

Teaching English Through Multimedia*

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This is a work-in progress paper which the researcher is working with an English teacher in Waseda University in Japan. We started the same project in the year of 2001. This is a replication of the previous paper about the exchange project with Waseda University students. The exchange program with Waseda University students encouraged Howon University students in various ways. In this paper, the researcher also tried to show how to use authentic materials from the internet, TV, magazines and other resources of mass media. Using those materials were helpful to the students to improve their English ability. The result of this study will give positive impact to further studies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is one tool that enables man to function in his own society and also provides the means to relate to other cultures. Learning a foreign language is one of the requirements in the current society. Without having proper skill of the foreign language, it is difficult to function as a competent person in a rapidly changing society. Especially, studying English is really important to communicate with other foreigners and to deal with different businesses in the global society. Korean students have a strong motivation to improve their English since they realize the importance of good English communication skills to be successful in Korean society.

Many Korean students have a one year study leave to journey to English speaking countries to have new experience and broaden their viewpoint about the

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world. Even the elementary school students take a study leave in English speaking countries. However, Korean students still have problems in expressing their ideas in English.

There are lots of studying materials available such as English radio program, cable TV and movies in English. If they take advantage of all the resource materials, they can improve their English. Many Korean students have good grammatical background of English but they feel frustrated whenever they have problems communicating with English speaking people. In this paper, the researcher would like to experiment some techniques which will motivate students to use English as much as possible. Exchange e-mails with foreigners and making video project in English are good way to use English in real life situation.

The most important thing for the students is that they have to enjoy using English to communicate as this is one of the purposes for studying English. Students should be able to get the necessary information from the newspapers or internet. When they can use English in the real life situations, that is the authentic foreign language learning.

In this paper, the researcher also tried to show how to use authentic materials from the internet, TV, magazines and other resources of mass media. Using those materials were helpful to the students to improve their English ability. The result of this study will give positive impact to further studies.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As a background of this study, the researcher would like to talk about English as an international language, the importance of the background knowledge in reading, E-materials in the EFL classroom. English is not a foreign language any more in the global society. There are lots of reading materials we have to read as fast as possible. Background knowledge helps us to understand texts in English when we read them. In the age of the information, using e-materials in EFL classroom helps students to be exposed to the current news and various information which occur around the world.

1. English as an International Language

English is the lingua franca in many areas. There are English speaking countries

such as United States of America, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. In some countries such as Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia, English is used as an official language. Korea and Japan and other countries teach English as a required subject at school. This tendency shows the importance of English in the world. Whenever there are international conferences and meetings, the official language is English. Most information in the internet is written in English. Even computer games have the instructions in English. English is not a foreign language any more. It is the medium of communication throughout the world.

Korean students should have certain English proficiency to be able to get better jobs in the Korean society. Students who have good English proficiency tend to have jobs in the foreign companies where the pay is better. They need some knowledge of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in English to compete with the people in the competitive society.

2. The importance of the background knowledge

There are a lot of reading materials to get information as fast as possible in the age of information. Students need to have proper reading skill. The more they read in English, the better the students can understand English well.

Schema theory shows the importance of the background knowledge in reading. Schema may be viewed as the organization of a subject's past experiences that directly influence current perception. It is pre-existing knowledge structure stored hierarchically in the brain. It can also be defined as the cognitive constructs that allow for the organization of information in long-term memory which provides a basis for prediction (Widdowson, 1983). This background knowledge plays also an important role in learning a foreign language. If the learner has some background knowledge in his/her mother tongue, s/he can understand much better even though it is written in other foreign languages. That's why it is really important for the learner to have some background knowledge in his/her mother tongue. They have to read more books in their mother tongue before they learn a foreign language. According to the interdependence hypothesis, the knowledge the learner has in his/her mother tongue will be transferred when s/he studies in foreign languages. There is a theory about the threshold level which explains that students should reach a certain level to be able to understand the concepts in the foreign languages.

Using materials which are published in Korea helps students to learn English because students already have background knowledge about Korea. Especially, even

lower level of students are able to understand Korean culture and movies and news which are written in English.

