

Communicative Teaching of English through Newspapers

Sachiko Satoda

This paper discusses the effective use of English newspapers for TEFL instruction. Teaching English through newspapers has begun to attract the attention of school teachers recently. Newspaper is one of the most familiar sources of information. It provides us with topical, interesting and useful information. In this paper I would like to introduce my two-staged approach to teaching English through newspapers. The first stage is how the students learned to read newspaper articles. The second is how the articles were used in a communicative way. Lastly, the methodology of this approach is discussed, and some suggestions are made for further study.

I Introduction

Teaching English with newspapers is not a new method. Yet, in many cases, teachers have given classes in their own way and its teaching method has not been fully studied until quite recently. An article from the Daily Yomiuri Dec.27 in 1993 shows the current trend of newspaper teaching ; 'newspapers are being used in a growing number of classrooms as a teaching tool since the Japan Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association in 1985 began pushing the educational importance of the print media.' My approach to newspaper teaching, what is called NIE⁽¹⁾, began in 1990.

II 1st Stage Approach: How Students Learned To Read Newspaper Articles

2.1 Students' impressions about English newspapers

I have conducted newspaper-teaching lessons with the 4th graders (the first-year senior high students) in regular English I course. Every year in the first English lesson, I ask the 4th graders the following questions about the English newspapers.

- 1) Have you subscribed to any English newspapers? If so, name them.
- 2) When you hear the word English newspaper, how do you feel about it? Write your impressions.

From the students' answers two things have become clear. One, English newspapers are uncommon in their everyday life. Two, students have rather negative impressions on English newspapers. They say there are too many difficult words in them, the letters are too small, English is hard to understand. These negative answers show that the students have no idea how they should read the articles. When asked to read English newspaper articles under these circumstances, the students are very likely to lose their interest at the first sight of the newspaper articles. Taking these points into consideration, I set up four steps of instruction (shown below) to reduce the students' fear and to help them become able to read the articles.

2.2 Steps of instruction

1. To help students have general ideas of what types of articles are contained and how they are classified
2. To show students how news articles are organized and help them learn how to read the ' headlines '
3. To help the students learn how to read the ' lead ' which includes the information of 5 W's and 1 H (who, what, when, where, why and/or how.)
4. To help the students grasp the meaning of the whole article

In step 1 the students were asked to work on real newspapers. As Kenji Kitao (1993) suggested, this method helped the students to understand what newspapers are like and what kind of information is expected and where it is located. While working on this activity many students were looking over the articles with curiosity. Some students said that newspapers were more understandable than they had thought. They were especially pleased to find an article they already knew. This sense of familiarity encouraged them to read the article further. Yet, most students still found the newspapers too difficult to understand at this stage. In step 2 the students were asked to match the headlines with the articles after they learned the rules of headlines. In step 3 the students were asked to identify the main pieces of information quickly and give an outline of the article. In step 4 the students were asked to scan the article to find answers to the questions about the article. At this stage it is important to inform the students that they don't have to understand every word. By the end of step 4 the students became able to read newspaper articles somehow with the help of dictionaries.

2.3 Questionnaire (1) about reading newspapers

The students made a fairly favorable impression on this method. They said that it was good for them to expand their vocabulary. Though it was difficult to read newspapers, they were able to gain confidence in themselves when they could manage to read them. They were able to learn useful words and phrases that are often used in current news. Besides English, they were able to broaden their knowledge through newspapers.

The results of the questionnaire show that reading newspaper helps the students to enrich vocabulary and idioms which are used daily but are rarely seen in school textbooks. Also, it helps to enhance their interest in current topics by expanding their background knowledge of the issues raised by the article.

Yet, I began to feel that this approach should be developed into a communicative approach. Newspapers are not only sources of information but also sources of topics to discuss. Reading newspapers can give the students a chance to think about and exchange ideas on the issues related to the articles and express themselves.

