

Increasing Vocational Senior High Students' Motivation for Learning

English through Communicative Activities

Su, Hua-chong (蘇華崇)

Kaohsiung Municipal Kaohsiung Industrial High School

Design

Grade Level

The plan was designed for the second-graders at Kaohsiung Industrial High School with a proficiency level roughly ranging from low-intermediate to intermediate.

Materials

1. Studio Classroom Magazines
2. Handouts
3. Websites
4. Power-point Slides
5. Picture Dictionary

Teaching Activities

Two activities were designed for each language skill, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing, with eight target activities in total covered in the semester. These target activities were considered communicative ones since they were all more learner-centered activities with a focus on fluency and communicative competence development and practiced in either a pair or group work manner. Students' grammatical errors were seldom corrected as long as their meanings were able to convey. Besides, the learning materials were mostly authentic materials from the Internet or from the realia, brought back from Australia. The teaching schedule along with the teaching focus/activities for each session is listed in the table below:

Table : Teaching Schedule

Time	Teaching focus	Teaching activity
The first period (Listening)	✓ Develop listening comprehension ✓ Introduce listening stages	ABC news-- Behind the News (an Australian website)
The second period (Speaking)	✓ Develop confidence of speaking ✓ Attend to speaking accuracy and fluency	1. Think of a Question 2. Picture-dictionary Dialogue 3. Alphabet Dialogue
The third period (Reading)	✓ Introduce reading strategies	Reading Strategy Training
The fourth period	✓ Get started with writing	Running Dictation

(Writing)	✓ Exercise word spelling	
The fifth period (Listening)	✓ Lower listening comprehension anxiety ✓ Implement cooperate learning	Jigsaw Listening
The sixth period (Speaking)	✓ Develop speaking fluency	Pecha Kucha
The seventh period (Reading)	✓ Develop reading fluency and accuracy ✓ Implement cooperative learning	Jigsaw Reading
The eighth period (Writing)	✓ Introduce writing stages	Rotations

Procedures

First Period (Listening): ABC News (Behind the News)

Teaching procedure	Content
Warm-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present students with a photo/picture related to the listening task and ask them to come up with words in relation to it. 2. Provide students with the handout with questions they are going to answer and indicate the main points of each question.
Main teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have students watch and listen to the video clip provided by the website. Remind students some important clues from the clip from time to time. 2. After listening, allow students time to complete the handout with the given questions.
Wrap-up	Discuss the answers of the questions and compare those of students.

Second Period (Speaking): Think of a Question/Alphabet Dialogue/Picture-dictionary Conversation

Teaching procedure	Content
Warm-up (Think of a Question)	For Think of a Q activity, pair-up students first, provide them with a list of answers, and ask each pair to try to come up with an appropriate or inappropriate question for each response. Mention to students that thinking of creative questions can make interesting the practice.
Main teaching (Picture-dictionary Conversation)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pair-up students and distribute each pair a page of picture dictionary with both pictures and target words (e.g. one with a picture of an intersection on the street). 2. Give students a strip of post-it sticker, asking them to draw a face of themselves on it along with their names; inquire students to choose wherever they like to paste themselves on the picture. 3. Ask students to have a conversation with their partner based on the place and the activity of the picture-dictionary they are engaged in.

Wrap-up (Alphabet Dialogue)	Alphabet Dialogue will be used as a wrap-up, this activity consists of 26 lines of dialogue with the first line starting with a given letter (say 'R', e.g. Right here, I will wait for you here). The reply to it must start with an 'S', and so on, until the whole alphabet has been covered. Students who hesitate, or use the wrong letter 'Die'. The next student continues the dialogue. Filler words can also be used to make easy and create more fun for the whole dialogue.
--------------------------------	--

Third Period (Reading): Reading Strategy Training

Teaching procedure	Content
Warm-up	Introduce students the reading strategies (guessing, skimming, scanning, mind-mapping)
Main teaching	Distribute reading texts specifically designed for each strategy for students to practice.
Wrap-up	Discuss in class with students comparing and contrasting the strategies learned today with their traditional word-by-word reading.

Fourth Period (Writing): Running Dictation

Teaching procedure	Content
Warm-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach the reading text for today's task first with the detailed grammar and sentence structure explanation. 2. Ask students to read the text aloud after you or the CD.
Main teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect all the books of students with the reading text back and pin the reading text up on the walls outside the classroom. 2. Pair-up students and explain to them each pair must choose one person to be the runner and the other, the scribe. 3. The runner must goes to the text on the wall to memorize as much as he/she can and run back to the scribe to dictate what he/she just memorizes. The pair that finishes dictating all the text first wins!
Wrap-up	Check out the completed dictation on the board with the whole class.

