

A Pedagogical Look at Teaching English Oral Communication To Junior and Senior High School Students *When Theory Meets Practise!*

Douglas PARKIN

Overview

The purpose of this paper is to look at theories and recommended practises used to teach English oral communication to Japanese students in both junior and senior high schools. According to the Oxford Dictionary, Pedagogy is defined as “The method and practise of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept.”¹ Pedagogy as it applies to teaching English oral communication, relates to the purpose of such a practise. We as teachers of English oral communication should be bound by purpose, and in my mind that purpose is to bring English to life. Communication in any language is the final testament to how well a person has learned a language. It is the goal of every language learner to use what they have studied, to communicate thoughts and ideas to others in the most effect way possible. Learning grammar structures with all of their complexities, as well as huge lists of new words, both have their purpose but it is not for the sake of a written test. Communication is the final testing ground for learning grammar and vocabulary, and we as teachers of communication need to provide opportunities for our students to demonstrate what they have learned. It is our job to create classrooms that will break down the natural fears that Japanese students hold towards speaking English, create confidence in what they have learned so far, and provide interesting yet challenging opportunities for them to gain new skills and to grow as learners of their second language.

In an editorial article found in the Japan times on December 25th, 2014 it said:
“In its proposal submitted to the education minister on Monday, the Central Council for Education called for replacing the current unified exam ... with a new exam that will focus on testing the applicants’ ability to use their knowledge to think, make judgments, express themselves and solve problems... Universities ... will shift to selecting successful applicants by gauging their abilities in multiple dimensions through such means as interviews, essay writing and group debate, instead of relying on the scores of paper tests.
The Abe administration has placed reform of the university entrance exam as a key part of its agenda to “revive” Japan’s school education.”²

The government knows it is time to make a change in the educational system, to one that promotes students using what they have learned and applying it to practical situations. No

longer will students be bound by a system that focuses on paper testing alone, to judge what knowledge and skills they have learned. It is time for educators to provide practical arenas for our students to apply the knowledge they have acquired, and to express their thoughts and feelings on matters that mean the most to them and to their futures. Oral communication education is exactly that kind of arena, and in this paper I propose to address those theories and practises which I believe will facilitate the best possible growth for junior and senior high school learners of English.

1. Communication Psychology

Psychology is used in many professions, but we as teachers use it constantly every day to help provide our students with the best possible educations we can. Psychology is an essential tool that we teachers need, in order to understand the learning habits and needs of our students. Communication psychology as I refer to it, is the use of psychology as it applies to Japanese learners of English as a second language. Learning any second language can be a daunting task to almost anyone, but for several reasons most of which being cultural, Japanese students have developed many fears and dislikes regarding the studying of English. In November of 2013, our school was very fortunate to take part in the H.I.H. Prince Takamado Trophy All Japan Inter-Middle School English Oratorical Contest.³ During a very large dinner ceremony held at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, Princess Takamado gave a very eloquent speech. In her speech she said that when she asked students throughout Japan a simple question, 99% of their replies were “NO”. The question the princess had asked those students was “Do you like English?” Even to a princess, Japanese students will be honest about their dislike of the English language. We as communication teachers need to use psychology, to understand why our students dislike English, and move them in new directions towards developing a perceived need for the language, as well as a positive desire to learn it. The following sections are what I believe are a few methods to accomplish such a task.

1) Breaking Fear Barriers

We need to break down the fear barriers that students have regarding the studying of English. We all know that most fears are irrational in nature and first need to be understood before they can be removed. Here are just a couple methods I use in my classes to remove many of the fears students hold with regards to speaking English.

(1) Question Crazy Cards (QC Cards)

Contrary to how it may appear, Japanese students do want to speak in order to ask questions and to have their opinions heard.

Fig 1.



This may sound overly simple but it is true, we just need to provide opportunities for our students to express themselves. About 10 years ago, I started thinking about how to get students to come to me, instead of me constantly going to them to start conversations. I came up with a tool called Question Crazy Cards. As seen in **figure 1**, this little card has 35 small boxes on it, in which a small stamp or a signature can be used to fill them. The QC card system works like this:

- a) A student goes up to any teacher and says: "Excuse me, may I ask you a question please?"
- b) If the teacher says "OK" or "Sure", then the student proceeds to ask a question in English to the teacher.
- c) The teacher will answer the question and decide how many points the question deserves. 1 point is given for an easy question, 2 points for a medium level question, and 3 points are given for a high level question.

At first I used to give a prize to the person in each class with the most points, but soon learned because only one person could win a prize, that students would lose interest in the cards after their first semester of use. I have since made the cards mandatory, in that each student is required to get at least 10 points per semester, then hand them in to receive marks for their term grades. I still provide prizes for the two highest point scorers in each class, grade bonuses for those with higher than 10 points, and special prizes for record breakers. The current record for most points scored by one student in a single semester is 1200 points!

