

Considering The Possibilities of Teaching Social Studies in English Immersion Education

—Exploring Teaching Skills by Utilizing Audio-visual Aids and Vocabulary Lists—

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I Reasons for the Theme

Social Studies (Civics) will be taught in English for Japanese students at an English immersion school. It is expected that there will be many difficulties for both students and teachers. Especially, if the subjects of Social Studies such as Modern Society, Ethics and Politics and Economics will be taught in English, students are required to understand many difficult words and technical terms in English, in which they wouldn't learn in English class. Therefore, teachers should be concerned how to maintain the same academic abilities as if students were studying in Japanese. I compiled this paper entitled "Considering the possibility of teaching Social Studies in English Immersion Education –Exploring Teaching Skills by Utilizing Audio-Visual Aids and Vocabulary Lists—" and reported on ideal teaching methods for Social Studies in English while maintaining the same academic abilities as if teaching in Japanese.

II Content of the Report

1 Studying and Practicing Teaching Methods Used in Social Studies (Civics) in English Immersion Education

(1) Goals of Social Studies and the Definition of Academic Abilities

The Course of Study for Social Studies (Civics) sets its goal as follows; consider and understand modern society independently to recognize how to live and behave in a society and to foster quality as a member of a democratic and peaceful state. On the other hand, Professor Kataue of the University of Hiroshima and Mr. Yamada, a student of the Graduate School of Education, insisted that there were three academic abilities of Social Studies. The first ability is comparative presentation skills. The second ability is social cognitive ability to analyze social issues from various points of view. The last ability is the social ability to judge and mediate conflict of opinions, unlike the idea of dichotomy, and have a sense of good and evil. It could be said that the ideas of both Professor Kataue and Mr. Yamada, are simple but well-directed, although there are many different ideas and definitions for academic ability.

(2) Meaning of Teaching Social Studies in English Immersion Education

By considering the relevance of Social Studies and English immersion education, I anticipate that students will be able to learn Social Studies in English by:

- ① Having the ability to grasp the features and the trends of modern society such as internationalization.
- ② Having the ability to explore methods of solving various kinds of problems in modern society independently and judge them fairly to find out how to live and behave in the society that we belong to.
- ③ Learning foreign languages like English as a practical communication skill to understand other opinions and explain their own opinions to find the way to mutually solve various kinds of problems.
- ④ Having the ability to be interested in not only events and issues in Japan but also world-wide events and issues in the world such as environmental disruptions, cultural conflicts, and racial or ethnic problems.
- ⑤ Being able to understand different cultures and coexist with people who have different cultures.

(3) Outline and Purposes of Demonstration Classes

As a part of the one year training course at the Okinawa Prefectural Comprehensive Education Center, I had the opportunity to have a demonstration class for first grade students of the international English course at Kyuyo high school on the 29th of January to be able to study effective teaching methods of Social Studies in English. I taught Modern Society (50 mins) and the purposes of the class were:

- ① To practice how to teach Social Studies in English effectively and examine the validity of those teaching methods.
- ② Examine how students could understand the content of the class and the English that teachers used in the class.

(4) The Unit That Was Taught in the Class

I taught the unit "Age of Internationalization" (P54-55) in the class. At the beginning of the class, I asked

students to discuss satirical cartoons about Prophet Muhammad that were in a Danish newspaper. Then, I asked students to recognize what kind of problems would happen according to internationalization and discuss how to solve these kinds of problems. The reasons this unit was used in the demonstration class were:

- ① This topic is desirable to teach Social Studies in English because students are concerned with the importance of cultural understandings and how to live together with different cultures.
 - ② It is thought that students would feel familiar with the topic so that they could discuss it easily
 - ③ Students were asked to consider and judge the topic from various points of view and discuss it in English. So, students and teachers can experience English immersion education vicariously.
- (5) Ideas in Teaching English
- ① Points That Teachers Should Consider When They Teach Social Studies in English

Teachers should keep in mind that students have to get accustomed to more difficult English words or technical terms because they don't learn these words in regular English classes when they study Social Studies in English. Therefore, teachers should consider using easier English words and terms so that students can learn easily.

② Using Audio-Visual Aids

It would be difficult for students to learn and comprehend by only listening to the teacher's explanation in English. So, it is preferable for teachers to confirm the meanings of English words and technical terms regularly in each section of the class. Therefore, using audio-visual aids such as DVDs, videos, photos and PowerPoint presentations were useful teaching aids for students who have limited English proficiency. I asked students to study and discuss a rather difficult theme, that is, conceptual conflicts between religious values in Islam and western democratic values such as freedom of expression in the demonstration class at Kyuyo high school. So, it was indispensable to utilize audio-visual aids to help students study and comprehend Social Studies in English in the class. For instance, I confirmed the goal of the class and explained difficult English words and technical terms by using PowerPoint (see Fig.1 and 2) . I also showed news relating to the class on DVD so that I could stir up interests so they could understand more easily.

