students has been practicing communication with their peers via timed conversation since the first semester.

They have also learned about the communicative strategies (CS) that are to be used during the timed conversation. CS is one of the important parts of communicative competence and will enhance the effectiveness of communication (Canale, 1983). Ellis (1994) defines CS as, "procedural skills which learner used to overcome the inadequacies of their interlanguage resources."

Although CS would benefit students, we should not introduce everything at once to prevent information overload. Hence, I have reintroduced these strategies one by one, and take a minute or two to practice them.

## **3. Things that I worked on**

### **Small Talk**

I would like to share some of what I did in this research. Usually I take a couple of minutes to do a small talk in the beginning of the class. It is to get students to practice speaking and for the warm up to use English. The theme for the July and the second semester, it will be about the students' future dreams as the textbook was about the famous successful runner who achieved her dream by trying hard. In May, I introduced some simple conversation strategies such as opener, closer, and how about you. Most of the students seem

to be able to do that so from July I introduced rest of the strategies such as rejoinders, followups questions and shadowing. I will take some time to practice each of these skills in the second semester before the small talk so that they know what to practice. Giving explanation and examples were not good enough for a lot of students.

### **Guessing before reading**

The second thing I did was doing some guessing before reading. This is to activate students' schemata, aka their knowledge and information they already have in their brains. Some research show that using what they already know enhance learners' reading skills and comprehend the content better. They looked at the pictures on the worksheet and with pairs, they predicted what the story was about. After that, they did T or F. Before reading. Some students were worried and told me it is not possible to answer without reading. I told them the important thing here is to get your brain moving before reading so I told them not to worry.

### **Pair Shadowing**

Third thing is that I got students to practice shadowing with each other. I used to only use CD to do that but because there are more than 30 students in the same room, I wanted to do something that helps students interact with those who are around them.

### **Speaking Test**

At the end of the second semester, there was a speaking test to see if the students could interact naturally and use conversation strategies smoothly. The topic was "Your favorite animal and its protection." They had approximately three months to prepare.

Here are four questions that students must ask and answer in the timed conversation.

<four questions>

1. What is your favorite animal? Why?
2. What problems do you think they have?
3. Do you think they need protection? Why? Why not?
4. What can we do to protect them?  
(Or what should we not do?)

Just like one of the famous Christmas songs, I added each question at beginning of every class so that students can gradually get used to them.

I also re-introduced conversation strategies one by one to review. I already introduced them in the first semester so lots of students could already do them but even some low-levels seem to be able to use some of the strategies.

### **Speaking Test Scores**

This is the score of the students.

15 points 30 students

14 points 3 students

12 points 2 students

Most students got perfect score. Even the low level students could do better than I had first expected.

### **Fun Essay**

They wrote essays based on what they talked in the timed conversation. While they were doing speaking test, they were instructed to work on it. ( Most of the students turned out they were practicing for the speaking test and did the fun essay as a homework for winter vacation)

Here is a score of the students.

15 points 4 students

14 points 5 students

13 points 7 students

12 points 6 students

11 points 10 students

10 points 3 students

Almost all the students could write well. However, there were some parts that some students could not express well so I took points off and was more strict compared to speaking.

### **Questionnaire**

I did questionnaire again in March and here are the questions that I asked.

Do you like English?

Why do you study English?

What did you think of the class?