Therefore, last year, in 1993, I added some communicative activities shown below to my regular newspaper teaching lessons. English I course, then, consisted of 5 hours per week, including one team-teaching lesson. I spent 12 hours on this approach in total.

III 2nd Stage Approach: How the Articles Were Used In A Communicative Way

3.1 Students' poor communication skills

As English has traditionally been taught not for communication but for getting information or for academic study, students have not been used to expressing themselves in English. Therefore, one of the common scenes observed in team teaching lessons is that when students are asked to give opinions, they become perplexed and remain silent or they merely smile without saying anything or they only give simple responses like, "It's good," or "It's bad." They rarely speak out about the reasons why they think so.

3.2 Steps for communicative approach

Before moving on to the 2nd stage, two steps were provided. First the students were given an assignment to write down their opinions about the article they had chosen so that they could practice getting their ideas into shape. Second, students practiced agreeing or disagreeing with others through various activities in team teaching lessons. Students were encouraged to make their stance clear by saying "yes" or "no." They were especially encouraged to make objections to other speakers' opinions.

3.3 Overall objectives

- 1) To help students acquire why-because logical thinking
- 2) To have students comprehend a speaker's intentions, and respond to them appropriately
- 3) To enable students to enjoy discussions in English

3.4.(a) Lesson 1: Discussion Style (Appendix 3 — 1)

Period Allotment:

1st period

Comprehension of the article by working on a task-sheet

2nd period

- 1) Students exchange their ideas about the agenda below and develop their arguments

(Appendix 1)

- 2) Each group reports on the discussion

Agenda

- 1) Do you think it necessary for us to learn foreign languages? And why?

2) If you learn another foreign language besides English, what do you want to learn? And why?

Students read an article about Australian high school students preference for studying Japanese as a second language. Then, they were presented agenda related to the article. Each group had 4 or 5 members, one of whom was chosen as a moderator. I reviewed some useful phrases for a discussion that they had learned in team teaching lessons. Members were asked to express their opinions freely on the proposed agenda. In order to make the discussion heated, the moderator was asked to raise provocative questions if necessary. While students were having the discussion, I walked around the classroom to monitor and gave students some help when necessary. Finally, a leader of each group reported on their discussion. I asked some questions about the report.

3. 4. (b) Lesson 2 : Mock Discussion Style (Appendix 3 — 2)

Period Allotment:

1st period

- 1) Reading the article
- 2) Vocabulary work

2nd period

- 1) Divide the class into a group of 7, giving the members the following roles respectively: one mayor, two smokers, two anti-smokers, one restaurant owner, one from tobacco industry
- 2) Group discussion on the agenda (Appendix 2)
- 3) Announcement of the decision by the mayor from each group

Agenda

Should all the restaurants in Fukuyama prohibit smoking ?

Students read an article about a smoking ban in Los Angeles restaurants. Then, they were given a discussion topic. Members of each group, consisting of 7, were given a role respectively. The student whose role was 'mayor of Fukuyama' took the role of moderator and was given a right to make a final decision, judging the statements made by the other speakers.

3. 4. (c) Lesson 3 : Debate Style (Appendix 3 — 3)

Period Allotment:

1st period

- 1) Reading the article about hair length
- 2) Comment making on the article

2nd period

- 1) Explanation of the gist of making constructive speech

- 2) Model demonstration by JTE & AET
- 3) Brainstorming with a partner on the proposition 'Long hair is better than short hair'

3rd period

- 1) Final consultation with a partner after side decision
- 2) Debating
 - a. Affirmative constructive speech
 - b. Cross-examination from negative side
 - c. Negative constructive speech
 - d. Cross-examination from affirmative side
 - e. Rebuttal from both sides (Free speaking)
- 3) Demonstration by several teams
- 4) Comment from AET and JTE

In the 1st period students read an article about hair length in the column of "Letters to the Editor." Then they wrote down their opinions about hair length. The 2nd and 3rd periods were conducted in Team Teaching lessons. JTE and AET showed how to make a constructive speech of each side by demonstration under a different proposition 'Watching television is harmful.' Afterwards, students were presented a proposition 'Long hair is better than short hair.' Students worked in pairs and brainstormed on the proposition. At the beginning of the third period, they decided which side they would choose. Then each pair had a debate with another pair. As is shown above, the procedure of debate was cut short and made simple. We set a free speaking period for rebuttal. No time limit was set.