3. E-materials in the EFL classroom

Internet for language learning is a big issue among English teachers. It is called the sea of information. The internet is beginning to transform language learning by making available to teachers and students an enormous range of information and resources (Windeatt, Hardisty, & Eastment, 2000, pp6-14). As a means of communication, the internet allows students around the world to interact with one another cheaply, quickly, and reliably, opening up the classroom to the real world in a way which has never before been possible. The internet is a tool which has great potential in the language classroom, but its effectiveness in practice depends to a large extent on the way it is exploited by teacher and students (Windeatt, Hardisty, & Eastment, 2000, p.8)

The internet will also lead to more cross-curricular work. Skills needed to use the internet for language learning will be similar to those needed in other subjects in the curriculum, which internet resources found in the language classroom will often be relevant to other subjects.

Teacher's responsibility when we use internet as a teaching materials is as follows:

- * Be prepared
- * Be patient
- * Be organized
- * Be exploratory
- * Be critical
- * Be co-operative
- * Be realistic (Windeatt, Hardisty, & Eastment, 2000, pp6-14).

There are many benefits of using internet in the classroom (Dudenev, 2000, pp1-2). For language teachers, internet is the perfect medium. Language teachers are constantly on the lookout for quality, authentic teaching material. Almost all teachers are no longer able to simply read a book or a magazine, listen to a song or watch a film or television programme without considering the material's possible value for exploitation in the classroom. Teachers spend hours collecting leaflets and menus, handouts in the street and free magazines from street stands and buying foreign language newspapers and magazines.

Now all this material is quickly, cheaply and readily available from the comfort of our desks or homes. To the busy teacher the internet can be an infinite resource file of texts, visual stimuli, listening material, vocabulary, information, video files, live TV and radio and newspapers from around the world. Internet is not only a source of authentic material in English, but also home to encyclopedic information about all sorts of topics teachers may want to engage with in the classroom and of professional knowledge for teachers.

In most classes, textbooks are commonly used. In this case, students are overdependent on the textbooks. The benefits of using e-materials are useful and handy. The researcher spent a lot of hours searching good teaching materials in cyber space. Students downloaded materials which I asked them to do. It was effective in the sense that they were to read various materials. Those materials were more authentic than any other materials. Students showed their interest reading and discussing these materials.

The sites which introduce Korean news and culture help students to learn English. Whenever they read some Korean culture or related news in English, they are interested in expressing their ideas in English.

III. METHODS

1. Subjects

The subjects of this study is 20 junior students in the Department of English in the first semester 2002. "Media English" is an elective course for those who are interested in learning English through mass media. Most male students were older than female students since they were discharged from the military service.

The methods which were used in the class were as follows:

- * Using e-materials
- * Chatting in English
- * Studying Korean culture in English
- * The class exchange program with Waseda University students

These methods are supposed to be effective to help students to improve their English. Especially, using e-materials in EFL classroom makes students to have interest in English.

2. Using e-materials

1) I used the Korean English newspaper sites and Korea guide site and all the materials were downloaded from the internet so that students did not have to buy textbooks in my class. The web site is koreatutor.com/meet_korea. In this web site, students can find out about general information about Korea such as Today's News, Uniqueness, Korean Youth section, For Gourmets, Entertainment News, Tour information, Shopping, and Special Information. For example, in the Korean Youth, there is a very interesting topic called "So many special days." In this article, the author introduces the following dates which Korean young people celebrate:

January 14 is Diary Day, when you give a diary to the person you love.

February 14 is Valentine's Day, when girls give chocolate to the boys.

March 14 is White Day, when boys give candy to the girls.

April 14 is Black Day, when singles wear black, and eat jajangmyeon.

May 14 is Rose Day, when you can enjoy the new roses with person you love.

June 14 is Kiss Day. Show your love with a kiss on this day.

July 14 is Silver Day, when couples buy silver rings.

August 14 is Music Day, when you can send cell phone melodies to the person you love.

September 14 is Gum Day, when people give away chewing gum.

October 14 is Doll Day, when people buy dolls, or try to pick dolls out of game machines.

November 14 is Cookie Day, when people give away cookies.

December 14 is Hug Day. End the year with a hug."

These concepts are very interesting so that most students had an ardent desire to talk about them in English. Even though their English was not fluent enough, they were able to carry at discussion in group work. Because of their enthusiasm in this discussion, they did not even stop talking after the teacher gave signal to stop.

There are more interesting topics which students expressed their interests in such as "Couple Look", "Cellular Phone", and "Blind Dates".

