

Note

An Important Point of Selecting Realia

KAZUI Hironobu

Abstract

On learning foreign languages there are significant points particularly in the university or college level. One of them is converting the attitude from silent to loud. Another is the atmosphere of permitting a few mistakes. And another is having fun and enjoying learning foreign languages and so on. At university level, the point we instructors need is choosing realia. This time, I faced a realia that promotes learning. The way of selecting an educational method that makes learners advance efficiently.

Therefore, instructors should be careful to check them in their daily work.

Key words and phrases

English, education

(received 25 December 2015; online release 5 April 2016)

During some years of college instructing in Japan, I have seen so many language textbooks published every year. This is no exaggeration. In fact the market for textbooks is beyond our consideration. One major publisher advertises storing 10000 titles. On the other hand, many of these are considered not to be effective unfortunately. I have inspected some of them, and tried them in my classes. I found that the main weakness of these textbooks is they are not for speaking lessons.

For this reason, I kept searching for the ways to help my learners learn how to speak a foreign language. I tried to discover any kind of system that would encourage college learners to speak, giving them just enough intelligence to begin, but not so much that they become passive. Two years ago, I discovered a language learning system by a publishing company.

At first I was not completely satisfied with it. I could not quite understand how to master the system. It was quite a new system and consisting of A4 cards in a ring holder. Passing some months, I saw the system had been improved. Eventually, the maker had a very clear and perfect explanation of the system. At that time I made up my mind to try the system.

Therefore, I went to meet the writer at his university. I was impressed by his commitment to education, and by his willingness to reply to questions about his method.

The writer also accepted my opinion, in fact he consulted with his colleagues. Many new ideas produced from these conversations have been realized. As a result, professors at some universities have known it. It has been praised for its results. Learners who want to talk in a foreign language are making good advances. There are so many reasons that the system is becoming very popular, and I will introduce some of these.

Nobody can master any language without making mistakes. Even as infants master their own mother tongue. Everybody recognizes that this is the common part of their experiences. But instructors sometimes tell learners to be ashamed of making mistakes when mastering a foreign language.

However anyone who wants to master speaking in a foreign language must not learn such an attitude. The system helps to reduce the feelings of embarrassment. And actually, conversation encourages learners to make mistakes. Corrections from other learners or instructors turns mistakes into getting chances to speak. Learners also learn broken expressions. Those are preferable to silence.

Quick response makes another atmosphere in the class. Even negative learners become positive ones, and the instructor is able to be a coordinator or cooperator. In the lesson, learners are in charge and we are responsible for it. On the other hand, the coordinator encourages the learners to be playfully serious which means that they have fun with hardness.

From the start, conversation promotes this way of consideration by setting up the class with desks arranged in circles. Learners face each other in the groups in the class. The coordinator moves from group to group giving help when learners need it.

Because the instructor has become somebody whose work is to aid learners, doing questions becomes very significant. Encouraging my learners to do questions is one of the burdens I have. Months of much assignment and preparation for the university entrance examination have produced new students who are more often silent learners than active ones. It takes at least half a year to make learners understand that they have to ask questions when they do not recognize something or when they do progress immediately.

Having seen above, the conversation class makes small groups of learners. The importance is always on small groups. This is one of the best ways to encourage natural conversation. In a large class, small groups work is the way that learners have chances to converse in a class with 50 students for 90 minutes a week. The system can also work in a large class. But I found it works better within 30 students. This class size gives much more spare time for the students to do questions.

A rare feature of the system is the one page and removal style realia. There is no need for learners to sit hunched over a bound text. One single A4 sized card is all of the realia. Learners can easily sit upright, facing each other, and make eye contact. That sight is the posture for real conversation. The realia is a simple cartoon picture style that connects with written sections. Learners must look carefully at the pictures and consider intelligently to recognize the relationship between the words and the pictures. Speaking together, they negotiate their recognition of the pictures by words. Such negotiation means the basic process of any real advance in speaking skill.

Many learners enjoy using markers to color the pictures. This simple activity is fun and useful for them. Thus, the simple sentence [That is Tom's father] advances to become more complex [That is Tom's father. He has brown eyes and golden hair]

One particular instrument is the Lyric Card that instructs learners to hear and recognize a song by a popular musician. The Lyric Card tells learners how to use their own favorite tunes to advance listening, understanding and speaking with having fun and enjoying music.

I used to have one class instructing learners how to use the piece to proceed through the Lyric Card. We listen together without the Lyric sheet and then listen again. Then, we listen when they read an information gap exercise. This is nothing more than a copy of the Lyrics with some key words left out. Then we listen and try filling in the missing words.

At last, we listen to the music again and learners can sing along. And, we have time trying to be

sure that we recognize the contents of the Lyrics. By the time we finish with the Lyric Card, learners have practiced the skill of language.

The system includes many pocket size cards for encouraging selfstudy and learners can carry them anytime and anywhere. These small cards are convenient for beginning simple dialogue with other learners or monologue when in traffics. These are so many cards to give for hours of enjoyable selfstudy.

Emphasizing the significance of outside study, I always tell the learners that their class time with the instructor indicates less than the time they are awake during one day. It is important to see that the small inclass time is clearly not efficient. Those who really want to be fluent in a foreign language can understand that much more time is necessary.

One fun method to increase learning time is to watch bilingual programmes. I tell all my learners how to develop excellent skills and encourage them to buy at least one favourite bilingual programme. The method is simple and learners at first watch the programme three times in its translated version. The goal is understanding the conversations in the programme completely, gradually memorizing parts. They then watch the programme three times in the native language version.

The conclusion can be so astonishing that learners are immediately able to get at least some ideas of the conversations. Several times watching makes learners recognize the conversations step by step.

In summary, learning with a bilingual programme is a simple, sufficient, low cost, effective, and enjoyable way to study.

At the first class, learners introduce themselves by reading the explanations and cards written in their mother tongue. The cards help learners to recognize the words both inside and outside of the class. The cards thoroughly explain how to use the pocket size bills.

The best feature of the system is the bilingual programme model. Learners in my class watch the programme on the first day. Once learners understand the backbone of the system and understand the step by step way of using the system, the class should proceed commanding the language they study. With the system, the language of the learners never becomes a barrier for learners and it supports autonomous learning.

The maker of the system was not a native speaker and did not learn formally at university. He said that he really taught himself foreign language, with the same techniques of the system. Moreover, he lectures the system at college. His target is clear, and he gets all the learners speaking all of the time.

When I introduce the system, I tell learners about his background, which demonstrates the proper attitude of learning foreign languages.

Bibliography

1. John E. Warriner. ENGLISH GRAMMER AND COMPOSITION. HarcourtBraceJovanovich 1986
2. LongmanHouse, BurntMill, Harlow. LONGMAN DICTIONARY OF CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH SECOND EDITION. LongmanGroup U.K. Limited 1987