③ Figure Out the Way to Use English in Class

Teachers should consider how to explain and express themselves in English.

I summarized some points below:

- a. Teachers should explain key words clearly and repeatedly by using easier words or ways of expression.
- b. Have students understand technical terms in English completely.
- c. Consider the way to ask questions to students properly (i.e., using "Closed Questions" and "Open Questions" on a case-by-case basis).

④ Translation of the Textbook in English

The key points of the English translation of a textbook:

- a. Use easy words and expressions as much as possible.
- b. Use the official English translation for technical terms.
- c. Add supportive explanations if there are difficult English words or technical terms for students without deviating from the meaning found in original Japanese textbooks.

For instance, it is preferable to use "at first" instead of using "initially". I also add explanatory phrases like this; "...he spent his whole life as an apostle (a religious person, or rasul) and engaged himself in mission work." I think we should use supporting explanations as long as they don't deviate from the original meanings.

⑤ Worksheet and Other Materials

As for the worksheet that I used in the class, I kept in mind to check whether students understood the content

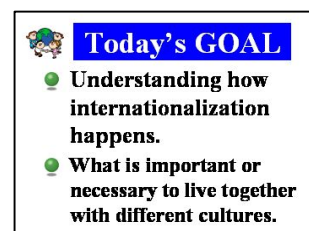


Fig. 1 Example to use PowerPoint (1)



Fig. 2 Example to use PowerPoint (2)



Photo. 1 Using Audio-Visual Aids in the demonstration class

of the class rather than checking English proficiency. I asked the students to do a matching activity for the technical terms or check whether they could understand the content of the textbook that was translated in English.

(Examples)

Exercise 3: Read the sentence below and place an 「○」 if it's correct. If it's incorrect, place a 「×」 in each blank.

- ① It is not important to make an effort to understand different cultures. (×)
 ② Progress of globalization recently creates serious friction or conflict with traditional cultures because of the destroying of cultural diversity. (○)

In addition, I prepared a “Vocabulary Lists” that listed the words alphabetically that were used in the textbook, and handed it out before the class. Then, I asked the students to utilize the Vocabulary Lists during the class as necessary.

III Verification of Teaching Methods

1 Way of Verification during the Social Studies Demonstration Class

I conducted two anonymous surveys before and after the class to check to see if my teaching methods worked effectively to maintain academic abilities.

2 Considering the Results of the Questionnaires

(1) Outline of the questionnaires

I conducted two anonymous surveys before the demonstration class. I listed the words and technical terms that I used in the English translation of the Japanese textbook and ask students to check whether they knew them or not in order to figure out student's English vocabulary (I received 34 surveys). Next, I conducted another survey after the class about how students felt about learning Social Studies in English (I received 35 surveys).

(2) Results of the English Vocabulary Survey

Before class, I gave the students a survey sheet that listed 133 words, which were used in the English translation textbook, and asked the students to check off which words they knew the meaning to. The survey excluded articles such as “a, an, the” and numbers. 34 students completed the survey. The student who knew the most words answered that they knew 79 words (59.4%) out of 133 words. The student who knew next highest amount of words answered that they knew 61 words (45.9%). The student average was 23.4% and the student who knew the least amount words answered that they knew 12 words (9%) out of 133 words. On the other hand, as for technical terms, only 5.9% students knew “cultural relativism,” 2.9% knew “ethnocentrism,” and no one answered that they knew the word “multiculturalism.” Judging from the results, words in the translated textbook seemed to be difficult for the students.

(3) The Result of the Demonstration Class Survey

80% of the students answered they could understand the class well or could fairly understand. More than 90% of the students answered that they thought the class progressed smoothly and could understand what the teacher said. 97.1% of the students considered the “Vocabulary Lists” to be helpful and useful. All of students answered that audio-visual aids like PowerPoint were helpful in the class. However, about 41.1% of the students answered that the English in the translated textbook was very or relatively difficult. On the other hand, 97% of the students agreed that they expected that their English proficiency would improve if they learned Social Studies in English. But, nearly 30% of the students answered that they disagreed (20.6 %) or strongly disagreed (8.8 %) that they could maintain the same academic abilities as if they were learning in Japanese, although more than 70% of students agreed or somewhat agreed that it was possible to maintain it (see Fig. 3).

