

Textbook-Based Real Exchange of Ideas in English

--Beyond Mechanical Comprehension Check-ups--

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1. Definition of the term

What is the meaningful 'use' of English?

more than mere mechanical repetition and drills

'use' is not mere exercise.

'use' has a non-linguistic purpose, i.e. function

'use' is creative, not pre-fabricated.

'use' is bilateral, that is, takes place between two or more participants.

What has hindered the meaning use of English in S.H.S English classes?

word-to-word translation into Japanese

Why is word-to-word translation not effective?

→Because there is no real purpose for reading the text.

→How can we create a real purpose for reading the text?

→Create a task which involves students reading for a purpose,
with a focus, through giving a task.

2. Which phases most need innovation?

Table-1: Traditional lesson procedures for senior high school and necessary points of innovation

min-utes	phases	How much desirable?	How much implemented (author's estimate)
1	1. greeting & calling the roll	5	5
3	2. small talk	5	2
5	3. review of the previous lesson	5	2
7	4. introduction of new materials	5	3
10	5. comprehension of new materials	5	1
10	6. focus on language rules	1	1
	6. controlled practices	3	3

10	7. exchange of students' own ideas & opinions on the content, 7. freer applications of language rules	5	1
3	8. consolidation & reflection	2	1
1	9. closing greeting	5	5

3. Solutions:

3.1 : Make teacher-talk more comprehensible for students: MERRIER checklist

Mime Model	Teachers explain with mimic gesture & action. Teachers demonstrate how to do an activity, by acting out the roles.	"telescope."—mimic holding a telescope and looking through it.
Example	Provide easy-to-understand examples to help comprehension.	" <u>furniture</u> —desks, chairs, tables, beds, lamps" . " <u>surname</u> —my <u>surname</u> is Miura. Your <u>surname</u> is Kimura. Her <u>surname</u> is Inoue.
Redundancy	Paraphrase a difficult word and phrases in several different ways.	(eg.) They've got <u>divorced</u> —They've separated, said goodbye to each other, not wife and husband any more. (eg.) Don't <u>yell</u> —don't shout, don't cry in a loud voice.
Repetition	Repeat important words and phrases several times.	You have a homework. Write an English self-introduction in more than 60 words. Understand? Write about yourself in English. Write in more than 60 words.
Interaction	Exchange plenty of questions and answers with students.	I bought a wallet—wallet—do you know a wallet?—This is my wallet—Show me your wallet.—Yes, it' s a wallet, beautiful, thank you.—So, I bought a wallet and---
Expansion	Help refine student's crude answers into a	T : What is your hobby? S : Anime. T : ' Animation. ' Okay. Do you like watching animation? Or do you like making animation?

	well-formed one through scaffolding.	S : Making animation. T : That' s great! So, your hobby is ---? S : My hobby is making animation. T : Wonderful!
Reward	Give positive feedback to student's trials.	Good! / Good job! / Excellent! / Wonderful! / Well done! / Almost! / You' re close! / Thanks for your idea! / Good try! / Interesting! / Good answer.

Sakai et al. (2003) *Eigoga Tsukaeru Nihonjinno Ikusei-MERRIER Approach no susume*. Sanseido.
pp.3-17 (partly modified by the present author)

3. 2: Innovate phase-5 (text-comprehension activities)

—use format conversion instead of Japanese translation or mechanical comprehension check-up.
(negotiation of meaning)

3.2.1 Types of format conversion

(No.1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9 are from Jiang & Grabe)

