

<Foreign Language>

Developing Teaching Methods to Increase Students' Expression Skills

— Through Communicative Writing Activities —

Keywords : Foreign Language / Junior High School / Expression Skills / Communicative Writing

Chinen Junior High School Sonoko Arakaki

I Theme of This Research

According to the Course of Study for teaching English in junior high school, the objectives are: 'to develop a basic and practical ability to communicate in a foreign language with skills of listening, speaking, etc.; to understand the language and culture more deeply through learning the foreign language, thus highly motivated to communicate in it.'

In a survey of the students to evaluate their attitude towards learning English, 80% of the them answered that they were interested in communicating in English. On the other hand, 33% of them were poor at speaking, and 40% of them were poor at writing English. The reasons for the students' responses, especially on poor writing ability, were that they didn't know how to spell words or construct sentences. From this aspect, their lack of a basic knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure caused their negative attitude in expressing ideas in English.

Besides the goals of the Course of Study to increase the students skills in listening and speaking English, we also need to focus on teaching writing technics to improve their basic knowledge. It might be possible to develop the students attitude toward communication in English by relating writing and speaking English in communication activities. By using communicative writing in teaching methods to build up the students' communication skills helps the students to gain a basic knowledge of English through writing exercises.

< Hypothesis of This Research >

By using writing to develop the students' knowledge of English, their expression skills will grow through communicative writing activities.

II Contents of This Study

1 About Self Expression Skills

The definition of self expression skills by communicating in English is that the students can speak and write their opinions or thoughts by understanding the situation and condition.

The key point of communicative activities for improving the students' self expression skills is that the activities should be interesting, specific, not controlled, and related to the students' own lives.

2 About Communicative Writing

By applying writing activities within the oral practices, reflecting back on the students tasks, and correcting mistakes in spelling and grammatical errors, it is possible to improve the students basic knowledge of English.

In order to improve the students' self expression skills, I think it is effective to have communicative writing activities in English classes, moreover, the students' attitude toward communication will also improve.

In demonstration classes, the students are given tasks to write sentences introducing their schools by making homepages. For future tasks, the students will work on making real homepages in English.

3 Assessment of Teaching

For more communicative class activities, it is very important to evaluate the characteristics of the activities and teaching technics. To assess the activities for improving the students' self expression skills, *the Communication Diagram* is useful. You can see the characteristics of the

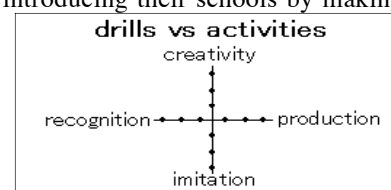


Figure 1 Communication Diagram
(Kageura 2006)

activities at once and see if an activity is more communicative or it's a drill.

III Teaching Plan

- 1 Unit Writing Plus1 School Homepages
- 2 Material The students write sentences introducing their school by creating a homepage.
- 3 Aim The students can write sentences introducing their school using the information they collect.
- 4 Lesson Procedure of Material

	Aims	Contents	View Points				Grading Data
			I	E	C	K	
1	*To have interest in homepages and participate in the lesson	*Listen to JTE and ALT's introduction of their schools	○				*worksheet *memos
4	*Finish creating homepage and give an oral presentation *understand other students' performance	*Finish creating homepage *Introduce their homepage to teachers *listen to other students' performance		○			*observing *presentation *self evaluation *reflection

I: interests in communication E: expression skills C: comprehension skills K: knowledge about English

5 Verification of the Hypothesis

(1) Consideration of the Changes in Students' Knowledge and Expression Skills

Comparing the changes in the students' attitude to express themselves through writing sentences, 55% of the students showed an improvement in writing (Figure 2). Some tried to answer using only one word though they didn't answer the same question on the first test. Through the tasks, they learned more vocabulary and sentences and become eager to express themselves. By noticing their mistakes, they could write more accurate sentences.

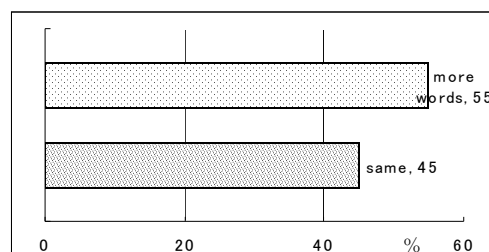


Figure 2 Attitude toward Self Expression

However, 31% students still couldn't write even a single word. This shows that we have to think about support for these students.

(2) Consideration of the Students' Attitudes towards Communication

It is remarkable that 38% students answered they want to improve their writing skills (Figure 3).

In addition to that, many students said that in the future they want to try more communicative writing activities like introducing their town, making a tour map of Okinawa, and writing English newspapers. Through the activity in the class, they felt filled and achieved, and became more confident in communicating in English. The activity could motivate the students in communication.

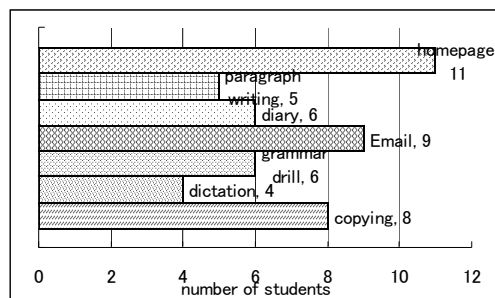


Figure 3 Activities Students Want to Work On

On the other hand, 46% students felt that their writing skills were not good enough. They noticed their lack of skill through the writing activity, and they think they need more drills for increasing their basic knowledge of English.

IV Conclusion and Future Tasks

The students improved their attitude in communicating through the communicative writing activity. They also raised their interests in self expression skills. On the other hand, for the students who couldn't answer and did poor on the test, further support is needed for them to increase their basic knowledge and in turn improve their communication skills.

To boost students' self expressions, I believe it is effective to have in writing activities with oral activities. Almost all of the students want to communicate in English. Besides using oral activities I want to utilize writing drills to expand the students' knowledge of English and useful teaching methods like communicative writing.