

[論 文]

Designing English Textbooks that Motivate Students

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Abstract

I was given an opportunity to speak in front of fifty-five junior and high school English teachers in Oita Prefecture, of which forty-seven were high school teachers. The title of my speech was “Designing English Textbooks that Motivate Students.”

My intention was to introduce some of the teaching materials I have recently been working with my colleagues with a hope that the books would be of some help to those who are concerned with teaching practical use of English. This article is largely based on the lecture.

Greeting

When I was asked by Mr. Sonoda of the Oita Prefectural Board of Education to give a lecture in front of many junior and high school English teachers, I was hesitant to accept the offer. Because some of the teachers, I know, have a very good command of English and have some knacks of teaching English and they may get bored listening to my lecture. On second thought, however, I should challenge to put myself forward and introduce what I have been doing lately with the hope that what I say may be of some help to you.

At the moment, we have no full-time, native speakers of English at our college, so I have very little chance to speak in English at school. Taking advantage of the situation, I am going to give this lecture in English. Please be patient with my less-than-perfect English. I would like you to keep company with me for a while.

1 About My School

First, let me explain where I am working. My school is now called 大分県立芸術文化短期大学. Historically, it was called 大分県立芸術短期大学, but about ten years ago two departments, kokusaibunka and communication, were added to the art and music departments. (The communication department is now called jyoho communication department.) Before it was nicknamed Geitan, which I like. But when the two departments were added, one of my acquaintances with a bit harsh tongue said, “I heard the new nickname of your school is Geibuntan. It sounds like *Amfontan* or *Mankintan*. Geitan is better.” Geibuntan is sometimes used in newspapers, but Geitan is still widely used. I prefer the latter.

About My Class

Our students are supposed to take one foreign languages from among English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Chinese. It is mandatory for students to take two units in a foreign language for their graduation. Generally, more students are likely to jump on the bandwagon and take English. The majority of my students are art and music majors. More than half of them are admitted on the recommendation system, so called 推薦入試. As a result, they are not so well-motivated to study English. Frankly speaking, more than eighty percent of them don't like English.

In my first class of a new term, I make it a rule to ask them to see if they like English. But they almost always say, "I don't like English". They admit, however, that English is important in the present world. They know that English is essential in such fields as aviation, music, sports, information technology and publishing.

Some of the art and music majors, though, have a good command of English, and they seem to be able to keep up with some of the better English majors.

Having these students in my class, I must always ponder how to put myself into their position and arouse their interest in English and hopefully raise their English ability. When they enjoy my class, I am happy, too.

2 Other Colleges

As you know, the number of students is diminishing year after year because of the low birth rate, and in the very near future, every student can enter a certain college unless he or she has a special preference. In other words, the number of students will match the capacity of colleges. This is a grave situation for the people concerned with management. Some colleges may have difficulty in making both ends meet. For these reasons, some schools are employing various means of recruiting students.

Giving many kinds of 推薦入試, recommendation exams, is one such measure. There are many reports saying, that mainly owing to the easier exams, the level of students has been dropping and that they need to be reeducated after they enter college.

The other day, 九州地区大学一般教育研究協議会, was held at Oita University. More than fifty-two colleges and universities in Kyushu participated in the conference. This conference consisted of five areas : 人文・社会・自然・外国語・導入部会 : the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, foreign languages, and introductory studies, respectively. In each area, ideas were exchanged centering around problems freshmen have. In the foreign language section too, language teachers reported on how to deal with poorly motivated students.

The economics department at Oita University has recently been recruiting students through the recommendation exam system, too. It was reported that for this reason, the level of the students has dropped. One fact that struck me was that one student who was accepted by the school only scored 6 points on the English exam given by the school in spite of the fact that he scored 173 points on the center exam. The two teachers from the economics department, pointing out these problems, suggested some ways of building up student English ability.

Back to the Geitan Situation

Back to the Geitan students, I have a lot of students with different backgrounds, different English ability and different tastes. For this reason, I've been trying to conduct my classes so that the majority of the students will be satisfied. Once in a while, I try to crack jokes in class. For example, when the word *papaya* appears in the passage in a textbook, I say to my students, "Papaya is a fruit a man comes to hate when he becomes a father. Do you know why? It's because パパ、いや." When I tell jokes of this sort, I look around to see how effective and appealing they are, but most of the time, there are just giggles in some corners of the classroom, not loud laughter or a thunderous applause. My joke is sometimes called オヤジギャグ. I feel a generation gap.

At the end of a term, I used to ask my students how they felt about my class. Some students said, "Mr. Someya, even if your jokes result in failure, please continue making them. I admire your effort." Some others said, "Sometimes, I thought your jokes were good. I felt like laughing, but I held back because no one was laughing." It is said that there are seven people behind one voice. So, even if these students are not the majority, I optimistically interpret their voices and take a positive attitude toward joking. When students laugh, I know they are actively taking part in class. I have been trying to make jokes in class, but it is not easy. I hope you can give me some suggestions on how to tell good jokes.