The QC card system is amazing at creating a situation which students have a reason to come to me and to any other teacher for that matter, to speak in English. The students love to come up and ask questions, as do I love them doing so. QC cards and activities like this can remove fears from students, and can change the English atmosphere in a school in many ways!

(2) Team Focused Activities

Answering a question in class in front of all of your peers, can be an almost traumatic event to many students, one of which many Japanese students would never do, especially in English communication classes. I believe that creating an atmosphere in your class centred around a universal goal, is one way to remove the fear stigmatism that many students hold towards answering questions in front of others. Students usually sit lined up in 6 rows within their class, and I use these rows as teams. On the blackboard I create a judging table which lists the number of each team from 1-6. Every time someone answers a question or does something point worthy, I put points in their team section on the table. Examples of actions given rewards include preparing the blackboard by writing the date, drawing the judging table, translating words, asking questions, and answering questions from the teacher.

By creating an all for one team atmosphere, students are much more willing to work together in their teams, put themselves out there, and to disregard fears they would normally have if

they were by themselves. The system makes them more willing to ask questions, answer questions, and to participate in any way they can to score points on the blackboard for their team. At the end of the class the team with the highest total score is given stickers to put on their name cards, which are placed on their desks during each oral communication class. Mere chalk strokes and a few stickers, go a long way in creating a unified learning atmosphere which is practically free from personal fears.

2) Creating Confidence

Creating confidence in students can be a very difficult task to say the least. By the time a junior high school student comes to us, they have already had quite some time to develop their fears about learning and to create their own insecurities about themselves. Every person has a list somewhere that they have mentally made which may go something like this: "I am not good at swimming, math, science, or colouring within lines." For new junior high school students many of their lists soon grow to include "I am not good at English, especially speaking!" We as teachers need to overcome those fears, but how? The answer is in no way simple, but one sure way is to give a child successes. We need to provide ways that they can feel like they are good at things. Oral communication can be very difficult, but students can quickly be given small successes during every class. We must get our students speaking every chance we can. The more we get them repeating what we say, the more their fears about speaking will disappear, and the more they will have confidence in their speaking abilities. "Say and Repeat" methods may seem monotonous at times, but they do have their place, as long as you use them sparingly, with passion, supported by purpose. When a student speaks along with other members in their class, they can also hear their own voice, and that is a step to building their skills and confidence. Rewards of "Good Job!", points on the board for their teams, or even by giving them an answer to their QC card questions, are also ways to building confidence in a student. "Get them Speaking" and confidence will soon follow!

3) Reinforcing Behaviors and Attitudes

As a foreigner teaching in the Japanese school system, I often find student behaviors to be different from what I was used to in Canada. I have found that the desire for conformity and not wanting to stand out, is quite universal in most classes. Coming from Canada, my teaching methods rely on freedom much more than teachers from this country. Creating an atmosphere where students are encouraged to think and create for themselves, can be very challenging. It is very challenging especially with regards to students' behaviors and attitudes. In my high school classes I allow a lot of freedom, some of which include sitting where students want to sit, choosing their own groups for tests, and selecting their own topics for presentations. This freedom is sometimes misunderstood by students, and can result in poor lazy behaviors

developing. They soon learn in my class that freedom is given, but poor performance is never rewarded. This type of western teaching is very effective in making students accountable for their successes and their failures, and is one of the best methods I know at getting students to freely express themselves.

Once a student reaches high school, their junior high school English skills become basic essential elements in my class. They are encouraged to use upper level thinking and expression, which are rewarded along with their positive attitudes and behaviors. I have had great success using these psychological methods to reinforce positive behaviors and attitudes with my students, and therefore strongly recommend them to others.

4) Enjoyment

This type of communication psychology may seem too simple to write, but I say it can never be overlooked. Students of course need a purpose to create desire when studying a subject, but enjoyment should always be there as well. Considering just how hard it is for many students to speak English, we as teachers must always have the “Fun Factor” built into our lessons. Still to this day, Oral Communication is not truly part of the “Senta” or “Central” testing system, so if you as an oral communication teacher cannot provide enjoyment as one reason to study your class, then students will see no need to try at all.⁴ Getting grade one junior high school students to enjoy oral communication classes is not too difficult, but as soon as they reach grade two and the grammar classes pick up speed, they start to learn to dislike and even hate English. That means that the “Fun Factor” in oral communication classes, becomes even more important from grade two on. We must make them laugh, think, feel, and believe that English words coming from their mouths are positive for their education and fun for them as well. We can never forget how enjoyable our classes “need” to be!

5) Class Atmosphere

Creating a positive learning atmosphere in a classroom is essential to educating our students. We must create a comfortable atmosphere during our lessons, that is absent from fear, and promotes positive growth for everyone. Two points I believe are most essential for this to happen are “Mistakes” and “Helping Each Other”.