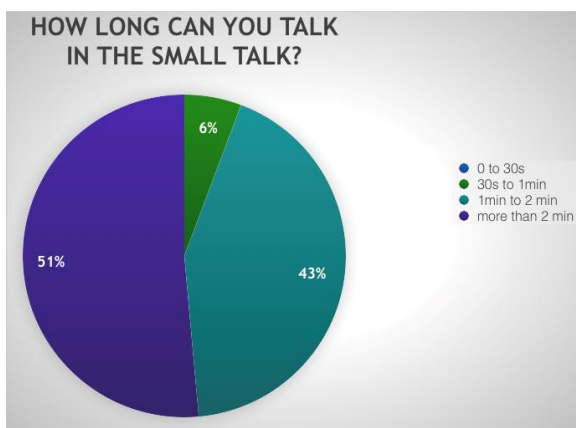
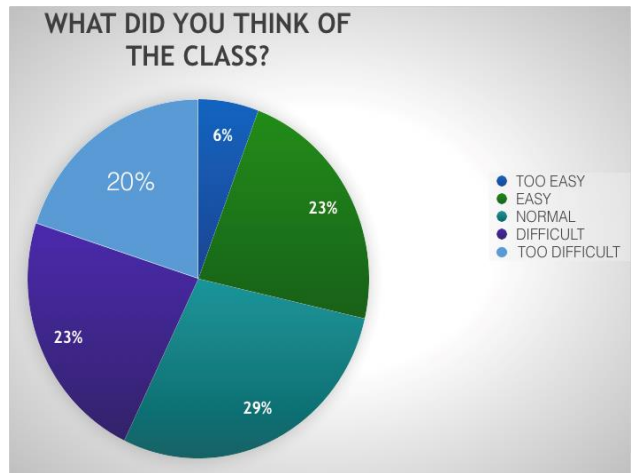
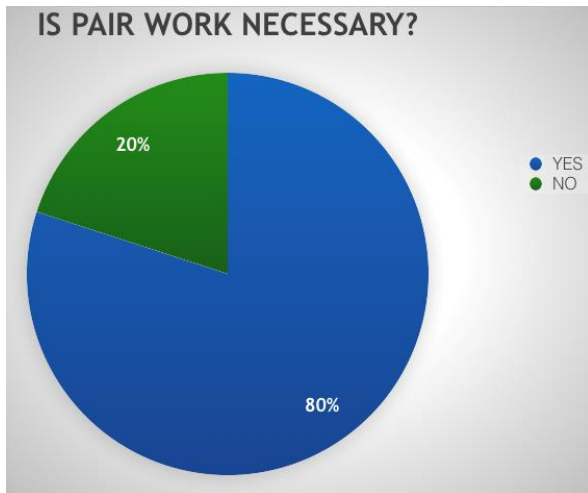
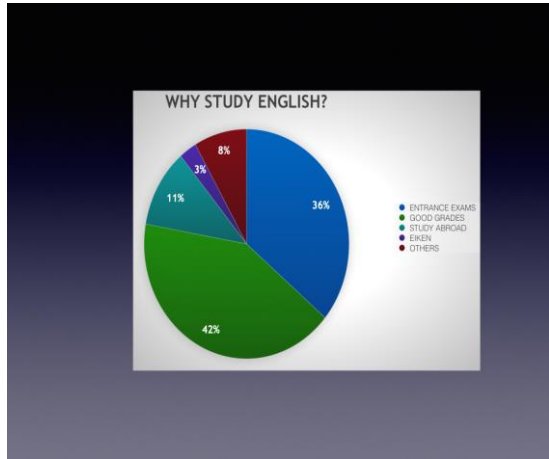
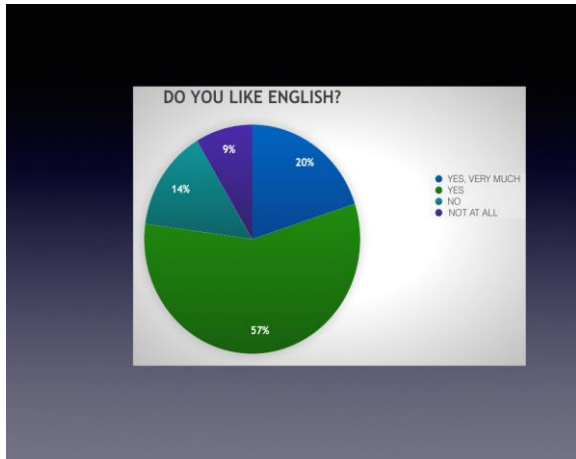
Do you think pair work is necessary?

How long can you talk to your partner in a small talk?

Evaluate your English skills.

Please give comments

These pics are the result of the questionnaires.



	Excellent	Good	So So	Needs Improvement
<b>SPEAKING</b>	5	5	20	5
<b>WRITING</b>	10	9	12	4
<b>READING</b>	15	13	5	2
<b>LISTENING</b>	6	8	16	5
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	8	10	9	8

### Comments from Students (Translated from Japanese)

I felt happy when I could make myself understood in English  
 Speaking was still difficult for me though it was fun  
 I could use some phrases for the Eiken and I passed  
 I read a lot so I read do well on the test  
 I wanted to learn more grammar  
 I don't need to do so much speaking  
 I don't like talking to my classmates  
 I didn't really like my partners  
 More info that will be useful for the entrance exams

### 4. What I learned

Most of the students could do almost perfect on the speaking test. They practiced more than I expected.

By introducing the conversation strategy one by one, low students seem to be able to acquire it better. As for the high-level students, I thought it might be better to teach them all at once and get them to practice the ones they want to improve.

Some students enjoy studying English more when teachers give more time for them to use it with their friends. However, a couple of students did not feel so as they do not like communicating with others (also in Japanese probably)

### 5. Future Issues

There are two issues for me now. First of all, I should change the speaking rubric as to make it more difficult and strict. Many students could do perfectly and with the rubric I was using, they met the expectations.