Once in a while, some students forget to bring their textbooks to school. When I use an LL room for an English class, I say to my students, "When you forget to bring your textbook, you have to sing a karaoke song." Some students actually try to sing. You know, LL rooms are perfect for singing songs because a good microphone and individual cassette players are furnished. One time, though, a male music major forgot to bring his tape. He was a big guy who played rugby in his high school days. He was a good singer, too. I said to him, "Well, Kitano-kun, you forgot to bring your tape with you. Can you sing a song for us?" Then, he said, "Sure, Sensei, I will sing, but could you dance to my song behind me?" I don't know how to dance, but upon his request, I adlibbed a dance that would fit into his beautiful song. But frankly speaking, I was in a cold sweat.

I always welcome student questions, but they hesitate to ask me questions in class. They are generally not used to ask questions in class. So, I have a question box in front of my office. I got some questions at first, but I rarely get any these days. I used to bring the questions if they are relevant to the entire class and explained them in class. I wish students had more questions. Raising questions is a sure way for a student to show his or her active participation in class.

Well, let me get down to business.

Today, I would like to introduce some of the teaching materials that seem to be fit our students' needs. Although the materials are designed for college students who are not English majors, I hope that some of the remarks I am going to make serve as a reference for your students.

3 Education in Japan and Education in America

It is widely known that written entrance exams in Japan are extremely difficult compared with those in some Western countries. It is often said that in Japan entrance exams, which are mostly written exams,

are very difficult, but once students get accepted, they don't study or they don't have to study very hard to graduate. Their graduation is, so to speak, guaranteed or automatic and it is sometimes compared to a "conveyor-belt process." This is generally true.

In American colleges, the reverse is true. That is, in America it is not so difficult to enter a college except a well-known, distinguished college. However, students are compelled to study hard after they are accepted. It's not uncommon for students to flunk out owing to truancy or lack of effort. In America, for those who want to study at college, the door is fully open regardless of sex, age or ethnic background. In this respect, the United States is free, fair and equal to everybody. And yet, unless students study hard and reach a certain standard, they cannot be graduated with ease.

The difference in the school system between the two countries is quite obvious. The Japanese government wants foreign students to come and study in Japan, but very few come to study here. But in America, a large number of foreign students come annually. Once I heard from one of my acquaintances working for the University of California that he had been racking his brains in trying to refuse foreign students. According to him, too many foreign students apply his school every year and he is in charge of regulating the number of students. In response to applicants, he has to write many letters of apology and it costs a great deal of money to do so. I thought, "What a luxurious worry!"

American schools generally try to maintain their academic level by being strict to students who do not study hard. For this reason, foreign students who really wish to study go to America.

English Education in Japan and Japanese Education in America

It is often pointed out that the English ability of a sizable number of Japanese students is worse at the time of graduation than at the time of entrance. However, this phenomenon is highly unlikely in America. In America as time goes by, student ability goes up: This ability is directly proportional to the number of years they study.

I have been to some English speaking countries on business. Whenever I have a chance, I make it a rule to observe a class in which Japanese is taught. This is because I feel that observing how Japanese is taught will give me clues as to how English should be taught in Japan.

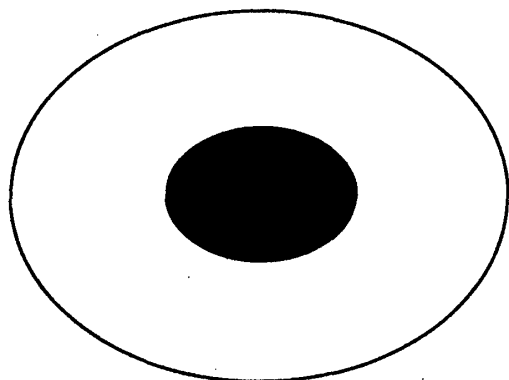
We often see foreigners living in Japan speaking Japanese fluently on TV. Some of them speak Japanese just like native speakers: They have mastered Japanese customs and manners and can argue with Japanese guests on many issues. How did they study Japanese? I am always curious to know this.

How Japanese is taught in New Zealand

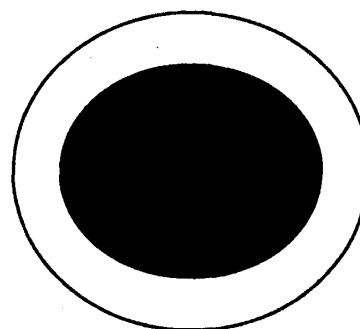
Some years ago, I had a chance to visit New Zealand for a week or so. I went to a public high school in Christchurch on South Island. At this high school, a half a year of Japanese is mandatory, and the class I observed was an elective class for the students who had already taken the half-year Japanese course. I was astounded at the students being able to carry on conversations in natural Japanese. In this class, the students were freely changing partners to practice dialogues. During this time, the teacher was moving about getting questions from students. Whenever there was an important question, the teacher would interrupt the practice session, answer the question and give further explanations in English. Other than that, the entire class was conducted in Japanese.