(1) Mistakes are OK

It is imperative that our students know that mistakes are OK. Everyone who has ever learned a language has pronounced something wrong, used a wrong word, or made a grammar mistake! Who cares! Students need to see that:

① Making mistakes creates opportunities for us to learn. Each time we realize we make a mistake, it is an opportunity for us to learn what “not to do” as well as “what to do”. This is one of the essential ways people learn, and our students need to make as many mistakes as

they can. The more mistakes you make the more you learn. This is very simple and very true!
 ② “To Err is Human” is a very common expression that simply means we are human and we make mistakes. Growth can never occur without mistakes or personal loss. We need to make errors or mistakes to be human, and to grow as people.

(2) Helping Each Other - Grow Together!

I find in my classrooms that I have many levels of students. I have advanced students who have lived overseas or have gone to English cram schools for most of their life, students who are average, and students who almost hate English and are very scared of it. Considering all the levels of English students in our classes, we need to create ways so everyone can grow together. In my classes I like to create an atmosphere where no one is afraid. Many students that have lived overseas never speak, for they fear standing out because of their high level of English. I quickly try to make those students realize it is OK to speak, but they should use their skills to help others. Having a team atmosphere in class where everyone must speak, makes it so that higher level students help lower level students. It allows higher level students to maintain their levels while not having any fears to speak, but it also lets lower level students grow from the experience as well.

Students need to always help each other grow, because that is one fundamental reason we have classrooms in the first place. Oral communication classes must utilize this fundamental principal to allow everyone to find their “English Voice.”

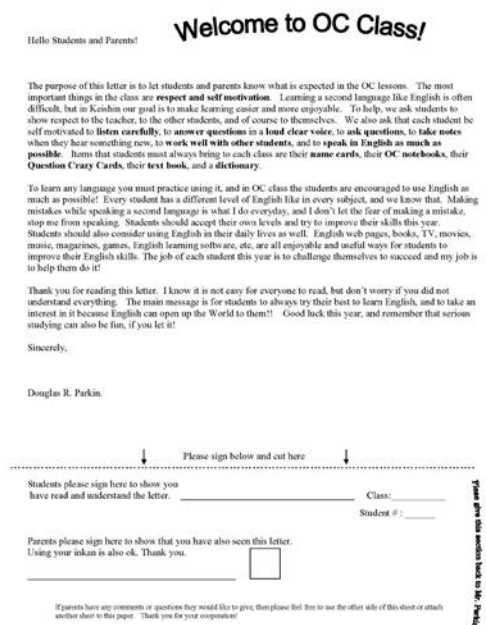
2. English School Atmosphere - Language Acceptance and Perceived Need

As mentioned earlier, the current testing situation in Japan does not require English to be spoken, so why should students in any school see a need for oral communication classes? The key to this situation is the perceived need for students to speak English by the parents, teachers, school administration, and by the students themselves.

1) Parents

As an oral communication teacher, we must educate parents and let them understand why our classes are necessary for their children. In my high school classes in grade one, I like to send a letter **figure 2**. home with each student, along with a slip that says the parents and students

Fig 2.



have read it. The letter explains all that is expected of their children in my class. This is one method I use to reach out to parents to involve them with their children's oral communication education. I encourage students to work with their parents on homework, as well as with other teachers, friends, and family members. Hopefully by involving parents with their children's English education, they will develop a deeper understanding of what and why it is needed.

2) Teachers

(1) Administration (Principal - Vice Principal - Department Heads)

A school is a very busy place and often times the administration sees only a little of what happens in each classroom. It therefore is very difficult for them to understand the need for specific items in each faculty. English has been taught using grammar and vocabulary as the key focus for a long time, while oral communication has been seen as a nice addition but never as a necessity. To create a positive atmosphere with regards to accepting English oral communication as a necessity in a school, it is very important that the administration be involved. We need to involve the administration with oral communication events, presenting of awards, and extracurricular activities. Having your students involved with English community events while having their names mentioned in local newspapers, on the radio and in TV programs, is also a great way to gain the attention of the administration at your school and the acceptance of your programs.

(2) English Teachers and Faculty Policies

The acceptance of English within a school, greatly relies upon the support it receives from the teachers of English themselves. Trying to get students to embrace the opportunities that English gives them is very difficult. It is for this reason that it is essential for all English teachers in a school to unite together with a single voice saying "English is not scary, it is fun, it has a purpose, and it will greatly improve your future!" For a very long time in Japan, English has been taught as a subject using rote memorization and arithmetic equations, void of any real application for the real world. It is for these reasons that I created an English policy recommendation document, to present to the junior and senior high school English teachers in one of my schools, titled "English First". The following paragraphs are excerpts from that document:

English First!

This simple phrase is the first policy change that I know our school desperately needs. I propose this policy should work as follows:

1. **Greetings** - English teachers should always greet and be greeted by students in English. Example: "Hello Mr. Hashimoto" - The psychology of this is simple. If a student cannot do something as simple and as easy as

greeting in English, then they will never be able to communicate period. Having one or two foreigners walking around trying to get students to greet in English is good but not fully effective. It sometimes actually creates a negative effect for some students, who become scared when they see a foreigner! This is very sad but very true! If everyone greets English teachers in English, it becomes a united message, not a “foreigner” message!

