Teaching/Learning English in English at Japanese Senior High Schools: Practical Tips for Teachers

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The author’s survey last year revealed that the MEXT’s proposal to conduct English classes in English has evoked feelings of confusion and apprehension among senior high school teachers and students. This article offers some practical tips for teachers in implementing the changes. First, the author discusses how teachers should prepare for such classes. Secondly, a sample class plan is presented for different phases of a class. “Scaffolding” is one of the key ideas in providing necessary assistance to students. The author then discusses the use of physical and visual messages, when and how to use the techniques of recast, clarification request, corrective feedback, paraphrasing, code-switching and display questions, and when and how to make use of L1.

Key words: scaffolding, linguistic support, affective support

1. Introduction

As the author’s survey last year (Yamada & Hristoskova, 2011) revealed, the MEXT’s proposal to conduct English classes in English has evoked confusion and apprehension among senior high school teachers and students. About half of the JTEs at senior high schools surveyed agreed with teaching and learning English in English (hereafter, TLEIE) and others “neither agreed or disagreed,” or “disagreed”. When nearly half of the JTEs do not positively agree with TLEIE, the difficulty of implementing the Ministry’s idea of conducting English classes in English is only to be expected. Among the various reasons for their negativity, SHS teachers said that they were in need of practical tips at individual and organizational levels.

As a state of affairs, nearly 70% of the JTEs in the same survey said they were using Japanese a lot in class, which in itself need not be either good or bad, but we can assume the shift toward TLEIE presents difficulties for many JTEs. The same survey revealed that over 67% of the students in academic courses and nearly 73% of the students in vocational courses said
they were either not so much or not at all used to TLEIE classes. The analysis showed that when they were not used to TLEIE, they had negative feelings toward it, and the percentages of the students who were not used to TLEIE were quite high among academic and vocational students. The survey concluded that students are in need of both linguistic and affective support. The following sections will discuss how teachers can give this linguistic and affective support to students.

2. Getting ready for TLEIE

In this section, I will discuss four important things for us teachers to do in order to get ready for TLEIE. First, we need to make the purposes of TLEIE clear. Why do we choose to teach English in English? Secondly, we need to have a clear understanding of what students already know. This will lead to the third point, recognizing what kinds of support students will need and our need to get training in this field. Fourthly, we will have to set up certain rules as to the use of students’ first language (hereafter, L1).

2.1 Making the purposes of TLEIE clear

The New Course of Study presents the purpose for English classes conducted in English as “to enhance the opportunities for students to be exposed to English, transforming classes into real communication scenes” (MEXT, 2009:92, MEXT 2010:7). They regard “exposure to English” and “real communication scenes” as important in language learning.

How effective is it for language learners to be exposed to the language and to be in real communication scenes? Willis (2003) summarizes three essentials and one desirable for effective language learning to take place. The three essentials are “exposure,” “use,” and “motivation,” and the one desirable is “instruction in language” as shown in Table 1. The purpose of the MEXT will fulfill the two of the essentials of effective language learning, i.e. “exposure to a rich but comprehensible input of real spoken and written language use” and “use of the language to do things.” If TLEIE class succeeds in motivating students, the three essentials for effective language learning to take place will now have been arranged.

The overall objective of foreign language subjects, as the MEXT states, is “to develop students’ communication abilities” (MEXT, ibid). Brown (2001) states how such communicative goals are best achieved as follows: Communicative goals are best achieved by giving due attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and contexts, and to students’ eventual need to apply classroom learning to previously unrehearsed contexts in the real world. (Brown, 2001: 69)

To summarise, the purpose of employing TLEIE is to develop students’ communication abilities by enriching the language exposure to real language and language use situations in classrooms.

2.2 Learning what students already know

Having made the aims clear, teachers need to do a good review of what students already know. Then we can, and we should, use the language students know so that they learn to recycle their knowledge and skills they have acquired, and eventually internalise their knowledge.

Also, by having a clear understanding of students’ knowledge and background, when we use new lan-
language items, we can make the students’ knowledge the base line and start from there to make the new language items the “i+1” level for the students, “i” being the student’s current knowledge of the language and “1” being slightly ahead of the student’s current level. According to the Input Hypothesis, a language is acquired “by understanding messages, or by receiving ‘comprehensible input’” (Krashen, 1985: 2). It is important for teachers to be able to use students’ “i+1” level of language.

There are several ways to get a better picture of students’ current levels, to understand what they have learned and not learned and to learn what kinds of activities they are used to doing and not used to doing. Senior high school teachers should be advised to do the following:

1. to read junior high school (JHS) textbooks their students have used,
2. to exchange information with JHS teachers,
3. to observe JHS classes, and
4. to talk with students and read their language products.