I found that the teaching material the students were using was a Japanese eight-frame cartoon. Come to think of it, cartoons are wonderful language material. Expressions dealt with in cartoons are colloquial and simple enough. They are to the point and easy to memorize.

Traditionally, in English classes in Japan, a lot of time has been spent on grammar and explaining things in Japanese. In Japan, before teaching practical use of language, we try to teach reasons, or theories. I'm afraid this is why students come to dislike English.



A English Education in Japan



B Japanese Education Abroad

Let me show you English education in Japan and language education in English speaking countries in terms of diagrams. Please look at Diagram A. The outer ellipse shows the amount of information about English students get at junior or high schools. The solid ellipse in the center shows the amount of English knowledge that is of practical use, 運用能力. This means students cannot use English freely even if they know a lot about it. The white area indicates knowledge that cannot be used automatically: it is just resting. It may be compared to money saved in a strong box.

A tremendous amount of time is spent on teaching English. In spite of the fact that students learn a lot of vocabulary and grammar, which the average American student may not be familiar with, they cannot express themselves on the spur of the moment.

Let's look at Diagram B. Diagram B shows language education in America or New Zealand. As I pointed out earlier, American students in general have good, practical use of Japanese if they have studied Japanese, say for three years. Compared with Diagram A, the outer ellipse of Diagram B may be much smaller, but the inner solid ellipse, that is the amount of knowledge they can instantly use, is much larger than that of their Japanese counterparts.

We Japanese are often astounded by Americans on TV who can speak Japanese eloquently just like native speakers of Japanese. Once in a while you can even see Americans who have mastered Japanese dialects. Among them is Daniel Carl. He can use Yamagata-ben with ease. I am astonished by his command of Japanese. He often cracks jokes in perfect Japanese.

Well, let's have another look at both Diagram A and Diagram B. What has been advocated in Japan recently is how to enlarge the inner ellipse of Diagram A so that it will come close to the outer ellipse like Diagram B. As long as we keep cramming students for entrance exams, we will keep producing lots of students who dislike English. Students will come to hate English unless they can use it.

The best solution to the problem of students getting disgusted with English is not to give too much information. Giving students excess information will tire them out before they can digest it. They shouldn't be given more than they can chew. Rather, on the part of teachers, energy spent on giving peripheral knowledge, that is the gap between the two ellipses, should be directed toward enhancing practical skills in their students.

As you know, in American colleges, speech classes are mandatory. In order for students to graduate, they are obliged to take a public speaking class. Speech has been considered indispensable in English speaking countries. In Shakespeare's plays the hero eloquently talks in a climax, whereas in Noh plays in Japan dancing prevails in a climax.

It is known that famous American presidents were great orators. Even at the present time, both the Republican and Democratic candidates for the presidency are giving speeches on why they should be elected. Their ability to speak and debate issues effectively has a great influence on voting. On the other hand, in Japan, historically speaking there have been very few eloquent Prime Ministers. In fact, a few decades ago a certain prime minister was known to often say "Uoo, Ahh" at important meetings. The maxim "Silence is golden" has been applicable even to our prime ministers.

Issues over taciturnity and eloquence are not of present concern. I am not going to discuss these issues any further. I shouldn't digress from the subject at hand. Let me go back to the focal point. That is, how can we bridge the gap between the two ellipses in Diagram A?

4 Textbooks to Motivate Students and to Enhance Practical Use

As to writing English textbooks that match student interests and enhance student motivation, let me touch on some of the points you may have to bear in mind. Basically, they should include the following:

1 Books should match the interest of the majority of students

Ideally, it is the best to write a book that suits every student in your class. But it is next to impossible to do so. When you have a group of students, there will always be pros and cons to whatever material you prepare. As the proverb goes, "There is no accounting for tastes." , what you can do is focus on an area in which the majority of students have interest.

2 Each unit should be closely unified

In some language schools or in colleges where English is focused on, the class may meet more than once. However, in many classes at college in Japan, the class meets only once a week. And the class usually lasts for ninety minutes. My school is not an exception to this rule. In situations like this, student memory is likely to slip away. For this reason, each unit, including the relevant exercises, should be closely unified and completed within one class period.

3 Contents should not be difficult

When teaching English to those who are not English majors or to students who are not good at English, the teaching material should not be too difficult to understand. Rather, the material should be easy to

understand and be helpful to everybody in one way or another, including top-notch students. The book should serve as a reference.

Recent scientific studies show that when you tackle things, which are too laborious, your brain cells become inactive. In any case, teaching materials that are beyond the scope of the average student should be avoided. If they are constantly used in class, they will give rise to students' coming to dislike English.

4 Each unit should be full of variety

A ninety-minute class is a long one. When dealing with students who do not like English very much, what should be born in mind is that monotonous activities should be avoided. Some students may be interested in conversational activities, and others may be interested in reading or composition exercises. Ninety minutes should be allotted into various activities so as to appeal to all the students one way or another. I am talking big now, but I am afraid my ninety-minute speech today will bore you to sleep.