2. **Teaching** - Monkasho has said that all English classes should be taught in English. Again, are we doing this in our school? The idea of 100% English only teaching is great if students are ready, but I think most teachers would say our students are not ready. This is why I say we use the “**English 1st**” policy to begin with, so we can get our students ready for 100%. Every teacher should start their classes using basic English greetings and instructions. They should then use basic English to start to explain grammar points. Japanese should only be used when it is impossible for students to understand on their own, or if too much time is being used. This method will create an atmosphere in the class and in the school, where basic English becomes easy to all students, allowing more complex learning to occur. ALTs come to the school with native/advanced English communication levels, so why are we using them for basic English communication teaching? Japanese English teachers should cover basic English in their classes, while ALTs should be used to teach more advanced communication English skills.

3. **Questions** - When asking questions to an English teacher, students should always use the “**English 1st**” policy and start all questions using English first. If students struggle to communicate to their teachers, then their skills will surely grow. (No struggle = No growth/learning) Teachers of course should answer questions first in English then use Japanese only when necessary.

4. **Meetings** - Uniqlo is a well known company that originated in Ube. As of July 2nd 2012, it became company policy to conduct all meetings in 100% English. If Japanese business people can use English only, then a faculty of English teachers should have no problem with using the same policy. Teachers may be uncomfortable at first but after a short while it will become natural. We must ask ourselves one simple question: If our English teachers are scared to speak English, then what can we expect from our students? English teachers especially Japanese teachers, need to be the role models for our students. Lead by example is one of the best policies any business or learning institution can have.

Using the policy English 1st is a big step for many teachers and for students, so

we need to put this system into action by steps. A 100% expectation from tomorrow is foolish, so we need to see English 1st as the method to be used before using Japanese. At first the balance between using English and Japanese may be 20-30% English (1st) and 70-80% Japanese (2nd). The balance would then be shifted to 40-50% English and 50-60% Japanese. Eventually the shift would continue to where 90-100% will be in English and 10-0% will be in Japanese. 100% is the goal and without a goal we have no destination! ⁵

Policies such as the one I proposed above may seem radical to some teachers, but the government has indicated strongly the need for such policies to be in place for all teachers of English. The **English First** method is only one way to help guide Japanese teachers of English, in a direction that will support the growing need for practical English usage. It will also create a stronger acceptance of English within a school by all students.

(3) Other Teachers

Having English being embraced by teachers of other subjects is like telling you that “physics is good for you!” It may be true in some ways but once you have spent many years developing a distaste for it, you may not see a need to change your mind. Getting baseball coaches to have their players greet English teachers in English, is a similar task. It could take some time to get them to understand any need for their players to greet in English, especially when they have been trying so hard to get them to do it in Japanese. Having first, the administrators and the other English teachers understand the dire need for English to be spoken in your school, will help you in your pursuit of getting teachers of other subjects to understand its importance as well.

Having an English greeting policy in place where every student needs to greet all English teachers in English, is a great way to break through the basics of the subject, and will vastly strengthen any school’s English learning program!

3) Students

Getting every student in a school to understand the need for English and the value it has when used in its spoken form, is a large task at first! Once the English teachers, the administration, and the other faculty teachers support the need for English to be spoken in a school, students will follow. If it is policy and has been practised by seniors in school clubs, then new students to a school will see speaking English as an accepted norm. Creating change, especially one where speaking English is a common occurrence, is a difficult thing but it is very possible.

4) School English Events

Before coming to Keishin, the school’s English speech competitors were chosen by the administration. I was told which students were going to compete and I was to train them. I

found the students to be quite good, but I also believed that there were many more students that would probably want to be involved as well. I was wrong! It seemed like every time I looked for other students to compete in the speech competitions, they ran away scared. Well, after a period of time and some hard work, we became successful with some local speech competitions and even qualified for the nationals. It was at this point that I believed it was time to change our speech system. We then created an inner school speech competition for both junior and senior high school students, which we used to choose our competition speech club members from. The first year we only had about 10 students for junior high school and about 8 for high school, competing in the competition. All of the junior high school students watched the junior high school speakers in the morning, and all 500 grade one and two high school students watched the high school speakers in the afternoon. This past year we held the inner school speech competition for the fifth time, and had about 18 speakers for high school and 35 for junior high school. We have been to the nationals five times over the past 6 years and have changed the acceptance of speaking English in our school at all levels. An event such as the inner school competition we hold at our school, can change how a school views English communication. In addition to speech competitions, schools can also engage in debates, English clubs, school English plays, English concerts, English days, and several other such activities, that will develop an interest in students to study the spoken art of English communication.