These activities will give us clearer ideas and confidence as to what levels and kinds of language we should start with.

2.3 Understanding what kinds of support we should give to students

In Section 1, I reviewed that students are in need of both linguistic and affective support. In a classroom where the students’ target language is the main language of instruction, students face a constant challenge in understanding the class content. The teacher has to provide appropriate assistance to students to help them understand exactly what it is that is difficult for them to understand. In other words, the teacher needs to provide appropriate “scaffolding” for the students’ language learning. Getting a good handle on what students already know will help us understand what kinds of support we need to give to students. Then, throughout the language course, teachers will need to keep in mind the following types of support:

- **Linguistic support:**
  1. use of topics that students have enough background knowledge about,
  2. use of the language that students already know and the language slightly higher than their current level,
  3. simplification of the language that is beyond their language level by way of paraphrasing,
  4. provision of background information to activate students’ schema when using topics unfamiliar to students,
  5. provision of planning time before speaking,
  6. use of glossary,
  7. instruction of useful expressions for discussion, speaking, and
  8. instruction in and encouragement of the use of communication strategies

- **Affective support:**
  1. use of topics that students are interested in and like,
  2. use of intrinsically motivating materials and tasks,
  3. kind guidance and facilitation of activities, and
  4. encouragement in the form of praising students’ efforts to produce the language, and contribution to class.

Both with linguistic and affective support, students will be provided with an environment where they can

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4 The six functions of scaffolding originally posited by Wood et al. (1976: 98) are as follows:
1. Recruitment (R) – Drawing the novice’s attention to the task.
2. Reduction in degrees of freedom (RDF) – Simplifying or limiting the task demands.
3. Direction maintenance (DM) – Maintaining motivation and progress toward the goals of the task.
4. Marking critical features (MCF) – Calling the novice’s attention to important aspects of the task.
5. Frustration control (FC) – Decreasing the novice’s stress.
6. Demonstration (D) – Modeling the preferred procedures to achieve the goals. (cited from McCormick & Donato, 2000: 157-158)
actively participate in language activities. This will allow students to experience success in communicating in the target language. The experience of success will give students self-confidence and self-efficacy, motivate them to study further, and thus lead to autonomy. Teachers need training to make this kind of support possible.

2.4 Setting up rules

In a monolingual classroom like many in Japanese schools, it is difficult to conduct English classes all in English for several reasons. In communicative activities, when students get excited to communicate their meanings, they sometimes naturally start using their L1 because they communicate their meanings better and much more easily that way. Banning the use of L1 entirely would have negative effects such as giving too much pressure on students and thus demotivating them. Also, grammatical explanations are often much more efficiently done in L1. The MEXT, in fact, says that they do not mean to have teachers conduct their classes necessarily all in English but that we should think of the use of Japanese when necessary, providing that the centre of the class is students’ carrying out language activities using English (MEXT 2009b : 44).

However, once too relaxed, it is easy for students, and as a result for teachers, to go back to the use of L1 as a main language in a monolingual class. There will be a need to set up rules when and how teacher should and can use L1 and have students use L1, including code-switching. I will come back to this topic later in the next section.

3. In class

In the previous section, I discussed four important things for teachers to bear in mind when preparing for TLEIE. In this section, I would like to discuss what teachers can do in different phases of a class, using a lesson plan.

This lesson plan assumes a class basically conducted in English. It deals with a section from “PRO-VISION English Course I,” Unit 10 “Living Together.” The text concerns Dr. Nakamura Tetsu (born on September 15, 1946 in Fukuoka) who has devoted his life to working among refugees in the Afghanistan/Pakistan borderlands. The story shows Dr. Nakamura’s love and passion for the Afghanistan/Pakistan people and how relationship of trust can be built between people with different customs and cultures.

Lesson Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st period</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd period</td>
<td>Part 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd period</td>
<td>Part 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th period</td>
<td>Part 4 (this period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th period</td>
<td>Group projects &amp; presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th period</td>
<td>Presentation(continued) &amp; Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th period</td>
<td>Language Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lesson outline:

- In Part 1, students will think about Dr. Nakamura’s attitude toward different cultures and his personality, and also discuss the situation in Afghanistan.
- In Part 2, students will read what the drought in 2000 brought about, and what Dr. Nakamura decided to do.
- In Part 3, students will read about Dr. Nakamura’s digging wells and what happened.
- In Part 4, students will read about Dr. Nakamura’s creating a canal, and think about how it will be possible for us to build friendship with people from different cultures.
- In the 5th period, students will work in groups, decide on their themes such as “International Volunteering Activities,” “More About Dr. Nakamura Tetsu,” “More About Digging Wells,” “More About Creating Canals,” “The History of Afghanistan,” etc., and make presentations in English.
- In the 6th period, presentations could continue, and then, students will review the whole text, checking if they understand it completely now.
- In the 7th period, students will work on some language focusing activities (vocabulary & grammar).