5 A short test at the end of class

As the proverb goes, "Strike while the iron is hot", when the things taught in class still remains fresh in the memory of the students, it is best to give a short review test, or a quiz at the end of a class. As time lapses away, memory becomes dim. The test can be short: It can be less than ten-minutes. Ideally, the average score should be between 60 and 70 percent.

5 Some Books Designed for Non-English Majors

1 *First Step to the TOEIC Test Listening*

Let me first explain the book called *First Step to the TOEIC Test Listening*. As you know, TOEIC stands for the Test of English for International Communication and this test was made by the company called Educational Testing Service in America. It is designed to measure English proficiency for non-native English speakers. The test does not require any specific vocabulary but general words used in our daily lives. The test score shows to what extent examinees can communicate in English with other people in the world.

The test consists of two main areas: listening and reading. The maximum possible score is 990 points. As for listening, the tape (or CD) is recorded at normal speed and is heard only once during the test. It takes about 45 minutes to complete the entire section. The listening part is divided into four sections:

Part 1	Photographs	20 items (4 -choices)
Part 2	Question and Response	30 items (3 -choices)
Part 3	Short Conversations	30 items (4 -choices)
Part 4	Short Talks	20 items (4 -choices)

The reading section consists of 100 questions and takes 75 minutes. It is further divided into three sections:

Part 5	Incomplete Sentences	40 items (4 -choices)
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Part 6	Error Recognition	20 items (4 -choices)
Part 7	Reading Comprehension	40 items (4 -choices)

There are a growing number of people who take TOEIC in Japan now. Some companies have already decided promotion in reference to TOEIC results. If, for example, you can score 730, you can be promoted to 係長, and if you can get more than 780, you can be 部長.

At the college level, some schools allow students who attain a certain score to be exempted from taking classes like English 1. It seems that more and more people are encouraged to take TOEIC. 文科省, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, also encourages students to challenge the test.

Well, so much for the genuine or authentic TOEIC, let me explain an easy version of the TOEIC that a colleague and I have designed. Please look at the sample copy you have at hand. When I mentioned that I am going to give a lecture on “Designing English Textbooks that Motivate Students” to Seibido, one of the leading publishers of college English textbooks, they were kind enough to send me sample copies to assist me in giving today’s talk. It’s a little something for you. Please take it home.

Well, please look at part 1, the picture listening exercise. On the actual test, you have twenty pictures, but in this book, you have just one picture because it is a simplified version so that it can be done within ten minutes at the end of a class. On the actual TOEIC, the directions to this exercise is longer, but in *the First Step*, the directions are shortened, too. It goes like, “Look at the picture. You will hear four short statements about it. Choose the best statement.”

Well, shall we listen to the entire test first? And let me come back to the book again and describe it further.

(1) Pronunciation

As you can see, in Part 1, which is a picture listening exercise, we took up a phonological point with the hope that that will make it easier for students to understand listening. Let’s have a closer look at the very first page, Page 1. On the tape, students hear the sentence “The man in the center has caught the largest fish.” We focused on the word *caught* because this word is often confused with *coat* and *court*. This is an extra piece of information for students to tackle Part 1 exercise: This is a sort of warm-up information. I explain the difference between [ɔ:] and [ou] and [ɔ:r]. And on top of this, I explain the post-vocalic r, which is not pronounced in British English.

As for a phonological hint, please look at Page 3, Part 1. Here, the distinction between [a] and [ə] is explained. Since there is no [ə], a neutral vowel, or a schwa or an obscure vowel in Japanese, students have a hard time in catching this vowel. The vowel [ə] often appears in conversations. Or other vowels like [i], [æ] and [u] are reduced to [ə] when they are not accented in normal speech. Let me take up an example:

Tom and Carol

[ænd]



[ənd]



[ən]



[n]

I explain this kind of sound change to help students understand spoken English.

In Part 1 in Unit 3, I explain the voiceless interdental fricative [θ], which appears in the listening in Part 1. This is another consonant which troubles Japanese learners of English.

Likewise, in every unit, one point in regard to English pronunciation is explained under 発音のポイント.

(2) Notes

Here and there, you will see side notes, which are not given on the actual TOEIC test. Unless students know these words very well, they will not be able to understand the listening material so well. The words shown on the side of a page will help students understand the material. It is advisable to practice reading these words prior to the test.

Also given especially for the First Step to the TOEIC Test Listening is a hint for Part 4. In general, students are not familiar with listening to long passages, so the hint is given to assist them in comprehending the material.

(3) Student Opinion of *the First Step*.

I am using this text in three of my basic English classes called English 1. In the first half of the year, the average scores were 59, 65, 69, respectively. For our students, the degree of difficulty of the book seems to be appropriate. At the end of the term, questionnaires were administered to all the students who used this book, *First Step to the TOEIC Test Listening*. The results were rather satisfactory.

(4) Two types of CDs

One of the characteristics of this book is that there are two CDs attached to the book: one recorded at normal speed and the other at a slower speed. You can choose the CD which matches the level of your students.