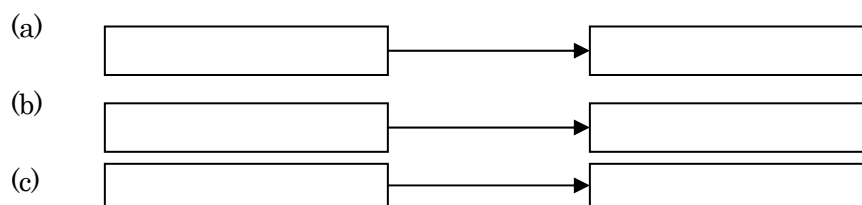
1. definitions

is a that

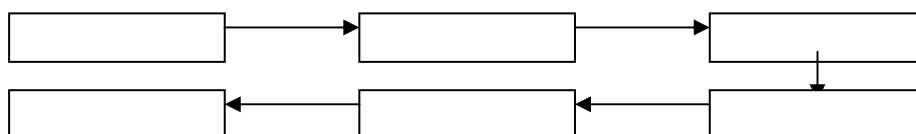
2. comparison-contrast table

	1	2
comparison	<input type="text"/>	
contrast	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

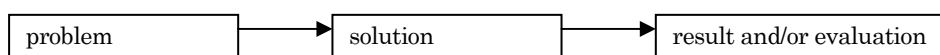
3. cause-effect



4. process and sequence



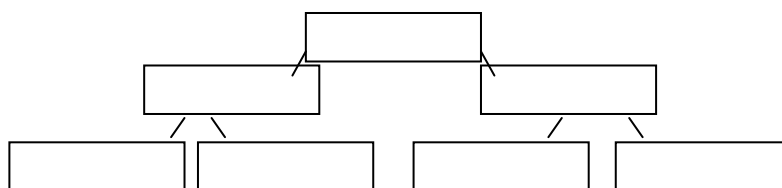
5. problem-solution



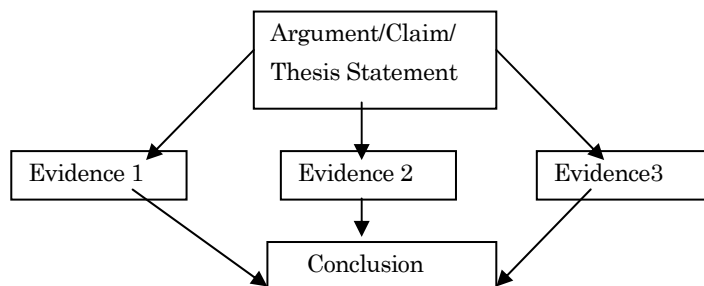
6. description and classification

	item 1	item 2	item 3
feature 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