Lesson aims:

1. To have students understand accurately what Dr. Nakamura did, why he did it and how he did it by listening, reading, and through discussions with classmates.
2. To have students express their own ideas in English as to what they like about Dr. Nakamura’s attitudes and what they themselves want to do for people in need.
(6) Teaching procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Time (min)</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>① Warm-up</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Greeting C, P-Greeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>② Check of homework</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C-Check the answers. (Handout ①)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>③ Review</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>P-Retell the story so far in pairs. C-Check the main events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>④ Pre-listening / pre-reading</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>C-Tell what they think of the photos. P-Think of the answers for the T’s Qs. C-Discuss possible solutions in pairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑤ While-reading 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>I-Listen. P-Check the answers in pairs. C-Check the answers with the whole class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑥ While-reading 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>C-Listen to the rest of the story to answer the T’s question. C-Answer T’s Qs. C-Practice reading aloud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑦ Post-reading 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C-Watch DVD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑨ Wrapping-up</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>C-Understand the assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher’s support

- Use of English students already know, smile, big actions
- A: Recast (=corrective feedback)/Praise
- B: Corrective feedback, (use of L1, code-switching)
- Smile, recast, praise, use of gestures, paraphrasing
- Smiles, recast, praise, display questions, use of gestures, repetition, speaking slowly, use of photos, clarification request, code-switching
- Recast, praise, corrective feedback, praise, (use of L1, code-switching)
- Repetition (for emphasis), paraphrasing, (cod-switching)
- Recast, repetition, paraphrasing, (use of L1, code-switching)
- Repetition, Use of DVD (for activation of schema)
- Paraphrasing, repeated explanation (use of L1, code-switching)
- Recap, praise, clarification request, (use of L1, code-switching)
- Repetition, speaking slowly, praise, smile

F=class format: (C=class, G=group, P=pair, I=individual)
Now, let me explain how this class proceeds:

Students have been given a homework assignment (Handout ①) to write up a summary of the previous section and to check the meanings of the new words in this lesson.

Lesson 10 “Living Together”
Part 4   Homework for preparation

A. Review Part 3 and write a summary of it in about 50 words.

B. Check the following words in your dictionary, and find their meanings/explanation from ④ ~ ⑫.

1. the Hindu Kush Mountains
2. low (adj.)
3. year after year
4. supply (v.)
5. branch (n.)
6. construct (v.)
7. supply (v.)
8. handle (v.)
9. common ground
10. bring ~ together

(7) Points of evaluation :
① Did the students understand the English spoken to them?
② Did the students actively try to express their opinions and respond to the teacher and the classmates?
③ Have the students understood the textbook text?
④ Have the students familiarized themselves with the new language items?

① Warm-up: Class starts with a friendly greeting, both the teacher and students recycling the language that the students have already learned and can use comfortably. In this phase, thanks to the teacher’s smile and friendly gestures, the students’ affective filter should be lowered. That is, students can be guided to speak English in an unforced way.

② Check of homework: Students check their answers first in pairs, and then together with the whole class. Students practice pronouncing the new words, so that they will be familiarized with the new vocabulary and expressions.

③ Review: As a review, students retell the story they have read so far in pairs. When they are doing this, the teacher goes around the classroom, scaffolding the students’ restructuring of the story, praising good work, and encouraging them to produce language. When mistakes are heard, recast could be used, but explicit corrective feedback will disrupt the activity. Corrective feedback can be given after the class when the homework (Handout ①) is collected.

④ Pre-listening / pre-reading: Before students listen and read the new text, this pre-listening / pre-reading activity will activate students’ schema, and students will have an objective for their listening and reading activities. Here, students are shown photos of the Hindu Kush Mountains with little snow on them. The teacher asks students what they think of them. After this, the teacher presents a new problem, saying, “There has been less and less snow year after year. Dr. Nakamura was worried. What do you think he was worried about?” The teacher leads students to the answer, “The wells may dry out!” Then, the teacher gives students a referential question: “What would you do to solve this problem?” Students discuss in pairs what they would do. This is to raise the students’ interest in reading/listening and finding out what Dr. Nakamura actually did.