(4) Analysis of the Results of the Survey

The results of the survey are summarized below:

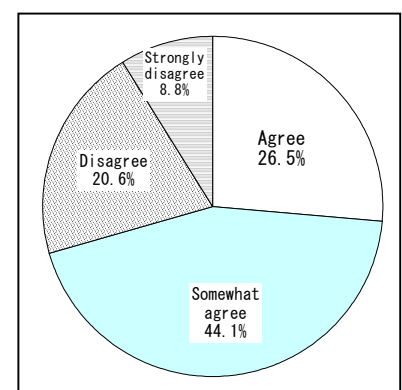


Fig.3 Results of the survey (1)
 Statement: I can maintain the same academic standard as if I were learning in Japanese.

- ① Explanations using easier words and simple expressions by the teacher was helpful for the students to understand the content of the class.
- ② The use of PowerPoint and Vocabulary Lists were effective in improving student's understanding of the class content.
- ③ Words, technical terms and sentences in the English translation textbook were difficult for the students.
- ④ Many students deemed learning Social Studies in English a reasonable way to improve their English proficiency. However, at the same time, not a few students doubted it was difficult to maintain the same academic abilities just like learning in Japanese.

To clarify the reason why students thought it was not easy to maintain the same academic abilities, I compared two types of students; ones that thought it was possible to acquire the same academic abilities and the others that said it wasn't possible to acquire the same academic abilities as long as they were learning in English. As a result, there were not any obvious differences in being able to understand the teacher's explanations and the content of the text. However, the students who less evaluate learning Social Studies in English answered that they felt that the English textbook was rather difficult to understand than the students who thought positively about learning Social Studies in English. Therefore, whether students were positive or not about learning Social Studies in English supposedly depends upon if they could understand the English translation textbook or not.

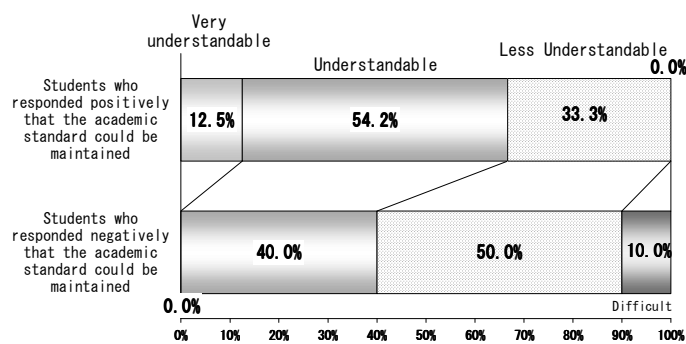


Fig.4 Results of the survey (2)

Statement: I could understand English translated textbook.

Chart.1 Results of the survey (3)

Case of students who responded positively				
Statements	Very understandable	Understandable	(Person) 24 students	
			Less understandable	Difficult
I could understand what the teacher explained in English	12	10	2	0
I could understand the content of the class	4	16	3	1
I could understand English translated textbook	3	13	8	0

Case of students who responded negatively				
Statements	Very understandable	Understandable	(Person) 10 students	
			Less understandable	Difficult
I could understand what the teacher explained in English	2	7	0	1
I could understand the content of the class	2	6	1	1
I could understand English translated textbook	0	4	5	1

IV Summary and Conclusion

1 Summary

Students are required to have a higher English proficiency in studying Social Studies in English because they have to understand more difficult words and technical terms in English that they would not normally learn in English class. In the survey, students answered they could understand the demonstration class in English more than I expected. However, I did not confirm if they really understood through the use of an objective examination such as a test. So, it should be considered that the results or comments of the students in the survey were basically subjective data. In addition, judging from the survey, it became obvious that if teachers contrive to use English, that is, to use easier words and expressions, on the worksheets or when they speak, it would be possible to help the students understand the class in English to some extent. Especially, using audio-visual aids in the class to have students understand the content or support their English abilities are effective. However, students could answer only simple questions asked by the teacher but only a few students who had a higher English proficiency could comment or discuss in English in the class. In addition, although the content was not difficult compared to other units, it was still difficult for students to understand the content of the translation textbook because of the use of the difficult English words and technical terms. Therefore, to achieve the academic abilities in Social Studies that I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, it is required of both teachers and students to acquire a high level of English proficiency. Teachers should contrive good ways and means to teach their subject in English, too. Whether its possible to teach Social Studies in English while maintaining student's academic abilities or not depends upon how developed the teacher's and student's English proficiency is. Many people expect synergetic effects, that is, to acquire good academic abilities and improve English proficiency through English immersion education. So, I think there are still many issues that should be resolved to teach Social Studies in English.

2 The issues that should be solved

In conclusion, the issues that should be solved when teaching Social Studies in English are:

- How to develop teaching methods and materials to support students who have less English proficiency.
- Consider organizing teaching support systems for students by collaborating with others such as English teachers.
- Study on the proper English translation of technical terms and easier English sentences used in translated textbooks.

<Reference>

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