

Final report

Combining Writing and Speaking Skills in Writing Classes

Level: High school second-year students (6 classes with 18~21students each)

Subject: Writing (Textbook: Vivid Writing---Daiichi Gakushusha)

Problems: Lack of basic junior-high-school level English skills and knowledge.
Lack of students' motivation to learn English.

Goal: To develop students' writing ability so that they can manage one-paragraph writing.
To develop students' speaking ability so that they can continue to speak in English for one minute.

What I did :

1) Making original activities.

- Pick out 2 or 3 grammar points from the textbook and create communicative activities using them.
- Choose topics students can easily and comfortably relate themselves to in writing.
- Use the exercises in the textbook as homework.

2) Scaffolding for writing.

- Give a model passage for analyzing the structure.
- Give questions so that students can write a passage by answering them.
- First writing and peer editing for checking the passage organization and learning from their classmates.
- Second writing for elaboration.
- Rules in writing a paragraph
 - a. Students should write at least 8 sentences.
 - b. The first writing and the second writing should be different.

3) Scaffolding for speaking

a. Mentions (free but very simple)

- Give students a few questions for starting out.
- Introduce some conversation strategies.
Shadowing / Wow! / That's great! / What else? / How about you? /
By the way...

b. Pre-writing interview (controlled)

- First conversation in pairs: introducing vocabulary.
- Pair conversation for grammar practice: introducing conversation strategies.
(Students repeat their conversation with different pairs.)

c. Timed conversation for one minute (free)

4) Examination:

- Students are required to write a passage with about 90~100 words.
- They are also required to make their own sentences using some of the grammar points taught in the writing class.

Result:

(From the questionnaire given to the students)

Questions: What kind of change did you experience through the writing class?

①I can manage to write longer passages than before.	51/97	53%
②I have acquired new vocabulary.	34/97	35%
③I have come to understand grammar better.	41/97	42%
④I have less resistance to writing English than before.	49/97	50%
⑤I have come to understand English word order better than before.	32/97	33%
⑥Reading English has become easier than before.	23/97	24%
⑦I still don't understand grammar well.	9/97	1%
⑧I have come to dislike writing English.	8/97	1%
⑨I still don't understand English word order well.	18/97	19%
⑩Reading English is still difficult for me.	8/97	1%
⑪I have not acquire new vocabulary much.	6/97	0.6%

Numbers in bold: Points I feel happy about. **Numbers in rectangle**: Points I need to work on more.

Students' comments:

(Positive)

- I'm happy to be able to write English passages on my own.
- I enjoyed your class very much.
- Your writing class enabled me to review important grammar points.
- I have learned how to change ideas in Japanese into English sentences.
- I have come to understand English better than before.
- I have learned many kinds of expressions.
- I have learned that it's possible to write longer sentences with the knowledge I already acquired.
- It feels good to be able to express in English what I want to say.
- I enjoyed the activity of mentions very much.

(Negative)

- I didn't like your class because you didn't use the textbook much.
- I wanted to do a lot more grammar practice.
- It was difficult.
- I wanted to work on the exercise questions in the textbook more.

What I learned:

a) The importance of scaffolding:

Clear idea about what students will be able to do through this class



Specific goals of each class

One thing at one time policy



Proper and well organized scaffolding



Students can achieve the goal easily and comfortably



Confidence

b) The importance of personalization in classroom activities:

·Familiar topics let students interested and motivated to work on the activities.

Especially for beginner level students, it is easier to talk and write about themselves than more general topics.

Following are the topics of the writing class this year: No.3 and No. 8 were the most popular topics among the students.

1. My Favorite Movie
2. Superhero power
3. My Friend
4. Weekend Activities
5. My Favorite TV program
6. Kakamihara High School Students
7. Claim
8. My Parent

c) Recycling activities → Students feel comfortable and confident in doing tasks.

Avoids complicated explanation of the procedure in English.

Typical terms for explanation are repeated by the teacher in every class.

→A lot of English input for students

d) Class dynamics:

·It depends on the class dynamics of each class whether each activity is successful or not. It is necessary for the teacher to think of activities suitable for each class.

Class 1 and 3: Most activities went well, but some students easily lost their concentration especially in the afternoon. Writing went almost accordingly to the schedule.

Class 4, 5 and 6: These are the best classes where every activity went well and all the writing assignments went accordingly to the schedule. Most of the students were quite positive in writing and speaking English. Their writing seem to have developed more than the other classes.

Class 7: The most difficult class to manage. This is a science-math course class and the members of the class stay the same all through the three years. There is lopsided power balance between the bully and the bullied and it often appeared in class especially working on communicative activities. Some students often try to get the teacher's attention by doing something mischievous. Therefore, it is often difficult to create an atmosphere of English learning.

Future issues:

1. Promote students' understanding of English word order through writing activities.
2. Develop students' vocabulary through writing activities.
3. Make what students acquire in writing class transferable to reading class.

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These are the three points that came out less achieved than I had expected as the result of the questionnaire.

4. Class dynamics:

I want to learn more about the relationship between class psychology and better language teaching. Each year it becomes more and more difficult to have good class management in my school. Students' English ability seems to be going down

drastically together with their motivation to study English. Also the relationship among students has become more difficult than ever. It is very necessary to think of the way to let students feel comfortable and have cooperative relationship among themselves through English teaching.

Teaching Plan (Writing)

Level: Second-year high school students

Class size: 20

Time: 50 minutes x 2classes

Goal: To write a passage to describe parents.

Procedure:

1. Warm-up
Mentions for 1 minute (done at the beginning of each class)
2. Brainstorming
Students work individually on questions about their parents.
(Students also learn some vocabulary to use in describing their parents)
3. Pre-writing interview
Students make a pair and ask each other the questions they answered in the 1st activity.
4. Analyzing sentences:
Present the teacher's model passage about parents.
Students read it and answer some comprehension questions.
5. Grammar practice:
Students practice target grammar points in the passage through speaking activities.
6. Preparation for writing:
Students write sentences according to the grid of paragraph development
7. First writing:
By using the teacher's writing as a model, students write a passage to ask their friends out on weekend, using the information they get in the first activity.
8. Peer-editing in pairs
Silent reading
Peer-editing in pairs
9. Timed conversation
10. Second writing (Homework)