2 *Communicative English through Humor*

Let me now talk about another textbook called *Communicative English through Humor*. This book consists of humorous anecdotes gathered from my students. I wanted to write a book in which my students would take part in one way or another. I imagined doing this would have the students develop a

sense of closeness to the textbook and enjoy studying.

I asked my students to give me firsthand, humorous information in Japanese. I got a sizeable number of stories and chose twenty so that each story would make one chapter and that the book would have a total of twenty units. Some of the students' originals were a bit short, and others lacked punch lines. When necessary, my colleague and I modified these stories so that they would fit on a page.

Let me show you an interesting example. The original Japanese anecdote goes as follows:

(Unit 4)

彼の住んでいる小さな部屋は風呂つきである。水道料を払わないので止められていた。
ある日、朝早くから彼の友人が遊びに来ていた。2人でテレビを見ながら過ごしていたが、
気が付くと外はいつの間にか大雨になっていた。彼は急に立ち上がり、
「洗濯をしなきゃ。」といきなり叫んだ。
友人が、
「水が出ないのにどうするんだよ。」と言うと
彼は
「だから今がチャンスなんだ。」
と言って、ベランダに出た。突然来ている服に粉末剤をつけ、シャンプーを頭につけ、洗い始
めた。するとすぐに雨がやみ、彼はからだじゅう泡だらけになったままだった。

These Japanese sentences were translated as in the story on Page 19. Please open *Communicative English through Humor* on page 19. The original did not have a title, so we entitled it "A Mixed Blessing from Heaven":

Unit 4 A Mixed Blessing from Heaven

One of my friends was living in a one-room apartment. One Sunday, I went over to his place to spend time with him. Even though his room was very small, he had his own bathroom. The only problem was that he couldn't use it since the water company had shut off his water—a result of many unpaid water bills.

While we were chatting and watching TV, it began to pour. My friend suddenly jumped up and yelled, "I've got to do the laundry right now."

I asked him, "How can you? You don't have any running water."

He ran out onto the balcony, poured detergent all over his clothes, and began to scrub vigorously. Then he even put shampoo on his hair and attempted to wash it.

I watched him in stunned surprise, but the rain soon stopped. My friend had no time to rinse himself off and stood on the balcony with bubbles all over his head.

After a moment of silence, he came in and we both burst out laughing.

Please look at the following page. As you can see, there are five multiple-choice questions on the story.

Since my intention of making this text was with my students, I asked some of my art-major students to draw eight-frame cartoons as you can see on page 22 and page 23.

At the bottom of the pages is the conversation which was devised based on the story on page 19. The English dialog on page 21 is the translation of the Japanese dialog. The last page of this unit is a short dialog for students to practice. In this dialog, some useful expressions are spotlighted. They are shown in italics. Since this section is for active participation for students, a special recording is done. That is, after the entire recording, only A is recorded so that students can take the role of B. And after that, only B is recorded so that they can act out A's part.

Well, so much for the explanation, shall we listen to the tape to Unit 4.

Earlier in my talk, I mentioned how Japanese is taught in a high school in New Zealand and cartoons are used as very effective teaching materials. Since my colleague and I designed this book before my going to New Zealand, our book is 元祖漫画教材?

(1) Students' pronunciation for Production

I touched on pronunciation tips in *the First Step to the TOEIC Test Listening*, because in order for students to increase their listening power, they must be familiar with English sounds. Even if there is no written system in some languages, sounds always exist in their language. Knowing sounds is essential to the study of language. This is true in the case of English, too.

Bearing this in mind, I will point out some of the phonological concepts students need to know before they can use English effectively.

(2) Japanese Accentuation

Let me take up some English words with a Japanese intonation : オーストラリア[o:sutoraria], シアトル [siatoru], マクドナルド[makudonarudo]. If these words are pronounced in this fashion, native speakers of English will not understand.

The Japanese language has a pitch accent, whereas English has a stress accent. The former has to do with intonation and the latter with strength.

The tendency for Japanese students not to place any stress accent when speaking English becomes a great obstacle. Before this inclination becomes fossilized, students should be set in the right direction. It is often the case that students lose confidence in communicating in English when they can't make themselves understood owing to poor accentuation.

(3) Replacing Sounds

I will point out another problem Japanese students have. That is, students tend to use phonetic sounds specific to Japanese and replace English sounds by them. The result is, of course, they cannot make themselves understood.

Let me take up some of the examples:

1	ヒーター	heater	[çi:ta:]
2	ラジオ	radio	[ɾajio]
3	ロック	lock	[ɾokku]
4	フード	food	[φu:do]

Consonants like [ç], [ɾ], [φ] do not exist in the English language.

In Case 1, [ç], voiceless palatal fricative, is used instead of [h], voiceless glottal fricative. Still worse, no stress accent is placed.

In Case 2 and in Case 3, the trill consonant [ɾ] is used instead of [r] and [l], respectively. Japanese does not have neither [r] nor [l] sound.

In Case 4, the closest Japanese counterpart [φ] is uttered instead of the English [f]. The voiceless bilabial fricative [φ] is typical of the Japanese language.