Fifth Period (Listening): Jigsaw Listening

Teaching procedure	Content
Warm-up	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide the whole class into five groups (A, B, C, D and E) and each group is given the same colored sheet with focus questions. (e.g. The whole class is grouped into five groups with five sets of focus questions. And these five sets of questions together constitute the holistic picture of the given listening task.) 2. Ask each group to read silently the focus questions, trying to predict the answers to them and then discuss the answers in the group.
Main teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play a video-clip related to the topic learned in the previous class's

	<p>reading.</p> <p>2. Ask each group to try to listen specifically for the answers to their focus questions.</p>
Wrap-up	<p>1. Regroup the class with the new group comprising members from each of the original group.</p> <p>2. The members in the new groups are requested to share their answers with their new members to get the overall picture of the listening task.</p> <p>3. Finally, lead the whole class to discuss together the answers to all the focus questions.</p>

Sixth Period (Speaking): Pecha Kucha

Teaching procedure	Content
Warm-up	Play the video-clip of Pecha Kucha introduction and bring in the principles and format of Pecha Kucha presentation.
Main teaching	<p>1. Model the way to do Pecha Kucha first to students.</p> <p>2. Pair-up students. Students are then asked to do Pecha Kucha practice with their partners by using the power-point provided by the teacher.</p>
Wrap-up	<p>1. Inform them that they are going to do only half a Pecha Kucha given the time constrains and students' proficiency level.</p> <p>2. All the students are asked to go home and prepare and to do their own Pecha Kucha presentation next time.</p>

Seventh Period (Reading): Jigsaw Reading

Teaching procedure	Content
Warm-up	<p>1. Divide the whole class into five groups (A, B, C, D and E) and each group is given the same colored sheet with focus questions. (e.g. The whole class is grouped into five groups with five sets of focus questions. And these five sets of questions together constitute the holistic picture of the given reading task.)</p> <p>2. Ask each group to read silently the focus questions, trying to predict the answers of them and then discuss the answers in the group.</p>
Main teaching	<p>1. Distribute the reading text to students.</p> <p>2. Ask each group to read specifically for the answers to their focus questions.</p>
Wrap-up	<p>1. Regroup the class with the new group comprising members from each of the original group.</p> <p>2. The members in the new groups are requested to share their answers with their new members to get the overall picture of the reading task.</p> <p>3. Finally, lead the whole class to discuss together the answers to all the focus questions.</p>

Eighth Period (Writing): Rotations

Teaching procedure	Content
Warm-up	The class is divided into five groups. Five Guided Writing Tasks are distributed—one to each group. The tasks cover the topics and principles of writing stages: Brainstorming, Topic Sentences, Concluding Sentences, Sorting Information into Appropriate Paragraphs, Vocabulary Development and Grammar.
Main teaching	The group has ten minutes to complete the tasks (e.g. They are to write a topic sentence for the given paragraph) and then move on to the next task. At the end of 50 minutes, each group has completed all the tasks.
Wrap-up	Introduce the whole writing processes (stages) explicitly to students. Students are expected to discuss with the teacher their reflection and difficulties during the processes they have just undergone.

Students' Feedbacks

After the teaching activities at the end of the semester, the author ***observed*** that these communicative activities did successfully arouse students' learning motivation for English. Due to the interactive nature of the activities, not only did the students keenly participate in the leaning processes, but they also performed better in their academic learning (e.g. the vocabulary quizzes). Even those previously perceived as lower-proficiency-level learners showed their interest in taking part in the class activities. In addition, the author conducted ***interviews*** with three randomly-chosen students (sampled from the higher-, intermediate-, and lower- level pool respectively). All of the three students responded with positive feedbacks, saying they enjoyed getting involved in these communicative activities. Moreover, all of them reported that they thought their English learning motivation increased because English learning became much more fun than the traditional grammar translation classroom learning. Finally, all three learners considered this kind of training helpful for bettering their English proficiency level.

References

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. New York: Longman.

Dornyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate.

Hadley, A. O. (2001). *Teaching language in context (3rd ed.)*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. New York: Oxford University

Press.

Rao, Z. (2002). Chinese students' perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classroom. *System*, 30, 85-105.

Richards, J.C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wu, X. Q. (2006). *Communicative and Traditional Teaching in Taiwan: Students' Views and Factors Influencing Them*. Unpublished master thesis, National Tsing Hua University, Hsinchu.