IV Study

4.1 Lesson 1

It was the first time for the students to have a discussion in a regular class. Some groups were able to have a rather heated discussion with opposing opinions and those group members seemed to enjoy themselves, while some groups could not develop their discussion and finished it soon. There was a clear difference in attitudes between those successful groups and not successful groups. In successful groups members showed a positive attitude towards discussion. If the group had a positive moderator, the discussion developed further. On the other hand, in not successful groups members showed little interest in the discussion. Students' performance at this task indicated that usual examination results and traditionally judged abilities in English can sometimes be misleading given their lack of emphasis on the speaking / listening skills.

4.2 Lesson 2

Lesson 2 was a kind of role-play game, which was designed to induce the students to raise opposing ideas. Students tried to appeal to the mayor how their arguments were significant and attacked other speakers' weak points. Students were engaged in the discussion more actively than in lesson one. This was firstly because each speaker was given a different role, so he had to speak out in order to protect himself. Secondly because playing a different person made them feel easier about expressing themselves. The final decision announcement by the 'mayor' was an exciting part, with which students were very amused themselves. In this lesson students enjoyed speaking in English and expressed their opinions better but they were not able to develop their argument in response to the other speakers' statements very well. Their assertion was a kind of one-way speech.

4.3 Lesson 3

Lesson 3 was a tentative approach to the debating activities. Though students had had some practice of agreeing and disagreeing with other speakers in team teaching lessons, it was our first time to introduce some debate rules in communication activities. What I put main emphasis on in this lesson was encouraging students to listen to other speakers' opinions and respond to them. I told students on the negative side to respond to every issue raised by the affirmative. Another thing I told students to be careful about was to add reasons to the statements in their speech. By model demonstration, JTE & AET showed the shape of constructive speech and how to deliver it. So students were able to organize their opinions better this time. They developed their argument to some extent. However, in order to make this game exciting, experience and high level of debating skills such as, quick response to the statements, skillful refutation, persuasive speech are necessary. These skills cannot be acquired easily. So when we conduct this activity, we should modify its rules so that it will fit the level of the students.

4.4 Questionnaire (2) about communicative activities

After these lessons I asked students what they thought about this communicative approach. About 62% of the students appreciated the communication activities, while 25% answered negative. Those who gave favorable answers said that they had good practice putting their ideas into shape, or they enjoyed practicing speaking in English. On the other hand, those who gave negative answers said it was frustrating because they could not convey their intentions well. They couldn't comprehend other speakers' opinions very well. The topic was not interesting. More emphasis should be placed on grammar.

V Discussion

Japanese poor communication ability has often been mentioned by many language teaching author-

ities. Kumiko Torigai⁽²⁾ points out the Japanese lack of skill at 'kokusai kosho' or international negotiations. When Japanese take part in international negotiations – in politics, business or anything else– they often end up making compromises on very important points even when they do not agree with the compromise, she said. Michihiro Matsumoto (1979) illustrates Japanese poor negotiation skills as follows. He says in discussion the Japanese merely insist their opinions with their ears closed to others' opinions. Moreover, the Japanese often use 'haragei' or implicit mutual understanding and 'sasshiai' or guessing each others' intentions in order to avoid disagreement in discussion.