2) The environment: what should we do to save our environment?

This topic attracted students' attention. Most students were interested in the importance of our environment. The topics were so real to them. Using these topics

were successful to attract students' attention.

3) The current news from the internet newspapers

Gaining access to English speaking newspapers on the internet presents language teachers with a number of teaching possibilities. Especially, there are a lot of benefits using Korean English newspapers published in Korea. Students are already familiar with the news around Korea. Even though they are reading in English, they can discuss the news about Korea. It gives the confidence to the students. When they are able to get meaning across to other students, they are satisfied with their English skills.

According to Krajka (2000), reading English newspapers helps students in the process of learning. If suited to the students' level of English, newspaper articles can be interesting to read and may trigger some class discussion as well as increase students' cultural awareness. It is too expensive for students to subscribe overseas newspapers. However, we can get many newspapers written in English over the internet.

4) Using box office movies in the internet

Movies are always a hot topic for the students. Students like to watch movies whenever they have free time or have a date with their male or female friends. Students are interested in discussing current popular movies. It was helpful for them to study about the synopsis and reviews of the movies. That is why it is really effective to talk about movies in the class. It is a great way to motivate students. It is a very effective way to read reviews in English after having watched movies on movie sites. The site we used in the class was "Yahoo movie site". In this site, students can read trailers, news, synopsis and about movie stars. I did many activities using movie sites. We discussed the types of movies such as "drama, action movie, horror movie, romantic comedy, adventure etc. For example "A Beautiful mind" was very popular among the students and most students watched it. In class, we discussed the following things using "Yahoo Movies"

Type: drama

Time: 2hrs. 15 min.

Rating: PG-13 (Parental Guide)

Release date

casts and credits

starring

directed by

produced by
written by
distributer
synopsis

In the class, students were asked to bring printed materials about movies which they have watched. Students had to download impressive movies and study the material from the internet. Each student presented his/her movies in front of the class. Students expressed that they were able to understand the content since they already watched the movie even though there were some words which were difficult to understand. They became very interested in studying English using movies.

Students were also interested to talk about the Korean movies in English. In the website of <http://www.koreantutor.com/meetkorea>, there are lots of entertainment news about Korean movies and dramas etc. These are easy to understand even though they are written in English. Students like to discuss Korean box-office movies.

And also popular operas and musicals were used in the class to understand the current culture in English. Students showed their interest about "The Phantom of the Opera" which is being shown in Korea at the present. In class, students studied about the musical in English. The plot, story, and theme were reviewed by the students.

3. Chatting in English

The chat feature allows people to exchange messages with another person on the internet. A message one person sends will instantly appear on the other person's computer (MaranGraphics, 1999, p7). One of the requirements in the Media English class was to chat in English and share their chatting experiences with other classmates in the classroom. Students printed out their conversations with their partners. One of the students expressed that she really enjoyed chatting with one person who was very fluent in English. She said that she was lucky to have such an excellent chatting partner. She had very positive experiences in her first chatting in English. There were some limits in chatting. Some students could not type fast in English. They said that they had to practice typing to communicate better with others in the chatting room. It had a very positive affect on them because they

learned from their chatting experience. Even though their expressions were short and incomplete, they enjoyed communicating in English. However, they are still reluctant to chat with native speakers because of their lack of English communication skills.

4. Studying Korean culture in English

There are many websites about Korea in English. These are to help foreigners understand Korea. Students are required to read and study the materials about Korea in the Media English class. It is really important to have background knowledge when students read. Since everything is about Korea, students are supposed to understand the content easily.

Students will have chances how to explain about the Korean culture and tourist places in English. Since they already have background knowledge about Korea, they know how to explain about Korean culture.

Most reading passages are downloaded from the internet. Students enjoy searching the information to introduce Korea to foreigners.

The researcher made some questions regarding the Korean culture. Students need to discuss the questions and answers their group. They liked brainstorming to answer the questions.

5. The class exchange program with Waseda University students

In the media English class which was offered to the junior students, they had to do some of the requirements to complete this course.

