How to Promote Interaction among Students and Teachers
——An Open Approach——

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In recent foreign language teaching the productive aspect of language has been emphasized. In reality, however, the Japanese secondary school students are still not encouraged to speak or write the foreign language with confidence. What has gone wrong with our language teaching and learning? The purpose of this series of papers is to investigate the causes of this situation and to suggest some theoretical and practical guidelines that may be of help in improving our effectiveness, especially from the view-point of communication.

In the previous papers beginning in 1981, it was suggested from a pedagogical stand-point that the theory and nature of open education would be beneficial in improving the traditional aspects of TEFL in Japan. It was pointed out there, comparing Australian and Japanese schools, that Japanese education might be described as having ‘knowledge-emphasized’, ‘subject-centred’, and ‘teacher-specified’ goals, whereas Australian education is more ‘activity-based’, more ‘integrated’, and ‘student-centred’.

In this paper, we would like to talk about our search for more enjoyable communication activities, some demonstration classes based on the “Open Approach” and our interaction analysis of Team Teaching classes in the years from 1988 to 1990.

1. Introduction — A Brief Sketch of Previous Papers (Fubito Osato)

“Good boys and good girls always listen.
To learn, we must listen. We must listen all the time.
Good boys and good girls never talk, but they always listen.
We should listen and listen and listen!
To you Teacher,
And your words, your words, your words!
—— the Geranium on the windowsill just died, but
Teacher you went on.” ——Albert Cullen
This is a poem which the A.C.T. Schools Authority in Canberra, Australia, ironically cites in its pamphlet Open Space Schools (1979:1). In addition, the Authority writes: “For learning to take place we should realize that there is a time to listen, a time to talk, a time to do. And for this we need SPACE.” This is an Australian way of thinking for open education. As many Australian and other Western teachers today believe, it is important for Japanese learners to form their own opinions and express them orally to others even in their native language. The teaching of English as a foreign language in Japan could also be improved by adopting this way of thinking and method of teaching. Our study of an “Open Approach” started.

Open education is now recognized as one of the major educational innovations of the last thirty years. Its definitions and conceptualizations have varied widely. Among many writers who have defined the word ‘open’ in a narrower and more practical context of a classroom environment, L.S. Stephens (1974:27) writes:

Open education is an approach to education that is open to change, to new ideas, to curriculum, to scheduling, to use of space, to honest expressions of feeling between teacher and pupil and between pupil and pupil, and open to children’s participation in significant decision-making in the classroom.

She has also described the fifteen characteristics which constitute the basic model of the open classroom. To sum them up, her open theory is characterized by a classroom environment in which there is a minimum of teaching to the class as a whole, in which provision is made for children to pursue individual interests and to be actively involved with materials, and in which they are trusted to recognize many aspects of their own learning.

*Chart A* shows the teaching principles we have selected from one viewpoint of ‘Open’ vs/and/or ‘Traditional’ education. What is your teaching method? Would you consider your approach traditional or open? Also, through this comparative study and some interviews, the author was able to know that the greatest controversial point is as follows: “The fact is that a learner who spends time in the traditional class is more advanced in reading, writing, and arithmetic than a learner who spends time in the open plan. A child in the traditional class has a more formal education. A child in the open plan class has a more advanced broad education, but doesn’t sufficiently know the details or fundamentals of the various subjects”. From now on, as much as we need to strive to find a ‘happy medium’ between ‘traditional’ and ‘open’ in general education, we language teachers need to try to find a harmonious point of contact among such components of language as ‘code’, ‘habit’ and ‘communication’, to improve the traditional aspects of TEFL in Japan. Here we would like to introduce one attempt of our open approaches.
〈CHART A〉 QUESTIONNAIRE: 'Open' vs/and/or 'Traditional' Education from a TEFL view-point

Where are you on the line? What is your teaching method?