In this phase, the teacher encourages the students to speak with smile, praises them for good try, and provides verbal scaffolding. For difficult expressions, code-switching may be used. To encourage the students’ language production, the teacher can give display questions, using gestures, repeating and slowing down for key words, and praising students who contribute creative or unique ideas. Since the focus is still on meaning, only recast may be appropriate in this phase. Explicit corrective feedback will discourage students.

⑤ While-reading 1: In the while-reading activity using Handout ②, students will summarise the key points of the text. Through this activity, students will get the answer to the question of what Dr. Nakamura did to
solve the problem of the wells drying out. Handout ② is created so that the students will be able to work out the chunks of meaning in the sentences in the text, and thus analyse the sentence structures. With the teacher’s paraphrasing of the complex sentences, giving display questions, repetition and code-switching, the meaning will be understood and at the same time, the structures are implicitly parsed (analysed) as in the following example:

Ex)

(in the text) He chose to use local traditional tools again so that the people would not have to wait to have the canal fixed with foreign aid if it were damaged.

Teacher: What did he choose to use again?
Student: Local traditional tools.
Teacher: Yes, He chose to use local traditional tools again. Why?
Student: (So that) the people would not have to wait …
Teacher: Right. They would not have to wait. They would not have to ask for foreign aid, foreign help, when the canal is damaged, when the canal breaks down. They would not have to have the canal fixed, “naoshitemorau,” have the canal fixed with foreign aid, foreign help.

⑥ While-reading 2: The while-reading activity 2 starts with a question posed by the teacher,” So, Dr. Nakamura started to construct a canal. What do you think happened to Dr. Nakamura’s project?” Students guess the answer, and have opportunities to express their ideas.

The teacher can scaffold the students’ language production by feeding them with vocabulary and expressions, and rephrasing. Code-switching will be possible, and the teacher can give implicit corrective feedback by using recast. The teacher can invite students’ language production by giving display questions. The teacher can emphasise the key words by slowing down and enunciating them. This will help students to analyse the sentence structures, too. (See the slide below.)

The comprehension check of the last paragraph is done orally with the whole class. Complex sentences can be divided into a few simple sentences by the teacher’s paraphrasing, and display questions focusing on key words. The teacher can elicit the students’ language production by feeding them with vocabulary and phrases. With the students and the teacher collaborating, the summary will eventually be completed on a slide like the one below.

⑦ Post-reading 1: As a post-reading activity, the students watch a DVD to see what actually happened after the story they have just read in the textbook. This will activate the students’ schema and help them formulate
their own ideas about people’s effort to realize dreams and building friendship. If the teacher asks display and referential questions at certain points of the viewing, this will also encourage them to think more deeply.

Post-reading 2: This is a language activity that requires the students to summarise what impressions they received while reading the story of Dr. Nakamura, using Handout ③. It is ideal if the students have formulated some ideas about Dr. Nakamura by this phase. If not, the teacher can scaffold the students’ thought process by asking display questions and having them remember the story. When the language they produce is unclear, or has some faults, the teacher can give clarification request or give recast. To help the students formulate their ideas, use of L1 and code-switching may also be possible.

Wrapping-up: The teacher shows the slide below. The teacher has to speak slowly, repeat the important points, and see if the students have understood the assignment.

4. Summary of teacher’s scaffolding in class

In the previous section, I illustrated what kinds of support a teacher can give to students to help them follow and actively participate in a TLEIE class. In this section, I will summarise the types of scaffolding employed in this class. The numbers ①~⑨ in the parentheses refer to the numbers in the “Teaching procedure” in the lesson plan shown in Section 3.

(1) Use of English students already know: (Phases ①~⑨)

Throughout the lesson, the use of English that students already know will help students understand the content better. The students’ affective filter will be lowered as they understand more English. This will also secure the students’ exposure to comprehensible input.

(2) Making use of physical & visual messages: (Phases ①~⑨)

Smile, good use of prosody for emphasis and clarification, and the vigorous use of gestures are effective scaffolding techniques. Praise accompanied by smiles for students’ contribution of ideas and language will help lower students’ affective filters and motivate them to actively participate in language use activities. A warm and encouraging environment is all the more important in a TLEIE class, where students’ anxieties about using a foreign language are high. The visuals, the photos used in Phase ④, will also help students to activate schema and make appropriate guesses as to the meaning. Therefore, it will be very helpful if teachers learn how to use effective nonverbal communication devices and learn to utilize suprasegmental aspects of the language.
(3) Paraphrasing, code-switching, display questions (Phases 5, 6)
Paraphrasing, code-switching, and display questions are particularly useful to guide students to understand complex language materials, so they can be used especially in while-reading activities. Cook (2010) also points to the “positive emotional effect” of code-switching and suggests effective use of it “as a communicative and pedagogic resource” (Cook, ibid: 47).