(4) Vowel Insertion

Another phonological problem Japanese students have is that they are apt to insert vowels between consonants. Let's have another look at Case 3 and Case 4:

3	ロック	lock	[ɾokku]
4	フード	food	[φu:do]

In Case 3 the extra vowel [u] is inserted, and in Case 4 the vowel [o] is added.

This is due to the fact that in Japanese the basic configuration of a syllable is a combination of a single consonant and a single vowel. It can be shown as CV, where C stands for a consonant and V a vowel. On the other hand, in English there are many syllable patterns such as CCV, VCCC, CCVC, and CCVC:

Japanese

か	し	た	に	へ
ka	si	ta	ni	he
CV	CV	CV	CV	CV

English

tea	ski	screw	and	asked	kid	grease	friend	streets
[ti]	[ski]	[skru]	[nd]	[skt]	[kid]	[gris]	[frend]	[strits]
CV	CCV	CCCV	VCC	VCCC	CVC	CCVC	CCVCC	CCCVC

It is advisable to correct students when they pronounce English words inserting vowels between consonants. It is because such a pronunciation will not be understood by native speakers of English.

Since I touched on some of the sounds specific to English in *the First Step to the TOEIC Test Lis-*

tening, I will not go any further. However, when students are not familiar with the English sounds, special care should be taken so that they will not replace them by non-relevant Japanese counterparts. They tend to replace consonants such as [f], [v], [θ], [ð], [r] and [l] by [h], [b], [s], [z], [r] and [r], respectively.

(5) Use of Mother Tongue

Earlier, I pointed out that students are unlikely to place any stress when speaking English and that that will make native speakers of English wonder what they are talking about. In order for Japanese students to get the feel of authentic spoken English, it is sometimes useful to show some characteristics of colloquial English by using the sound system of the Japanese language.

“I will get off.” will be read as 「あいういるげっとおふ」 by a typical Japanese student, but it will sound much more natural for the ears of native speakers of English if it is read as 「アゲドーフ」.

Generally speaking, in English content words such as verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs are pronounced clearly whereas function words like articles, prepositions and conjunctions are uttered weakly.

Another characteristic of English sound system is that when a word ends with a consonant and the following word begins with a vowel, liaison takes place between the consonant and the vowel. For these reasons, it is natural to say 「アゲドーフ」 rather than to say 「あいういるげっとおふ」.

Trying to associate words of the target language with your own language is a useful way of studying the language. Let's take another example. According to an NHK program, “Can I help you?” sounds like 「家内、屁プー」, meaning my wife breaks wind. This Japanese way of saying will result in a better pronunciation than reading the words *can, I, help, you* separately like the Japanese way of reading.

Let's think about the reverse situation, in which native speakers of English learn Japanese. Tadahiro Ushigome, a well-known translator for the Yokohama Bay Stars, takes care of newly-arrived American baseball players who know very little Japanese. His lesson begins with simple expressions such as *ohayo, sayonara*, and *arigato*. Mr. Ushigome finds that one of the most difficult Japanese expressions for the Americans is ドウイタシマシテ. Therefore, what Mr. Ushigome does is make them say the English sentence “Don't touch my moustache.” quickly. The result is a good, understandable Japanese sentence ドウイタシマシテ.

What I am trying to say here is that when teaching a beginner, it is sometimes possible to practice expressions with the sounds students are familiar with in their mother tongue.

(6) Function Words and Content Words

When you teach practical use of English, it is of prime importance to let students know the concept of function words and content words because this notion prevails on every level of spoken English.

Let me keep adding some function words to the original proverb “Rolling stones gather no moss.” The original consists of only function words:

- 1 Rolling stones gather no moss. (Original)

Function words can be added as follows:

- 2 The rolling stones gather no moss.
- 3 The rolling stones will gather no moss.
- 4 The rolling stones will be gathering no moss.

5 The rolling stones will have been gathering no moss.

When Japanese students read the above sentences, their reading time is directly proportional to the length of the sentence. That is, as the sentence becomes longer and longer, their reading time gets longer and longer. On the other hand, when native speakers of English read these sentences, the reading time is almost the same, regardless of the length of the sentence. When they read, they hardly pronounce the function words as if they were skipping the words. This sort of reading will give rise to rhythm to English. This is why Japanese students have a hard time in catching function words when they are asked to write them down in listening comprehension tests.

Since *Communicative English through Humor* has basically designed as a conversation text with which practical use of English is desired, the phonological points mentioned so far are not to be denied.

3 *American Homestay Do's and Don'ts*

It is said that more than 10 percent of all Japanese travel abroad these days. It is not uncommon to see or to hear our neighbors go abroad on vacation. Students, too, including high school students, go abroad on their school excursions.

To be better speakers of English, some students of our school are going to Carlton University in Ottawa, Canada and Bath University in England during the summer vacation. They can get two units of college credit through this program. Those students who go to Canada all homestay with different families. Most of these students have never been abroad and have never been exposed to English-speaking countries.