Why are Japanese such poor negotiators ? Traditional Japanese communication education seems to have the answer. According to Shigehiko Toyama (1994), in Japanese school education, traditionally much stress has been put on reading, while speaking and listening have been neglected even in their native language. Likewise, Haruhiko Kindaichi (1975) mentions that the Japanese will hesitate when asked to speak out, because in their traditional upbringing, children have not been encouraged to speak out but mostly been restrained from expressing themselves. These statements show that the Japanese have not traditionally been encouraged to develop communicative skills either at school or at home. We must be aware, however, that this passive attitude toward communication has caused a lot of frustration and misunderstanding when it comes to cross-cultural communication.

Then what should English teachers do ? In my opinion, the best way to start with would be to set up as many situations for communicative activities as possible in the classroom. Negotiation activities including agreeing, disagreeing and persuading are especially a good way to develop overall communicative competence. Students are required to employ all their communication strategies to do these activities. The activities would be more substantial if we could cooperate with other subject teachers. Next, I would suggest there are some points we should bear in mind in conducting these activities.

First, setting an achievement goal. We must set the goal according to the students' levels and needs. Students need to be directed to achieve the goal step by step.

Secondly, setting up meaningful situations. The situations for communicative activities should be natural, interesting and meaningful. It is important to have the students enjoy the activities and have them feel that what they are doing is meaningful and worthwhile.

Thirdly, in order to conduct the communicative activities smoothly, students should be well informed of the topic they are to argue prior to the activities. The result of the questionnaire (2) clarified the necessity of teaching vocabulary and its usage. Lacking in vocabulary, students misunderstand other speakers' opinions. Or they fail to convey their ideas in English. If the activities deal with serious issues like human rights, or environmental issues, the background knowledge teaching needs to be conducted. Reading a newspaper article helps them to build up their vocabulary and expand their background knowledge, but it is not enough.

Lastly, delivery teaching. To have students acquire a positive attitude towards communication is set up as an objective in the newly revised course of study. However, a passive attitude seems to be the most serious problem in communication teaching because it is deeply rooted in Japanese language and culture. Fusako Yasui (1994) states that when we are to conduct communication teaching, we should not rush to the debating activities but start it by having students speak in a loud voice. She then checks if other students are able to hear the voice. By doing so students are able to learn a fundamental rule of communication: that is, a speaker must speak loud enough to convey his thoughts. Yasui also mentions that in a group discussion, the most suitable number is four, because everybody must speak in a small group like this. Quite interestingly, AET & I had come to the same conclusion through the activities. Even when the group discussion went well within a group of 4, when two groups were put together making a group of 8, the discussion turned to be inactive. When a group of 3 was combined with another group, similar phenomenon was observed among the group member of 6. There seems to be cooperative attitude among the group members within a group of 4, but when the number exceeds 4, members tend to depend on each other and try to avoid speaking. Delivery teaching, therefore, should deal with not only speech techniques but also the psychological aspect of communication.

VI Conclusion

Because of the rapid changes in our society very large number of Japanese workers are feeling the necessity of communication education at school. Communication does not mean to speak fluently. It means to be able to express one's opinions or exchange information with other people at the right time in a right manner. Conducting newspaper teaching, therefore, is useful to encourage students to have their own opinions on the article they read. I'd like to pursue a better way of newspaper teaching to develop students' overall communication skills. To conclude this paper I would like to thank Jeffrey Edwards, our AET, who has always been cooperative and has given me valuable advice for this paper.

Note

- (1) NIE stands for Newspaper In Education. It is a movement to study how to use newspapers effectively in the classroom.
- (2) Kumiko Torigai's comments are extracts from *THE DAILY YOMIURI* November 22, 1993.