3. Natural English

“Speak more naturally!” Now what exactly does this mean? In my grade one classes of junior high school, I have my students memorize the following definition: “Natural English is Intonation, Pronunciation, Rhythm, Gesture, Speed, and Volume!” When the students reach Volume, they shout it out with great pride and yes, with great volume. Each student must understand the spelling of every word and its corresponding meaning in Japanese. They will learn a Natural English chant, understand each word, use them in activities and on tests, plus they must remember them for the rest of their oral communication classes over the next five years! Natural English is the foundation of what I teach, and with it I guide my students so that they can master to the best of their abilities, the English language in its spoken form!

4. Graduated Leveling

Like any other subject, students learning English oral communication must first master one level before they proceed to the next. As I have mentioned above, Natural English is the first step or level that grade one students must take before they can advance in the curriculum. I will now show the full curriculum I use for grade one of junior high school, then I will give a brief outline of the curriculum I use for grade two and three of junior high school, and grade two and three of senior high school.

1) Junior High School Grade 1

Natural English is the key component when teaching grade 1 students, but you will also see in **Figure 3**. that several other basic items are covered as well in the curriculum.

Fig 3.

科目名	対象学年	単位	使 Text 用 教科 書
英会話	中学校 1 年	1 単位	Worksheets

◎ねらいと留意点			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In grade one, the students are introduced to many basic English concepts and activities. The first focus of the course is to help students understand how Eikaiwa classes are run, and what is expected of them. After the basic concepts are taught, the students are taken quite quickly through the skills they need for their future grades during Eikaiwa lessons. Of course reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are taught, but "team work" is also highly emphasized as a necessary skill to succeed Eikaiwa classes. 			
学期	月	単 元	学 習 の ポ イ ン ト
第 1 学 期	4 月	<u>Lessons 1-2</u> Introduction to Eikaiwa learning	In the first classes, the students meet their teachers, and are introduced to the Eikaiwa course. Basic classroom English is taught, and class participation is elicited from the start. Preparing English file folders and student name cards is done during the first few periods. Each student is to write their own names on their name cards using only Romanized characters. Proper understanding of how to address a person are taught which include Mr., Mrs., and Ms.. The concept of names is quite difficult for Japanese students to understand so special emphasis is given to this topic.
	5 月	<u>Lessons 3-6</u> Alphabet	Although many students may have been exposed to learning ABCs prior to coming to Keishin, each student is taught the basics of the alphabet with regards to how to read, write and say the characters. Phonics is the main focus of the grade one junior high school Eikaiwa classes. ABC are first sung together, then said using "Big" and "Little" to identify the characters, and then are finally written using proper printing techniques. Basic words are used to emphasize the usage of each of the characters of the alphabet. Phonics are continuously stressed when talking about the characters of the alphabet.
	6 月	<u>Lesson 7-10</u> Phonics Acting Worksheets	In June the students are given different exercises to practice their new phonics speaking and listening skills. Phonics work sheets are given to the students which they are to then work within groups to perform short acting performances. Students perform within their groups and are judged by the other groups in the class. This exercise stresses the importance of how to identify the key elements of Eikaiwa.
	7 月	<u>Lesson 11-12</u> Continue Phonics Acting Worksheets	In July the students continue to read and perform new worksheets, with emphasis on helping each other to perform at higher levels of proficiency. In addition to the worksheets, students also have their vocabulary expanded by looking at math skills in English, animals, days of the weeks, months of the years, etc. The students are continuously challenged to go to a higher level in a fun yet inspiring way.
第 2 学 期	9 月	<u>Lessons 13-15</u> Natural English	September marks the beginning of "Natural English". Natural English is Intonation Pronunciation, Rhythm, Gesture, Speed, and Volume. The students are taught all of these elements of communication, several times so that they will firmly understand the concepts. These concepts are taught so that students do not learn English as just a group of words put together substituting sounds from their own language in order to communicate to others. Natural English teaching gives students a strong understanding how to actively and intelligible communicate with others using English.

	10月	<u>Lessons 16-19</u> Natural English Acting	The students are given challenging exercises that test their listening and pronunciation abilities. They are also given Natural English Acting activities to perform in front of each other. These acting performances challenge the actors to overstress each of the elements of Natural English so that the audience can easily understand what element is being used. The activity is very challenging, very fun to watch, and very useful in developing strong English skills.
	11月	<u>Lessons 20-23</u> Natural English Acting Performance Preparations	In November the students start to prepare for their Second Semester Natural English Acting Performances. The students work very hard together to prepare for their test performances of Natural English. Of course other elements of English are covered within the month but the main focus is on preparing for their test.
	12月	<u>Lessons 24-25</u> Natural English Acting Performances and Christmas	In December the students perform their Natural English acting performance in front of their classmates. The judges include their classmates and the teachers. After the presentations are completed then Christmas classes begin. Christmas classes use music, new words, movies, and presents to illustrate the very western concepts surrounding the Christian holiday.
第3学期	1月	<u>Lessons 26-28</u> Directions and Final Test Preparation	Starting in January the students are of course still given Phonics work sheets and Natural English activities, but the focus also is on teaching directions. The students are taught place names, and how to guide other people to locations within a city. The activities are very fun and educational.
	2月	<u>Lessons 29-31</u> Final Term Test Activity	The students end the grade one Eikaiwa course with a challenging and interesting test in which they are paired with another student. The test consists of introducing their friends in a creative way, then guiding them through a mock city, with their teachers judging them. (End of course final notes: the course is designed to increase the students' self confidence in creating and using the English language for the purpose of communication. It is filled with student activities that promote self development with guidance given by the teacher. It is imperative that each lesson have elements that are interesting and enjoyable for everyone including the teacher. If everyone enjoys the classes the students will develop a desire to learn, and with English that is the most import challenge!)
	3月		
考 備	ALT to supply supplementary material.		