For these reasons, my colleagues, Paul and Fred, and I have thought it would be nice if we could make a self-made video connected with a homestay with a focus on cultural differences, that would be both interesting and useful to students. Knowing the culture when learning a language is essential. Language reflects culture and culture reflects language. They are two sides of a coin, so to speak.

One advantage of making video on our own is that we can do anything we want on the video without worrying about copyrights. Some years ago, my friend and I wrote a manuscript about movies but it was impossible to clear various copyrights such as the original, script, shooting, lighting, music, designing and so on. The list is endless. The purpose of writing a textbook on movies was to entertain, encourage and motivate students' interest. I gave up clearing the copyrights and went to a TV company to get some suitable TV programs for class use at a reasonable price. But to my surprise, some TV clips are sold at outrageous prices. Using a one-second clip of a certain program, for example, would cost me a 50 thousand yen! It was way beyond my budget!

These are the reasons why we decided to make our own video materials. I got off the subject a little. Let me go back to the topic I was referring to. That is, the merits of making self-video materials.

Another good point of making your own material is that you can bring up 裏話, "inside stories", any time to catch students attention.

Paul, one of my former colleagues, has a relative living in the outskirts of Cincinnati in the state of Ohio in America. In order to make a homestay video, the three of us, Paul, Fred and I, and my son vis-

ited Cincinnati. The reason we brought my son was for practical and economic reasons. He was just an ordinary high school student with very little spoken English. We didn't have to give him any extra money. If we had hired a part-time student, we would have paid him a certain amount of money.

We had my son play the role of a Japanese student who would stay with an American family and experience various cultural differences.

Before we left Japan, we meticulously planned twelve units to make a book for a half-a year course. We brought two Sony DCR-VX 1000 digital video cameras with us.

Please take a look at your handout. I took up only Unit 8 here just to show you how the book looks like. Each unit consists of three trouble spots, do's and don'ts, students are likely to encounter. *Do's* mean what students should do and *don'ts* mean what students shouldn't do when homestayng.

Let's have a close look at Unit 8 . There are three points to cover in Unit 8 . They are

- 1 . Getting Ready,
- 2 . Trying New Things
- 3 . How to Say No.

To find out what each point refers to, let's watch the video.

We are not professional filmmakers, and the people in the video are not professional actors, either. In order to complete a unit, we had to spend so much time and energy. Video taking is no easy task in foreign countries. Because it is not easy to redo a video when you makes mistakes. In case you plan to make your own video materials, let me point out as a reference some of the difficulties we faced:

① Arranging Locations

Kris is the daughter of the family my son homestayng at. She is independent of her parents and lives in Texas now. She came home all the way from Texas just to help us videotape. We were quite lucky to have such a cooperative person like her. In some units of the project, we needed to shoot in places like a restaurant and a shop. We were total strangers in Cincinnati, but Kris helped us find good locations for our shooting by telephoning and negotiating with the owners. She explained to them the purpose of our filming, and found places necessary for the project. However, it was not always possible to gather the people we needed for the shooting.

② Lighting

Although we brought lights for the video cameras, they were not always bright enough. Since the family my son homestayng at were working till rather late at night, much of the filming took place at night. In this unit, for example, since the scene was to be at a party, we had to do the shooting after dark. In this particular family, Bert, the husband, was interested in Sunday carpentry. He had a lot of tools in his garage. Luckily, he had good, strong lights and set them for our shooting. For night shooting, lights were absolutely necessary in order to get clear, vivid pictures.

③ **Some Japanese names are hard to pronounce**

My son's name is Takashi. Both Bert and Diane, his host parents, had never studied Japanese, so it was difficult for them to pronounce names like Takashi. After much practice, they were able to say *Takashi*, placing the primary accent on the second syllable. However, they forgot to pronounce *Takashi* correctly when the shooting was in full swing, and uttered like *Takeshi*, *Takisha*, and so on. Since mispronunciation of the hero's name in the homestay video would be a disaster, we were compelled to shoot the same scenes over and over.

④ **Random Noise**

Diane liked collecting various clocks. Large clocks were put on the hall, in the kitchen, dining room, living room, upstairs, and so on. When filming was taking place, they often went "ding dong." The sound itself was a bother, but moreover, the ding-dong deprived us from concentration. Owing to the sound, the characters in the shooting often stammered in delivering their lines.

⑤ **It's hard to memorize long lines.**

Since none of the people involved in this project were professionally trained, it was not easy for them to memorize long dialogs. Especially, after a lot of shooting, their tiredness accumulated and their concentration would not last long. Sometimes our shooting went on till one o'clock in the morning! It was hard for the family to keep their energy level up till late at night or till early morning. We felt sorry for them, but since our stay was limited, we had to depend on their generosity and endurance.

⑥ **Unexpected mistakes on the part of the character**

My son Takashi was not very good at speaking English. His high school was a *shingakko*, a college preparatory high school, so he didn't have much chance to practice conversation at school. He knew expressions like "The same to you." But the funny thing is that when the shooting was progressing satisfactorily, he goofed and said "The same to me." Mistakes of this kind often happened especially when every other thing was going beautifully.