Traditional (Closed) Approach

1. Learning Activities
2. Skill-getting, Japanese use
3. Pattern Practice
*4. Memorization, Repetition
*5. Whole Class, Big Group
*6. Knowledge
7. Teacher-centered
8. Closed Mind (Relationship)
9. Control, Limitation, Don'ts
*10. Teacher: Person who teaches

Open Approach

Language Activities
Skill-using, English use
Communication Practice
Self-expression, Decision-making
Individual (ization), Small Group
Activities, Experience
Student-centered
Open Mind (Relationship)
Freedom, Flexibility, Dos

Teacher: Person who provides Environment

Authorized Textbooks, Drill Books
Rich Learning Environment (AV-aids)
Judgement, Summative Evaluation
(by Written Test)
Basics, Fundamentals
Correctness, Accuracy

Formative, Diagnostic, Process
(not by Written Test)
Application, Development, Integration
Appropriateness, Naturalness, Fluency

Knowledge-emphasized
Subject-centered
Teacher-specified goals

Knowledge-emphasized
more activities-based
more student-centered

Student-centered
more integrated

TEFL
JTE

HAPPY MEDIUM

TESL
AET

(OSATO, 1990)
2. My Open Approach (Yoko Jinnouchi)

I have been trying to move toward “student-centered” English classes in recent years. I often use games, group skits, self-expression, mutual understanding through Q&A and other such activities. These activities open the door to active learning by stressing “interaction” among the students themselves and between the students and the teachers, and can involve all of the students in the class. I hope that activities based on an open approach will promote active learning that is in accordance with the theme of my school research on “how to develop each student’s individuality”.

In this report, I would like to talk about my search for more enjoyable communication activities, my demonstration classes based on the “Open Approach” and my analysis of Team Teaching classes in the years from 1988 to 1990.

3. Examples of Concrete Applications  
   <Classroom City / Group Skits / Student-Centered Class>

The following examples are based on the approaches found in Chart A ——
   ② communication practice ⑦ student-centered activities as a whole.

| (1) Living English in the Classroom City —— Josai Junior High School 8th grade 1988  |
| —— focus (from Chart A) ④ Decision-making ⑥ Activities / Experience —— |

(a) Introduction
Josai Junior High School (my former school) is now aiming to be a leader in English teaching methods, especially in the area of Team Teaching. In 1988 the research theme “how to develop the students’ communicative competence” was chosen by the English department.

(b) Demonstration Class
1) Date: December 16, 1988, Class2-2 Witnessed by English teachers of Junior and Senior High Schools and Universities
2) Instructors: AET: Dennis Lange  JT: Yoko Jinnouchi
3) Textbook: Lesson8 (1) Emi Goes to the Library. (New Horizon English Course2)
4) Goal: The students will be encouraged to;
   ① enjoy communication with a native speaker of English in a classroom city that is similar to their home town by using useful expressions needed for asking the way (this lesson) and shopping (the former lesson).
   ② help foreigners who are having some troubles in Japan or to be able to ask people for help in foreign countries in the future.
5) Demonstration Dialogue

Combination of two dialogues: one is for asking the way and the other is for shopping.

A: Excuse me.
B: Yes.
A: Can you tell me the way to the ------ ? I want to buy a ------ .
B: <Sure. / Certainly. / All right. / O.K.> Walk ------ block(s) along this street. You’ll find it on the <right./ left.> You can’t miss it.
A: Thank you very much.
B: You are welcome.
C: May I help you? ------ etc.

6) Classroom City

A student is given a shopping list and must ask another student the way to the store where he must then go shopping. <demonstration>
<place: Josai J.H.S./item: a teacher>
Student 2: May I help you?
AET: Yes. I’m looking for a teacher.
S2: What kind?
AET: Beautiful one.
S2: How about Jin Jin?
AET: Pretty good. How much? ------ etc.