2) Junior High School Grade 2

In the first semester of grade two, basic phonics acting worksheets are continued with the focus still being on Natural English. In the second semester, the students are given phone conversation work sheets and activities. The idea behind using phones for a conversation, is to make students perfect their verbal skills rather than relying upon non verbal communication.

3) Junior High School Grade 3

The grade three curriculum centres around preparing students to travel overseas, especially considering most of them will go on a school trip to Australia in the third semester. I give each of the students a travel package that includes Customs and Immigration, Taking an Airplane, Commonly used Airplane words, Going to a Hotel, plus several other situations that will aid them in communicating while they travel overseas. In addition, I provide the students

with a list of commonly used travel questions and phrases they can also use on their journeys. In all three semesters the students are kept busy using the materials I have provided, while they work with their friends to create original dialogues they believe they can use. I guide the students at first, but I encourage the students to be creative and to take their own paths, while using English to express their thoughts.

4) High School Grade 1

The transition from junior high school grade three to high school grade one, is a large one with my curriculum. As I have mentioned earlier, I provide high school students with greater freedoms, greater choices, and greater responsibilities for their education. We use computers and various forms of multimedia to bring English alive for the students. In grade one they are responsible for giving one minute readings while using a microphone in front of the class, giving group presentations on school activities, doing karaoke presentations, and giving extensive research presentations with their chosen partners. The work is fun, challenging, and always very successful for the students.

5) High School Grade 2

Grade 2 of high school is the last year that I teach students at Keishin. It therefore is the last chance that I have to help students strengthen their abilities as effective communicators. I therefore take this final year to challenge them with activities, that will fully utilize every English communication skill they have developed, as well as several other skills they have developed so far in their lives. I want the students to challenge themselves and go beyond their fears and their insecurities, and to create in ways they did not know were possible. English at this level is only the language they use to communicate; the content of the assignments are the real challenges. In **figure 4**, you will find a copy of the final test I provided my grade two class this year. Don't worry this assignment is equal in difficulty to the other tests I have given in past years, and all of my classes have been more than successful!

6) High School Grade 3

About four years ago, I stopped teaching English oral communication to grade three classes. I believe this was a good decision based on the fact that my subject has yet to appear on the Senta tests. Many students in grade three choose which subjects they need to put their efforts towards, and English oral communication classes never seem to be in their priority lists. Yes as a communication teacher I can put on CDs and make activities focused towards Senta type questions, but in my mind this is a great waste of resources for the school. Until the system changes, true oral communication classes should be devoted towards students still able to benefit from them.

Fig 4.



VISIONS OF THE FUTURE! GRADE 2 FINAL TEST



It is your job to predict what you think the future will be. With your partner, you will need to look at the past and the present to predict the future **Qualitatively** and **Quantitatively**. Consider factors like race, religion, war, psychology, education, technology, biology, chemistry, space, society (social issues- love, hate, violence, crime), governments, birth, death, medicine, energy, environment, evolution, economy, ART (dancing, singing, music, paintings, fashion, sculptures, architecture, etc) - LIFE!

You must answer each of the following questions fully! Look at the % points given to each question to decide how much effort and time you need to give to each!



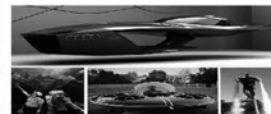
1. Predict what you think the future will be. Support what you think will happen quantitatively looking at the past and the present and use any details you think are relevant. Such details can be statistic, maps, research papers, trends, graphs, or any other types of information. You should also consider qualitative reasoning and feelings or beliefs that may not be supported by hard facts, but may still be relevant to your predictions. Explain everything fully and remember this is the largest question with a value of 20% of the test.
2. Explain why you personally chose this topic to talk about and why you feel your predictions are feasible. You can include personal research you have done including questionnaires given to your family, friends, and maybe teachers. You can use interview videos that you have taken or any other interactions or correspondences you may have had with others. This is your chance to give your side of the story. You can include personal experiences and beliefs you hold. This question is 10% of the test.
3. If you could be alive when your prediction comes true, how do you think your life would change from how you live it today or would it change at all? Please explain fully and use any information to support your thoughts. This question is 10% of the test.