Since 2001, the researcher used an exchange program with Waseda University students. An English professor at Waseda and I tried the same program in the first semester, 2002. Since we thought that was effective to motivate students to use English, we tried the same program again. An English professor at Waseda and myself exchanged many e-mails to discuss our class projects. She also wanted to continue this project because it had a very positive impact on her students. This is a kind of replication of the same study which we did in 2001. The steps were the following:

- 1) When classes in Waseda started on April 11, an English professor made a class mailing list like we did last year. She told her students to send messages as homework from the beginning. Students began to exchange e-mails as soon as the

class started.

2) Electronic chat and pen pal bulletin board

The computer people at Waseda are creating a new system which combines students for two classes (Waseda and Howon University students) and registers their profiles so that they can choose penpals and chat with each other. According to an English professor at Waseda, it isn't finished yet but they predict it will be done in May or even longer. When the project is finished, it will be better than e-mail mailing list.

3) Video Exchange

Students watched video which was sent from the Waseda University students. The tapes were produced in the second semester, 2001. We did not have time to watch their projects since Korean students had different schedules. They made good group projects which encouraged them to use English. Students had some ideas from Waseda University students' video projects. I instructed my students to e-mail Vicky about their impressions after they watched Japanese students' video projects. Vicky e-mailed me that she heard from many of my students. She liked to hear my students' comments about her students' video projects.

We tried to make a short introduction video like we did last year. We asked our students to keep the video short so that we can watch it easily. If the whole video is 15 to 20 minutes, it is easy for students to watch it more than once then all the students can understand it even more. The previous problem with our project was that it was hard to hear it the first time.

4) The class trip

A visit to Howon University will be highlight of this exchange project. Japanese students are planning to visit Howon University in September. An English professor at Waseda says that it has to be during vacation time in Waseda University in Japan.. Their classes begin on October 1. The other condition is that it has to be optional because some students might have other plans or might not have money for travelling. If they come to Howon, that will be the best exchange project for students who live in small cities near Howon University.

The purpose of this exchange program was to make it very a memorable experience for our students. It proved very well in our exchange program in 2001. an English professor at Waseda and I cooperated to have a better working relationship for both Korean and Japanese students. An English at Waseda and I know that we want to make it a very good experience for our students.

The students are the potential of the learner (Campbell & Kryszewska, 1998).

Students bring a lot with them. They all have their own ideas, opinions, experiences, and areas of expertise. All of this is important to them. What they need from the English language classroom is the language to express all this and thereby themselves, in English

6. Procedure

1) Howon University students e-mailed English professor in Waseda University to make sure that there are no mistakes in the addresses. They also sent a short message with their names and nicknames to Vicky. Vicky made mailing lists to have a penpal program with Howon University students. Howon students also had to e-mail the same letter to me so that I was able to read how they e-mailed others to introduce themselves to the native speaker.

2) In the first week of April, Howon University students made a self introduction video tape and sent to the Waseda University students.

3) By the third week, Howon University students had a group project to make a group video. In one group, there were only three or four students. The small group was more effective because if they have only a small numbers, they have more responsibility to complete the tasks. thus giving each student their own role for the project. Three students cooperated together.

4) There were six groups in making video projects. One group was not able to make a video by the deadline. All five groups did their best in making their short movies.

1st group: Introducing downtown Seoul (3 members)

Introducing downtown Seoul and the fashion style of the younger generation. They tried to interview pedestrians in English. However, pedestrians were reluctant to answer in English.

2nd group: Introducing the World Cup Stadium in Jeonju (4 members)

They introduced the World Cup Stadium in Jeonju and they also interviewed two foreigners. Four boys joined equally in taping their project.

3rd group: How to make kimchi (3 members)

They showed how to make kimchi . First they went to the grocery store to buy ingredients. They then showed the procedures of how to make kimchi. In the final stage, they cooked different foods using a kimchi such as kimchi pancake.

4th group: Showing Iksan Temple (4 members)

Four boys introduced and explained the famous temple in Iksan.

5th group: Dog meat soup (3 members)

They introduced the Dog meat soup which is the cultural food in Korea. They visited several places to video tape their project. They showed how to raise dogs and visited dog meet soup restaurants.

IV. DISCUSSION

The advantages of the class exchange program with Waseda University students are quite beneficial for Howon University students.