7) Learning Process (Procedure)

eg. ①Prompt Communication Activities
eg. ②Giving Directions and Shopping Game

In the classroom city a foreigner asks a student for help.
<example>
AET: Excuse me. Student 1: OK. (laughter)
AET: Excuse me. Student 1: Yes.
AET: Can you tell me the way to the book store?
S1: OK. Walk three blocks along this street. You’ll find it on the left.
AET: OK, good. Pronunciation “the”.
S1: “The” ------ etc.

8) Evaluation and Students’ Reaction

The idea of combining two dialogues was highly regarded at the workshop held after the class. The students enjoyed these activities. One of them wrote that the demonstration class was the most enjoyable class of the year. She said “Last year I
was afraid of speaking with AETs. But now I can enjoy talking with AETs. I'm very happy.” (an average female student)

(c) The Result of Team Teaching Analysis

The analysis of Team Teaching is based on the theory of “FIAC” (Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories) which considers “language interaction among the students and the teacher”. In case of Team Teaching an “Interaction Triangle —— that is a communication activity involving students, a JT and an AET” is necessary. Most important is to develop the students’ abilities of self-expression and improve English classes by encouraging creativity.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Contents</th>
<th>Appearance Rate(%)</th>
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<td>J1</td>
<td>Lecture/Explanation</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J2</td>
<td>Questions/Directions/Evaluation</td>
<td>Including Encouragement/Criticism</td>
<td>3.8 8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J3</td>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>Model Reading/New Words etc.</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J4</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Improvisation/Self-expression/Drama</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J5</td>
<td>Silence/Confusion</td>
<td>(Positive/Passive)</td>
<td>11.3 11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>Lecture/Explanation/Questions/Directions/Evaluation</td>
<td>Including Encouragement/Criticism</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7</td>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>Model Reading/New Words etc.</td>
<td>5.9 40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Improvisation/Self-expression/Drama</td>
<td>14.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>T9</td>
<td>Mechanical Answers</td>
<td>Mechanical Drill (Practice)/Looking Up</td>
<td>8.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>S10</td>
<td>Voluntary Answers</td>
<td>Performance/Self-expression</td>
<td>18.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>S11</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Including Silent Reading/Pair Reading</td>
<td>4.9 39.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>S12</td>
<td>Group Activities</td>
<td>Pair Practice/Quiz/Writing/T or F Test</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the analysis of the Team Teaching class (Chart B), the total amount of <Performance> activities (JT-category NO 4 / AET-8 / SS-9) comes to 36.0%, so it seems that this demonstration class stresses self-expression. Although it first appears that this class was AET-centered, the JT played an important background role as a support for both the AET and the students. If I must use the word “centered”, I should
say the class was a "student-centered" class.

②Group Skits to Develop Ideas and Creativity — Fuzoku J. H. S. 8th grade 1989
— focus (from Chart A) ④ self-expression ⑥ Small Group —

(a) Introduction 〈Key Words Are Ideas and Creativity〉
I cannot forget what Professor Maruyama (music) of Saga University said after a singing contest in 1989. He said, "Ideas and creativity are necessary to enrich music." Ideas and creativity are also necessary to enrich the study of English.

(c) Demonstration Class
1) Date: November 14, 1989, Class 2-2 Demonstration Class Day at Fuzoku J.H.S.
2) Instructors: AET: Neil Imrie  JT: Yoko Jinnouchi
3) Textbook: Let's Read 3 Australia (New Horizon English Course 2)
4) Goal: The students will be encouraged to;
① enjoy communication with each other and with the instructors by using what they have learned previously and also using the important phrases of this lesson.
② enjoy group skits concerning Australia and to exchange some questions and answers about the skits.
③ gain a basic understanding of the cultural differences between Australia and Japan, especially concerning school life.