Make the presentation exciting, informative, and very professional looking!!

WARNING *You and another group (In this or the other class!) may want to do the same topic(s) and that is OK, but if your two groups copy each other in any way, you both will receive -30% up to -100% for your test!! Try to find your own unique topic(s) if possible and if not be sure to work with your partner only!*

Rules for Presentations: **1** - Must be at least five minutes long no longer than Ten!!! **2** - No reading is allowed but you may use paper or computer presentation to reference (If you read you will be stopped and will come back another day with minus 20%) **3** - Judging will be based on Natural English 20% Question 1- 20% Question 2-10% Question 3-10% Remembering 10% Answering Questions 10% Creative and Dramatic 20% High Level of English Bonus 10%



This test is a great challenge that you should take and decide to enjoy while expanding your own minds and horizons! - THE PRESENTATIONS START THE WEEK OF JANUARY 19TH!!!

5. Cross Curriculum Teaching

Cross curriculum teaching is a term that means to take curriculum from 2 or more subjects, and to mix them together to help strengthen the overall learning impact in all the subjects

concerned. As I have indicated above with the testing that I give my grade two high school students, English is merely the language they must use to provide the information they have acquired for their assignments. They must use skills that they have developed in many other subjects to answer the challenging questions they have been given, using English as the means to express their thoughts and findings. I will now discuss a few forms that cross curriculum teaching can take.

1) English Teachers - Team Teaching

(1) Together in the Same Class

Team teaching can have many meanings, but in this section I will talk about having two teachers in the same classroom. The two teachers in this situation include one foreign teacher or “ALT” and one Japanese teacher or “JTE”. The following document is from a presentation I gave to Keishin teachers in April of 2009:

Team Teaching

Team - A definition given by the Oxford Online Dictionary is:

1. *Sports & Games*. A group on the same side, as in a game.
2. A group organized to work together: *a team of engineers*.
 - a. Two or more draft animals used to pull a vehicle or farm implement.
 - b. A vehicle along with the animal or animals harnessed to it.

Whatever your definition of team is, most people should agree that it means working together to achieve a task. When it comes to team teaching though, what does it mean then? Does it mean - JTE (Japanese Teacher of English) 80% and ALT (Assistant Language Teacher) 20% or ALT 80% and JTE 20% or JTE 50% and ALT 50%?

Team Teaching Started in 1987 with 848 ALTs from 4 countries participating. (See attached sheets) The question since then has always been what is real team teaching? Here are some examples of what has happened everyday since the JET Programme started in 1987.

- A) JTE 90% ALT 10% - ALT as an expensive tape recorder (with a tie!)
- B) ALT 90% JTE 10 % - JTE as an expensive dictionary (who is of course very pretty!)
- C) JTE 50% ALT 50% - Both doing equal roles (of course still looking good!)

Since 1987, the idea of using an ALT in schools has continued to this day but it has changed. Today the # of JETs are decreasing while the number of private companies supplying ALTs is increasing. WHY? The answer for many people is that the Jet Programme is too expensive, and the private

companies can supply the same ALTs for less money. The real question we should be asking is “how much value is an ALT to have in a school?” Many schools/BOEs that have changed from a “JET” to a private company ALT probably did not see much value in having them there, so therefore they looked for a more affordable way to fill the position, and often times they simply have cut the ALT positions all together. After 22 years of using the ALT system, are Japanese students really more effective when it comes to using English? Of course they can read and write but can they use it where it has its greatest value, speaking to others?

I think the question that we need to ask ourselves here at Keishin is “are we using ALTs and Team Teaching any differently than the other schools?” Team teaching in a school can be much more than simply having a bit of fun with English.

Team teaching should not simply be limited to what happens during a lesson! Team teaching should consider:

- A) **Preparing for the lesson** – The JTE and the ALT meet to discuss the content of the lesson and how they want to present it. Everyone at a school is of course busy, but planning is an essential part to a successful lesson. One of the worst feelings to have as a teacher is to enter a class knowing you have no idea what to do. This is true for the ALT as well as the JTE. If one person does not know what is happening then you are guaranteed that the “Team Teaching” mix will never be a 50/50 mix. It will fail, period! The class of course may be successful but you will be depriving the students of what they could have had if it was a Team taught lesson.

A basic model for a lesson may be:

1. Greetings by both teachers **5-10 min**
2. Warm up activity that reviews last lesson and perhaps introduces a new topic **10 min**
3. Introducing the new topic or main purpose of the lesson **10 min**
4. Doing an activity that puts into use the main purpose of the lesson **10-20 min**
5. Perhaps a second activity or simply a cool down from the amazing activities they just finished **10 min**

One goal that many teachers have, is to make the final activity so enjoyable/challenging, that no one wants it to end, and the students last memory of the class is positive. This allows the teachers to have students looking forward to their next OC classes! Fun yes, but with a purpose!