feature 2			
feature 3			



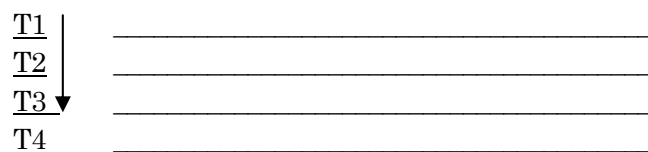
7. argument



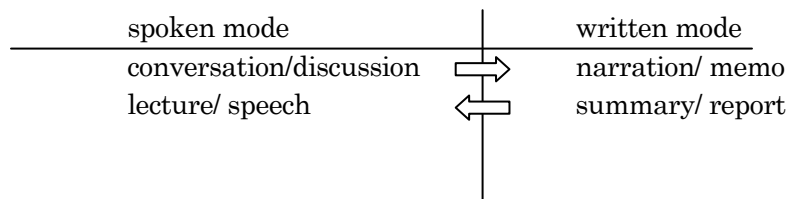
8. for-against

	For	Against
Position 1		
Position 2		

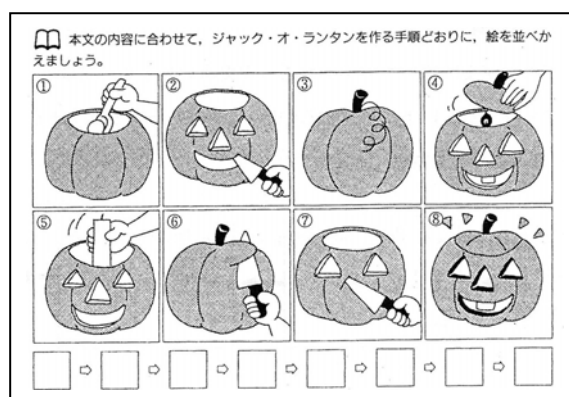
9. timeline



10. mode conversion



11. picture ordering/ reconstruction



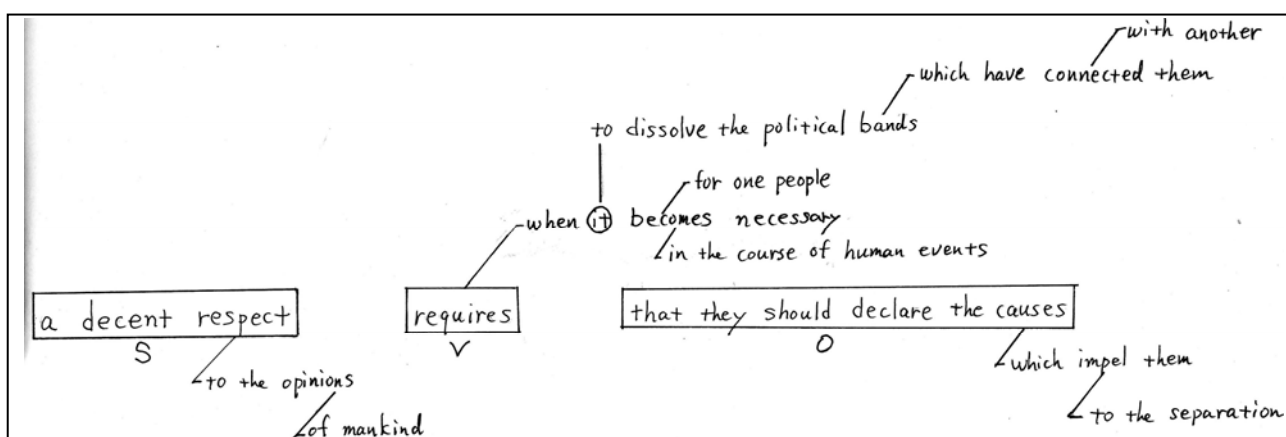
12. summarizing the text

3.3 Structural decoding—only when requested.

3.3.1 sentence skeleton mapping

When (in the Course of human events)
it becomes necessary for one people
to dissolve the political bands (which have connected them with another)
and to assume (among the powers of the earth,) the separate and equal station
(to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them),/
a decent respect (to the opinions of mankind) requires
that they should declare the causes (which impel them to the separation).
(Declaration of Independence, the United States of America)

3.3.2 focused structural decoding, upon students' request



3.4 Change phase 7 with tasks: 'reading for a purpose'

The second and a very fundamental innovation, is to add activities or tasks that allow students to exchange their own questions, opinions and ideas in English on the content of the text that they have learned. It is possible to spare enough time for this activity by saving time of text comprehension as proposed in Solution-2. I believe this to be the most important area of reform for Japan's English education. The current state only demands students to 'digest' the text content, but never demands them to 'criticize or question' it. This I am afraid severely deteriorates Japanese people's capabilities of discussing in English in international situations. Japan needs more intelligent English education to foster people who can form and express their own opinions and question others' opinions.

3.4.1 easy-to-handle reading tasks

(Miura 2008)

1. Which sentence do you like best in this story? Why do you like it?

2. Do you agree or disagree to what the author says? → text → answers

3. Which side do you support?

→

text 1
text 2

→answers

4. What would you do if you were in the the hero/heroine's position? →multiple choice answers

5. Would you recommend your friends to read this story?

→Yes, strongly./ Yes./ Not really./ Never.