5) Learning Process (Procedure)
eg. Group Activities
The students in this class have already made their original skits when they were studying Lesson 5 (the former lesson) after learning about San Francisco. In this lesson they tried to create Let's Read 3 (5) as a group skit. (conditions: they must use the phrases; be interested in —— , —— times as —— as / the content of the group skits should be related with Australia)

〈example〉Title: A Happy Wedding (Class 2-2 group 1)
Characters: Bridegroom (A) Bride (JT) Preacher (C) Koala (D) Kangaroo (E)
C: Today is a wedding. Bride of Jin Jin, Bridegroom of Tetsuharu, please kiss.
A&B: Oh! We are ashamed.
C&D: Congratulations!
A: Thanks.
B: We are very happy now!
D: You are very happy, Tetsuharu!
E: You can eat Jin Jin's homemade food.
B: Oh! Yes, I'm very interested in cooking.
C&D: Really?

— (After presentation) —

Question (AET): Where are you now?
Answer (C): We are in Australia.
Q(S1): Are you really happy, Tetsuharu?
A(A): No, no, I'm not happy.
Q(S1): Why not?
A(A): Because I don't like her.
(JT): Oh, no. I love you very much.
(A): No, thank you. Bye bye.
(laughter)

Q(S2): Kangaroo, can you speak English?
A(E): Yes, a little. --- etc.

6) Evaluation and Students' Reaction

The students really enjoyed the demonstration class especially Q-A activities and
the presentation of the group skits. One of the students wrote that a teacher had once
said to us, "a class depends on each student, not on the teacher." The student said,"That is true. Whether there is a teacher in the class or not, the students should carry
on with the class. The demonstration class truly depended on us, the students." (an
average male student) At the workshop after the class, one of the visiting teachers
commented that "if there were no teachers in the demonstration class, the students
would still achieve the goal, because they did a very good job by themselves. A good
activity for getting the students involved in the class may be skit-making."

(3) From Receiver to Sender; Student-Centered Class in Culture Sharing — Fuzoku
J.H.S. 9th grade 1990
— focus (from Chart A) ④ Self-expression ⑤ Individual —

(a) Introduction 〈Enrichment of LEE (Let's Enjoy English) Time〉

The students and teachers both look forward to sharing “LEE Time” because it is
an exciting time. We cannot guess what will happen beforehand. In every regular 1990
English class I set aside 15 or 20 minutes for “LEE Time” which consists of 〈Show
and Tell> and <Free Questions>. In the “Show and Tell” corner, a student shows his or her treasure to class by putting previous grammar points to use. After that the other students in the class ask the student some questions about the Show and Tell presentation. In the Free Questions corner 2 students come to the front of the class and are responsible for asking their classmates and teachers questions using sentence patterns learned throughout the year. The aim of these Q-A activities is to stimulate the students’ eagerness for communication in English. However, LEE Time contains a lot of silence because the students have difficulty forming Q&A on the spot. I hope that finding out more about their friends and teachers in this manner will be a pleasurable activity which will motivate them to study English and help them to come to regard it as a useful and living language. I hope the students will be transformed from a message receiver to a message sender, at least during “LEE Time”.

(b) Demonstration Class

1) Date: November 5, 1990, Class3-3
2) Textbook: Lesson7  (2) Cultural Differences (New Horizon English Course3)
3) Instructors: AET: Julia Harper JT: Yoko Jinnouchi
4) Goal: The students will be encouraged to;
   ① enjoy and participate in “LEE Time” with a positive attitude.
   ② gain a basic understanding of the cultural differences between Canada and Japan especially gestures, body language and way of thinking.
5) Learning Process (Procedure)

eg. Culture Sharing

The students asked some questions of the AET about cultural differences relating to Japan and Canada. The subjects covered many topics including religion, food, school rules, customs, current problems and other interesting topics.