Reference

- Gibbs, Dabbie & Gibbs, Geoffrey & Watanabe, Tokio (1988) *News and Views*. The Japan Times
Kitao, K. & Kitao, S.K. (1993) *Understanding English Newspapers*. KIRIHARA SHOTEN
岩下 貢 (1978) 『ディベート原論.総合編』 学書房

- 金田一 春彦 (1975) 『日本人の言語表現』 講談社現代新書 講談社
- 白野 伊津男 (1989) 『英語の新聞速読法』 日本英語教育協会
- 茶本 卓子 (1992) 「Topic Studies によるオーラル・コミュニケーション C へのアプローチ」
『オーラル・コミュニケーションの指導と評価』 開隆堂
- 外山 滋比古 「話す そして聞く ということの改めて知る重要性」 『CAT』 (1994) 6月号 アルク
- 中澤 美依 (1993) 「英語を話すコミュニケーション」 『英語コミュニケーションの理論と実際』
桐原書店
- 樋口 忠彦, 高橋 一幸 (1993) 「個性創造性を引き出す授業」 『現代英語教育』 研究社出版
2月号 pp.37-39
- ホルバート・E・ガリー/フィリップス・R・ビドル著 松本道弘 訳 (1979)
『「ディベートの方法」 論争・討論のルールと技術』 産業能率大学出版部
- 松本 茂 (1987) 『英語ディベート実践マニュアル』 バベル・プレス
- 安居 總子 「国語教育から学ぶ日本人の英語学習の在り方」 『CAT』 (1994) 6月号 アルク
- 安田 正, ジャック・ニクリン (1993) 『英語プレゼンテーションの技術』 The Japan Times
『高等学校学習指導要領解説 外国語編 英語編』 (1989) 文部省
『Newspaper in Education 教育に新聞を 東京 NIE 実践報告集 第1集』 (1993)
東京都高等学校新聞教材開発研究会
『21世紀に向けての英語教育』 『英語教育』 別冊 (1993) 大修館

A P P e n d i x 1

The following is a conversation that actually took place in one group in lesson one. (According to notes taken.)

Chairman: Do you think it necessary for us to learn foreign languages?

S1 : Yes. We can understand other countries more.

C : Why?

S1 :

S2 : I think it is important for us to know foreign countries more than before.

S3 : If foreign people learn Japanese, we don't have to learn foreign languages.

S2 : I don't think so.

C : Why?

S2 : Japan depends on foreign countries and can't live without them, so we should study foreign languages.

A P P e n d i x 2

(In lesson 2, the discussion that took place in one group was as follows)

Mayor : Do you think all the restaurants in Fukuyama should prohibit smoking?

Anti-smoker1 : Yes. It is a good plan. I hate smoking. I don't like the smell.

Anti-smoker2 : I agree with you. And smoking is bad for our health.

Smoker1 : No, no. I don't agree with you. I can't stop smoking.

Smoker2 : That's right. Smoking after meal is very good.

Mayor : What do you think, restaurant owner?

Restaurant owner : It's difficult. We don't want to lose customers.

Tobacco Industry : Will you divide the tables for smokers and non-smokers?

Anti-smoker1 : That's not enough. You must divide the room.

Restaurant owner : But I don't have enough money . . .

Smoker1 : You don't have to do that.

Anti-smoker1 : Yes, you must.

Smoker1 : No, you don't have to.

.....

Mayor : All right. All right. I see your points.

(After the group discussion the instructor asked the mayor from each group to announce his or her decision.)

Teacher : And what is your decision, group1?

Mayor : I decide that all the restaurants in Fukuyama should prohibit smoking, because smoking is bad for non-smokers' health, too. But if the restaurants make a special room for smokers, it is O.K.

A P P E N D I X 3

資料 1 (Lesson 1)

Australians choose Japanese

SYDNEY—Japanese has surpassed French as the language most studied by high school students in the Australian state of New South Wales, an education authority said Thursday.

“There has been a strong indication that there are career opportunities needing the ability to speak Japanese . . . anything from doing business with Japan to tour guides or English teachers,” said state Board of Studies spokeswoman Dianne Brien.

“There's an increasing push for NSW students to study a language other than English,” she said.

Until recently, Australian school students were not required to learn foreign languages.

Brien said although Japanese was more difficult to learn than European languages, many students see Japan as an international economic power and close regional ally of Australia.

There are 1,713 final year students studying the language in New South Wales.