6. Pick up one of the main characters of this story and write a greeting card to him/her.

7. What is your solution to this problem? →

data 1
data 2
data 3

→answers

8. How would you want this story to finish? Write your ideas.

3.4.2 Sample Task-reading Activity

Read the record of the debate below and do the following two tasks.

Task 1

- (1) Which statements by the two teams do you strongly agree with? Mark those parts in green marker.
- (2) Which statements by the two teams do you strongly disagree with or want to question? Mark those parts in red marker.
- (3) In pairs, compare your answer with your partner's

Task 2

Form a group of 4 students. Suppose your group is acting as judge for this debate. Evaluate which side has argued better (reasonably and persuasively), and explain why. Be objective. Discuss until you reach an agreeable group decision.

Proposition: Japan should make English its secondary official language.

(The Saitama Inaho Cup Inter-High School English Debate Tournament, partly modified by the present author)

Affirmative Constructive Speech

We, the affirmative team, strongly believe that Japan should make English its secondary official language. Let me present our plan first.

Plan

1. Public documents and services by the national and local governments shall be provided both in Japanese and in English
 2. Documents and signs at schools shall be provided both in Japanese and in English
 3. English will become a compulsory subject in all elementary schools
- Adoption of our plan will generate the following two merits.

Merit 1 We will protect the basic human rights of foreign residents in Japan.

a) Analysis

Foreign residents in Japan now cannot get necessary information to live in Japan, because documents and signs are all written in Japanese, which is a very complicated language for foreigners with three writing systems, especially Kanji are quite hard to learn.

b) Impact

It is very hard for foreign residents to live in Japan, which violates their basic human rights to maintain minimum standards of living.

c) Link

We will provide them necessary information in English, so they can have a better life and their rights will be protected.

Merit 2 Students can have better communication skills in English.

a) Analysis

English education in Japan has not been so successful. This is because it's too late to start learning English in junior high schools. It is scientifically proven that by the time students reach junior high school they are too old to properly hear English, but young children can hear English better. So it is obviously best to teach children English when they are young.

b) Impact

English is the common language in the world. If students cannot learn to communicate in English, Japan will be left behind in the global community.

c) Link

They will start learning English in elementary schools and will be exposed to English more by the documents and signs at school provided in English, which will motivate them to study English harder, and in the end, they can have better communication skills in English.

Therefore we believe that Japan should make English its secondary official language.

Negative Constructive Speech

We, the negative team, don't believe that Japan should make English its secondary official language, because adoption of their plan will generate the following two serious demerits.

Demerit 1 It will cost the government too much money.

a) Analysis

The current system works fine. Japan has the second largest economy in the world, and it has become this without English being a secondary official language. Due to the recent economic recession, the government has built up a large deficit and it simply cannot afford to spend more money on needless things such as making English an official language.

b) Link

The affirmative side wishes all public documents to be provided in both English and Japanese. This seems like a remarkable waste of money. Secondly and more importantly they want to provide all services in both English and Japanese. This would prove impossible. They have to educate all government employees and public servants to speak English. Of course, getting all of them to become fluent in English needs a large amount of money. Lastly, they want to make English a compulsory subject at all elementary schools and this will cost the government even more money in teachers' wages and teacher training.

c) Impact

The impact of the affirmative plan will be to worsen the Japanese economy. It will waste

a vast amount of money in translation and teaching and provide no real benefit.

Demerit 2 Japanese culture and language will be lost.

a) Analysis

Japan has a rich cultural heritage and a distinct language, unique in the way that it has 3 writing systems.

b) Link

If children are taught English from elementary school, they may find English easier to master than Japanese because of the complexity of the Japanese language. English is the world's most popular language and in time Japan will lose its mother tongue. Culture is closely linked to language, so at the same time Japanese culture will be lost.

c) Impact

Japanese language, its culture and Japan itself will be lost. It will be the 51st states of America.

Therefore we of the Saitama ALT Negative team never believe that Japan should make English its secondary official language, even though English is our own native language. Thank you.

Works Cited

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