<example> Q(Student1): In Japan, people say “itadakimasu” before having dinner and “tadaima” when they come home. What do you say in Canada?
A(AET): Well, let’s see before eating meals, usually in Canada everybody comes to the table. Father, Mother, everybody sits together, we say, “Let’s begin” or something like that “Let’s start.” And when come home, we say “I’m home.”
Q(S2): Yesterday I watched TV which was about America. That TV said, “Most of Americans like Japanese food, but they don’t like seaweed very much because it smelled and tasted bad.” Have you eaten “nori” made of seaweed? —— etc.

6) Evaluation and Students’ Reaction
The students seemed to be relaxed, because the demonstration class is like an expansion of the regular classes' "LEE Time". Also they showed much interest in cultural differences between Japan and other countries. One of the students wrote that "I wonder if a difference of environment around human beings causes a different way of thinking. I would like to study more about this area to become cosmopolitan." (an average female student) The other student said that "for every Team Teaching class I prepare a few questions. The moment that Ms. Harper understands what I said in English is the happiest time for me. I want to make use of "Free Questions" and "Show and Tell" to be a good speaker of English. These communication activities are just right for English Education in the 21st Century." (an advanced female student) My students are now able to use Q-A and short English sentences with some degree of confidence. It is now my goal to encourage them to use longer sentences and to develop conversation skills beyond simple Q-A. In other words they should be able to pick up on the last sentence spoken by someone and continue a related conversation.

(c) The Result of Team Teaching Analysis

The demonstration class put stress on students' volunteering, creativity, improvisation and dramatization. It was a so-called "self-expression or student-centered" class. I would like to use the new category (Type F) which was developed by a group of Saga University students in 1989. They divided students' "Performance" into two categories — one is <Performance 1> which is based on preparation and memorization, and the other is <Performance 2> which is based on volunteering, improvisation and self-expression. They also divided <Silence> into two categories — one is <Positive Silence> and the other is <Passive Silence or Confusion>.

I want to compare this demonstration class (Class II) with another demonstration class (Class I) presented by Mr. Yamada and Mr. Imrie at the All Kyushu English Teachers Conference in Saga on October 28 in 1988.

According to the analysis of the two Team Teaching classes (Chart C), both of them stress self-expression. The <Performance 2> category amounts to 18.9% of the time in Class II as compared with 5.7% in Class I. Class II emphasizes and depends on creativity. The total amount of <Performance> activities (AET-category NO@ — 25.4%, Students-Performance 2@ — 18.9%, Performance 1@ — 10.2%, JT-@ — 5.0%) comes to 59.5%, so it seems that this demonstration class (Class II) requires impromptu reaction from all of the students in the class and flexibility and a sense of humor from the teachers. That means this class contains more enjoyable and exciting activities than the ordinary classes with traditional approaches.
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<td>Modeling/ Lecture/ Explanation</td>
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<td>6.4</td>
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<td>Modeling/ Lecture/ Explanation</td>
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<td>28.5 38.1</td>
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4. Conclusion

In “LEE Time” (Communication Activities Time) has in my opinion developed the students’ communicative competence and promoted a positive attitude toward communication in English. “LEE Time” is a flexible activity which allows the students to talk about their individual interests and to express themselves to the best of their ability. Every student can be a hero or a heroine during “LEE Time”. According to the questionnaires given to the students about “LEE Time”, over 90% of them answered that “it is useful and enjoyable.” They also enjoy Team Teaching in which “LEE Time” is used. In the “Free Questions” corner in the Team Teaching classes, the students ask
various kinds of questions to find out more about the AET, often asking the AET's opinions of current events. They seem to have some confidence in speaking and listening to English now.

The points which need improvement are: 1) how to encourage the students to put more expression into their performance, 2) how to reduce passive silence and expand voluntary conversation. What will be able to break down passive silence? If we encourage the students to open up and transform themselves from a message receiver to a message sender, in other words if we encourage them to take a leadership role in English classes, an open atmosphere will develop in the classroom. The key to putting the students' mental gears into action is the use of communication activities based on an open approach. I would like to create more enjoyable communication activities in all regular classes.

References

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