B) **Doing the lesson** - Team teaching is a very valuable lesson for the students. It of course lets them hear a “Native” English speaker, but that is where it starts. It also allows the students to see a real Japanese person speaking English. Not every Japanese teacher has perfect English, but that is not a problem at all. The main thing is to have the students see a Japanese person modeling effective communication with a foreigner. They should feel “I want to be as good as Miss. Muraya!”. They seldom think “I want to be as good as Mr. Parkin”. This of course is because they expect a foreign teacher to have good English, but a Japanese person!! WOW!!

Points to consider during a lesson are:

1. Teachers should talk with each other often and in a friendly manner
2. Each teacher should talk to the students
3. Questions should often be asked to the students in English. When you see their blank stares gazing back at you, give them time to discuss the questions with their friends, and then ask it again.
4. Teachers should take turns introducing and explaining topics/activities
5. Teachers should support each other with: extra comments, give each other energy, be ready to take over when a section is finished, ask each other questions, fill in the blanks!!
6. Teachers that teach together after a while should be at a level where they can cue each other and know what each other wants without words - simply put - they know each other very well!
7. Synergy - one teacher teaching gives one teacher energy/results but two teachers team teaching gives three to five teacher energy/results!! Really! ⁶

Team teaching in some ways can be very taxing for a school to have. It requires paying for two teachers for the same period, and it also depends heavily on the ability for those two teachers to work well together as “a team!” The benefits to such teaching can be great and can be summed up in the one word I listed above “Synergy”. Two teachers working together can plan amazing lessons, which are fun for the students and keeps them wanting for more. This type of positive outcome is one reason why team teaching classes can be such a great addition to any schools English program. In addition to the points listed above, I would also like to point out that team teaching is indeed a perfect example of successful cross curriculum teaching. A JTE is a very qualified grammar expert while an ALT is a very qualified oral communication specialist. Using both teachers, shows how two similar but still very different subject teachers can be brought together to strengthen learning for students.

(2) In Different Classes with Unified Curriculum

“English teacher” team teaching does not necessitate both teachers working together in the same classroom. It can also be used to describe an English grammar teacher that works with an English oral communication teacher, to provide a unified curriculum that is supported in both of their classes. The grammar teacher may cover a unit of information that the oral communication teacher can bring to life in their classes. They can both work together to create a culminating activity at the end of each semester, that utilizes all the skills gained in their grammar or other non English communication classes. The culminating activity could be an English play, a debate, a seminar, various group/pair/individual presentations, a speech competition, or an overseas work study project. Team teaching has so many forms that it can take when two willing teachers work together.

2) Other Subjects

This section is devoted towards schools that wish to develop their English programs, and take them to the next level. **English First** or English Always policies can be used with teachers in other subjects than English, to create unique cross curriculum study situations. In Keishin we have several teachers in subjects like math, history, and science, who have great English skills. They could perhaps with some effort, use their English skills to conduct some if not a majority or even all of their lessons, in English. This is the ultimate in cross curriculum teaching, for essential information in subjects other than English would be taught using English. This type of teaching is usually found in international schools, but those schools willing to create pilot projects like this, may find themselves with several special students wanting just such an education for their futures.

Summary

Teaching English oral communication in junior and senior high school has been a great challenge for me, filled with hills and valleys. I have seen my share of almost sleepless nights filled with assignments and worries, yet I have seen successes with my students I had once never dreamed possible. I think like anything in life change takes time, and in my short 14 years of teaching in Japan at all levels, I have seen that change is coming. There was once a time that I felt like I was the only one saying “English needs to be used in more practical ways”. I now hear Monkasho or The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology saying the same message, which ultimately originates from the Abe Administration.⁷ Wherever those words are coming from, I finally hear the highest forms of government saying what I thought when I first came to Japan almost 18 years ago. The government says it is time that we change our teaching programs, so I hope that those of you who have taken the time to read this document, will find some practical ways to enrich your

English teaching programs, as well as your personal enjoyment of them.

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- ¹ “Pedagogy.” Oxford Dictionaries. Oxford University Press (OUP)1478. Oxforddictionaries.com Web. 17 Jan 2015.
 - ² “Testing Students’ Ability to Think.” Editorial. *Japantimes*. N.p., 25 Dec. 2014.
 - ³ “H.I.H Prince Takamado Trophy All Japan Inter-Middle School English Oratorical Contest.” *H.I.H Prince Takamado Trophy All Japan Inter-Middle School English Oratorical Contest*. Web. 20 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.jnsafund.org/en/>> .
 - ⁴ “独立行政法人 大学入試センター.” 独立行政法人 大学入試センター . Web. 20 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.dnc.ac.jp/>> .
 - ⁵ Parkin, Douglas R. “English First.” (2013): 2-3. Rpt. in *Ube Gakuen*.
 - ⁶ Parkin, Douglas R. “Team Teaching.” (2009): 1-2. Rpt. in *Ube Gakuen*.
 - ⁷ “MEXT:Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.” *MEXT:Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*. Web. 20 Jan. 2015.