However, Nancy Gordon, a bilingual research assistant, said because Australian and Japanese in-

dustries have not adapted to make use of them, “there aren’t all that many good jobs for Japanese speakers.”

(The Daily Yomiuri July 16, 1993)

a strong indication that のような事をはっきりと示す

state Board of Studies : 州の教育委員会

an increasing push for . . . to ~ : . . . がますます~する傾向にある

be required to . . . : . . . 必ず . . . しなくてはいけない economic power : 経済大国

close regional ally : 地域的に親密な同盟国 a bilingual research assistant : 2か国語研究所助手

資料 2 (Lesson 2)

L.A. bans smoking in restaurant

LOS ANGELES—The Los Angeles City Council on Tuesday snuffed out smoking in all of the city’s nearly 7,000 restaurants—from pricey celebrity hangouts to mom—and—pop greasy spoons—making Los Angeles the largest city in the nation to impose such a ban.

Despite heavy lobbying by restaurateurs, smokers and the tobacco industry, all the city’s indoor eateries will be required to post no—smoking signs once the ordinance takes effect next month. Owners who resist will face a misdemeanor charge, punishable by up to six months in jail or a \$1,000 fine. Smokers who light up despite the warnings are subject to a \$50 fine.

Exempt from the ban are outdoor eating areas, private clubs, bars or bar portions of restaurants. The ban will take effect 30 days after it is signed into law by Mayor Tom Bradley, who has supported other smoking bans and is expected to sign this one by the end of the week.

(The Daily Yomiuri June.25, 1993)

the Los Angeles City Council : ロサンゼルス市議会 snuff out : 火を消す

pricey celebrity hangout : 高級レストラン mom—and—pop greasy spoon : 小さな安食堂

restaurateur : レストラン経営者 lobby : (議員に) 働きかける

eatery : 簡易食堂 be required to post . . . : . . . を貼るように命じられる

the ordinance takes effect : 条例が発効する misdemeanor charge : 軽犯罪

exempt from . . . : . . . を免除された

資料 3 (Lesson 3)

Letters To The Editor

The long and short of it

The other day I watched a TV program on a research project involving hair length.

The objective was to collect opinions on which hair length was most desirable. People surveyed were asked, “Which do you prefer for yourself, long hair or short hair?” and “Do you prefer women with long hair or short hair?”

The survey found a majority of respondents preferred long hair, while only a few favored short hair.

More interesting than the findings, however, were the reasons.

The most popular reasons cited by women who preferred short hair were:

- It is easy to care for,
- Short hair is not easily messed;
- Women who have long hair appear less intelligent.

The most popular reasons cited by men who preferred short hair were:

- Women who have short hair appear tidier;
- Long hair looks uncomfortable in the summer.

And the reasons given by those who preferred long hair were:

(female)

- Long hair looks feminine;
- Men prefer long hair.

(male)

- Long hair looks feminine;
- Long hair can be worn in a variety of styles, including ponytails.

I believe those who favor long and luxurious tresses have different concerns than their counterparts.

Women who prefer long hair seem to be concerned that long hair is necessary to gain men's favor.

On the other hand, women who prefer short hair do not seem to be concerned with men's opinions, but place priority on cleanliness and a neat appearance.

Currently, there are many women who wear long hair, but gradually an increasing number of women are changing to shorter hair fashions.

I believe women who have short hair are more individualistic and charming. I envy them as I have long hair and have been hesitant to have it cut short.

What do you think?

Which do you like better, long hair or short hair?

(The Daily Yomiuri July.26, 1993)

Words and Phrases

* a majority of respondents: 回答者の大多数 * reasons cited by ~: ~があげた理由

* luxurious tresses: ふさふさした髪 * counterpart: 対応するもの

ex) American professors and their Japanese counterparts

* place priority on ~: ~を優先して考える * be hesitant to do ~: ~するのをためらう

次の表現を英語で言ってみよう

髪を短く切りたい