⑦ **Not enough space in shooting**

We would have had no trouble if all the shooting took place in an open area. But making a home-stay video often forced us to film inside the house. There were many obstacles inside the house such as pillars, couches, cabinets, tables, and so forth. Setting the tripod holding the camera needed a fair amount of space on the floor, too. Things like these were hard to anticipate at the time of preparation.

⑧ **Cameramen in the way**

What we faced in the actual shooting inside the house was that since we used two cameras, the other cameraman was often in the way. Parts of his body or camera often came into the viewfinder and that was quite an annoyance. Even if we managed to get rid of the problem, shiny walls or mirrors on the wall kept interrupting our shooting.

⑨ Avoiding backlight

Good shooting was difficult inside the house during the day because of the sunlight that came into the house. Because of the arrangement of the furniture, we were unable to avoid backlit shots. Even though we had plenty of good portable lights with us, they were not as powerful as the natural sunlight.

⑩ Shooting prohibited in certain areas

In America it is getting more and more difficult to film people in certain places. We were not allowed to take close-up pictures of any person unless we had special permission from that person. We were not allowed to shoot places like museums, concerts, department stores, bus terminals, either unless we were permitted to do so. These restrictions limited our freedom in making self-made video.

Well, I talked about some of the difficulties in making self-made video materials in situations like an American home. We did shooting like this in the hope that such a project would help students understand some of the cultural difference between Japan and English-speaking countries.

4 *American Homestay Do's and Don'ts Workbook*

I have shown Unit 9 of the book called *American Homestay Do's and Don'ts* and there is a workbook, parallel to the main book. This is a tear-off type of test and is given after the unit of the main text is over. This is fairly easy if students watch the video carefully and understand the content. To confirm students understanding, this sort of short test works well.

As for grading the papers, it is perhaps best for you to grade them. But when you can, ask your students to grade their own papers. I have given questionnaires to find out how students feel about doing their own grading. The results show that students actually preferred grading their own papers since they want to know what score they have gotten. I trust my students and they don't seem to cheat while doing the checking.

5 『ホームステイ英会話ナビー出発から帰国まで』

There are many ways to study living English, but homestay is one of the best ways to do so. Students can learn not only spoken English but also lots of culture by talking with their homestay family. By being exposed to totally different surroundings, they may be bewildered. They may be surprised at how fast native speakers of English talk, or they may realize how scanty their vocabulary is. They may miss their family, friends or food. But on the other hand, they may notice good points of the country they are visiting. Whatever they see and whatever they do, everything is new to them.

We wrote 『ホームステイ英会話ナビー出発から帰国まで』 with a hope that the book will help students enjoy homestay to their fullest.

The book begins with writing a letter to a homestay family, and touches on various situations in which students encounter while homestay in an English-speaking country. The book ends with writing a thank-you letter to the family students homestay at. All the dialogs dealt with in the book are based on actual situations.

Well, please look at Pages 8 and 9 of your handout. The heading on Page 8, Please let me introduce myself, is a key sentence. I ask my students to memorize at least key sentences like this. To find out whether or not they have memorized them, I often give them the Japanese sentences and ask them to say the corresponding English sentences. That is, I say, 「自己紹介します」, then my students are immediately ought to say, “Please let me introduce myself.” When I say, 「テイラー夫人はいらっしゃいますか?」, then they are obliged to say, “May I speak to Mrs. Taylor, please?” This practice seems to be working very well. When students have no trouble in converting what I say in Japanese to the English sentences, I change parts of the sentence to enhance students practical use of English expressions. For example, when I am certain that the students have no trouble in saying “Please let me introduce myself”, I may say, 「私に行かせてください」. The students are requested to say, “Please let me go”. By changing parts of the sentence, I intend to enrich their vocabulary and their working knowledge of English.

In the case of “May I speak to Mrs. Taylor, please?”, I may change the Japanese sentences so that students may have to change the aux *may* to *can*, *shall*, or *Mrs. Taylor* to *Mr. White*, *President Bush*, and so on. The repetition with slight change is one of the sure ways to enrich vocabulary and enhance practical use.

At the bottom of the page facing the English sentences are the Japanese translation and a little Culture Note.

Summary

Well, I think my time is running short now. Let me briefly recapitulate what I have talked about.

First I mentioned my school and what students I have. In addition, I touched on other colleges to let you know the present situation of Japanese colleges.

Second, I introduced some of the English textbooks my colleagues and I have written to encourage students and to give them some practical knowledge of English: The first one was a simplified version of TOEIC Test. The second one was a book entitled *Communicative English through Humor*, the ideas of which are largely based on my students. The intent was to share interest with them.

Third, for those who are interested in doing a homestay, we went to the States to make video material. I showed two other books connected with the main book.

The title of my talk today was “Designing English Textbooks that Motivate Students”. I’ll be happy if what I said will be a little help to you in the future.

Thank you for your attention.

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