Also because most of the students at this school are willing to study hard to get into prestigious universities. I hope to be able to be creative enough to teach them stuff that will be useful in the entrance exams in the CLT classes.

### 6. Sources

Canale, M. (1983) *From communicative competence to language pedagogy*. In J. C. Richards and R. W. Schmidt (eds). *Language and Communication*. London: Longman.

Canale, Michael, and Merrill Swain. "Theoretical Bases Of Communicative Approaches To Second Language Teaching And Testing." *Applied Linguistics*, I, no. 1, 1 Mar. 1980, pp. 1-47, doi:10.1093/applin/i.1.1.

Ellis, R. (1994) *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* [M]. Oxford: OUP.

Horwitz, E.K. (2008) *Becoming a language teacher; practical guide to second language learning and teaching*. Boston: Pearson Education.

Jing, W. (2006). *Integrating Skills for Teaching EFL -Activity Design for the Communicative Classroom*, Sino-US English Teaching. V. 3, No.12 (Serial No.36).



# FUN ESSAY



Categories	Criteria	Points
<b>Accuracy</b>	Uses a variety of sentence structures, vocabularies, and expressions with few grammar mistakes	3
	Some variety of sentence structures, vocabularies, and expressions with some grammar mistakes	2
	Most of the sentences are simple and there are lots of grammar mistakes	1
<b>Content</b>	Lots of details, well-organized, interesting to read	4
	Some details, organized, there are some interesting facts or stories	3
	Need more information, not so organized, the information is too general	2
	Few or no relevant details, unorganized, contain few information	1
<b>Words</b>	More than 100 words	5
	More than 70 words	4
	More than 50 words	3
	More than 40 words	2
	More than 30 words	1
<b>Design</b>	Essay is easy to read, and picture is painted with color	3
	Essay is not easy to read, or picture is not painted with color	2
	Essay is not finished, or there is no picture	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>



You can do it!

## Save the Animal

### Timed Conversation( 2 min)

Let's practice with your pair! ( 2min )

A: ( Opener)

B: ( Opener)

A: What is your favorite animal?

B: My favorite animal is \_\_\_\_\_.

A: (Rejoinder), ( Shadowing )

Why do you like \_\_\_\_\_?

B: Because \_\_\_\_\_. How about you?

A: My favorite animal is \_\_\_\_\_.

B: (Rejoinder), ( Shadowing )

Why do you like \_\_\_\_\_?

A: Because \_\_\_\_\_.

B: (Rejoinder) What problems do you think they have?

A: I think \_\_\_\_\_

How about you? What problems do you think they have?

B: I think \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think humans need to protect \_\_\_\_\_?

A: Yes/No because \_\_\_\_\_. How about you?

Do you think humans need to protect \_\_\_\_\_?

B: Yes/No because \_\_\_\_\_.

A: What can we do for \_\_\_\_\_?

B: We can \_\_\_\_\_. How about you?

What can we do for \_\_\_\_\_?

A: We can \_\_\_\_\_. (Closer)

B: (Closer).



### Review!

#### Opener 挨拶

Good morning! Hello! Hi!

How are you? Hey!

#### Rejoinder 反応・リアクション

That's great! それはすごいね!

Sounds interesting! 面白いね!

Wow! へえ!

I see. そうなんだ。

Cool! なるほど!

I agree. そう思う。

#### How about you? 相手のことも聞く

く

#### Shadowing 相手の言葉を繰り返す

す

Ex)

A:I like to play basketball.

B:Oh, you like to play basketball?

#### Closer 挨拶

See you! Nice talking with you.

Goodbye. Bye. Have a nice day.



# Rubric for Timed Conversation

	3	2	1	0
<b>Conversation strategies</b>	Could use all six	More than four	More than 2	None used
<b>Four questions</b>	Could ask and answer all	Could ask and answer two	Could ask and answer one	None
<b>Interaction</b>	Cooperating actively with each other.	Cooperating partially with each other.	Few interactions and almost no cooperation.	No cooperation at all.
<b>Details</b>	Excellent level of description	Good. All required infos included.	Lacks some critical details.	Did not prepare.
<b>Accuracy</b>	Almost error-free. Variety of sentences.	Some errors. Some variety of sentences.	Errors even in simple sentences. Sentences that do not make sense.	Almost all the sentences have errors.

Total 15 points

## Review

Conversation Strategies: Opener, Closer, Rejoinder, How about you?, Follow-up questions, Shadowing



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