Students like to share their ideas with other students in foreign countries. They are in the same age group so that they have more common interests to discuss together. Since they are in Asian countries and are also EFL students, they do not have confidence in their English ability. Even though they have little English ability, they still communicate with each other in their interlanguage. Second language learners tend to go through a systematic or quasi-systematic developmental process as they progress to full competence in the target language. Successful interlanguage development is partially a result of utilizing feedback from others (Brown, 2000, p.67-68). When they are able to get their message across, they feel confident. In this way, they can develop self-confidence and lower anxiety. This is the best way to be a successful language learner.

Students' responses about this class were rather positive. Even though we did not finish the first semester, students enjoyed the activities they had done so far. They liked making video tapes in English. While they were working on this project, they were forced to use English because the audience of their tapes would be Japanese students. It took longer hours for students to complete one video project. Each group made a 10 minute video project. However, all the students expressed that they had a memorable experience with their group members. When they cooperated together, they were able to come up with better ideas and project. Three or four members were good at completing group tasks. Language is used for communication. A large amount of English language practice should involve other people. Some practice of English can be done individually, but communication practice must be done with other people (Brown, 2002, pp60-65). In this sense, using group strategies is very useful for students to improve their English. According to Ur (2000), the advantage of group-work is the increased participation. Students who

are shy of saying something in front of the whole class, often find it much easier to express themselves in front of the small group of their peers (pp7-8). In cooperative learning, students of varying degrees of linguistic proficiency and content knowledge work in a group setting that fosters mutual learning rather than competitiveness (Chamot & O'Mally, p.21). This project gave students confidence that communication is more important than getting high scores on the TOEFL or TOEIC.

We received Waseda University students' self introduction videotape in the mid-term period. An English professor at Waseda sent us a videotape with some gifts from Waseda University. When Howon University students got the gifts from Japanese friends, they were really pleased with the result of their communication. Students who are in small cities want to have frequent communication with foreigners. By the end of the April, Howon University students were able to send their video project along with small gifts. Students are supposed to exchange their comments after they watch a video project. Waseda University students sent their comments about Howon University students' video work. Some students sent very positive comments and others sent a little bit negative comments. Their comments about Howon students' video projects were the following:

Student 1

"We got some presents are special to Korea with the video.

I got the key ring contains gold leaf!

And, the key ring is special to Korean Marine Corps.

This is rare and expensive, isn't this?

I think there are some men who discharged from duty in your class.

That is different from ours..

Last week, we watched the video about self-introduction.

After I watched the video, I thought it was interesting to know what my partners are like,

what Howon University is like.

I am also poor at speaking English.

But, I want to communicate with you ,without being afraid of making a mistake in English.

Let's practice each other !!!"

Student 2

"Thank you for your video and nice introduction Howon students.

I was pretty impressed by the fact that you guys are much older than us, Japanese university student is almost from 18 to 22. I guess probably you guys have draft or something like that.

Anyway they were really good and I enjoyed it!"

Their comments helped Howon University students to think about their English communication skills. Most Waseda students sent their comments by e-mail.

Using reading materials from the different sources makes students motivated to study English. The purpose of studying English is to read and write English in their daily lives. When students were able to read and write some information from other countries, they are more confident in using English. This should be the result of studying English.

V. CONCLUSION

It is very difficult to motivate students who study in small universities in the country-side. After many students transferred to other universities before they became juniors, the remaining students lose their confidence and solidarity. In this atmosphere sometimes it is so frustrating to deal with those students. The main job of the teachers in these universities is to help students to gain confidence. Once they have confidence, they can do whatever they want to do. To improve their English, teachers need patience to encourage students.

I used several methods and techniques which will be relevant to students level. It was necessary to pursue the different methods and plan interesting activities so that students will not be bored with their English classes.

This is a working in progress paper. It will take at least two semesters to complete the project which the students are engaged in. There will be a lot of things to add to make it a better program. It will be great if the other teachers try to use more authentic materials and some class exchange program with other students in foreign countries. Students can learn many things about their common interests and share different experiences with the same age group. Especially, when they exchange a video production with other country students, they are quite excited to see the other students' work. They also like to see the differences and

similarities in the foreign country.

When students use English to communicate with people, they feel confident and enjoy using English as a means of communication. Teachers should try to use more methods to help students.

It will take more time to complete this study. However, the process of this present study gives a lot of possibilities to help our students. Teachers should not stop designing methods and techniques to provide better learning opportunities for our students. The more effort teachers put into the classroom, the better chance our students will improve their English. Teaching is an endless but worthy journey to take.

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