(4) Use of L1 (Phases 5, 6, 8)
As Cook (2010) says, translation can be a “faster and more efficient tool,” when the sentence structures and concepts are too complicated for students. There can be both cognitive and affective benefit. It can be used to “relate new to existing knowledge,” to “give a sense of confidence and order,” and to “ease the insecurity and anxiety of not knowing” (Cook, ibid: 155-156).

Another way to use L1 would be to set up an L1 session sometime at a later stage of a class, or to hold L1 sessions sometimes after language activities, and give students time to discuss their questions in L1. Knowing “that they will have the chance to discuss something in L1” later in the class, they will be more motivated to try during language activities (the International Teacher Training Organization 2009, quoted by Cook, ibid: 131).

(5) Recast and clarification request: (Phases 4～8)
Lyster & Ranta (1997) identified six types of teachers’ corrective feedback: explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition. During communication activities, “instant and intrusive correction” can demotivate students to participate in communication, and is often useless because students are focusing on communicating their meaning. “Language focus” lesson should be better planned and conducted separately later, as is planned for the seventh period in the sample lesson plan. In the “language focus” lesson, explicit correction, including metalinguistic feedback and elicitation, will be appropriate. In the class shown in Section 3.1, since most of the language activities are geared to focus-on-meaning activities, more implicit feedback, recast and clarification request, should be appropriate. When the meaning is not clear, the teacher can use clarification requests, or feed students with appropriate vocabulary and expressions.

As for recast, we should note that teacher’s recast on a particular student’s language production will not be so effective for the student him/herself in terms of noticing, but will be beneficial for the other students who are listening to their teacher and this student. Ohta (2000), based on her study with adult foreign language learners of Japanese, states that students’ mental activity is “triggered by the noticing of contrasts between ill-formed and correct utterances” (p.66), and students who are attending to the talk between the teacher and a student have more chances of noticing.

(6) Having students talk (Phases 1～9)
So far, a lot of emphasis has been on how the teacher should talk. We have not yet focused much on the students’ speech production. In fact, when the objective of the class is “to develop students’ communication abilities,” we need aim at a good amount of both input and output of the language. Therefore, we have to ask our-

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5 “Explicit correction refers to the explicit provision of the correct form. ... Recasts involve the teachers’ reformulation of all or part of a student’s utterance, minus the error. ... Clarification requests indicate to students either that their utterance has been misunderstood by the teacher or that the utterance is incorrect in some way and that a repetition or a reformulation is required. ... Metalinguistic feedback contains comments, information, or

6 J. Harmer, 2007: 97
selves two questions: (1) Is my speech understandable for the students? (2) Am I not talking too much? Am I giving enough time for students to talk?

One way to evaluate our own speech is to voice-record or video-record the class, and listen to it after the class. This will help us answer the two questions above.

5. Conclusion

"The teacher has not really taught until the student has learned."

In this report, I have tried to provide practical tips for teachers who want to take the TLEIE approach to developing students’ communication abilities. First, I attempted to give teachers some ideas as to how to prepare confidently. Secondly, I illustrated a class taking a TLEIE approach, and gave some suggestions as to how teachers could provide appropriate scaffolding for students’ language learning in different phases of a class.

As a next stage, there needs to be more research done in real classrooms, where various factors are at work that would complicate a TLEIE class. There will be different educational purposes at different schools, students with different motivations for study, different feelings towards English, different language proficiency levels, and other differences from school to school. The analysis of the difficulties caused by such differences may provide some ideas on how to adapt the scaffolding techniques to suit the purposes of each school.

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要約

この研究ノートでは、2013年度より実施される高等学校学習指導要領に沿って、英語の授業を「英語で行うことを基本とする」場合の、教師の生徒に対する言語的・情緒的支援の在り方を論じている。教員が事前にすべきこと、授業中にすべきこと・すると望ましいことを、「授業を英語で行うこと」を前提にした学習指導案をたたき台としてまとめた：新学習指導要領の目標を達成するためには、(1) 生徒がこれまでに学習した言語材料を積極的に使う、(2) physical messageとvisual messageを活用する、(3) paraphrasing、codeswitching、display questionなどで、言語材料を理解可能なインプットにする、(4) 母国語の活用、(5) recast、clarification requestを使う、(6) 生徒にアウトプットの機会を多く与えることなどが大切である。

キーワード：Scaffolding（足場がけ）、言語的支援、情緒的支援