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The Art of Teaching Speaking

Chapter 3 (pp.66-75)

CASE #3

Teaching Speaking in the United Arab Emirates

Adults; Colleges

Nancy Fahnestock

A subject: Math,

Students: Female age from 18-40, having problem in communication in English

Proficiency; Lowest level

Challenges the teacher faced

1 instruction to communicate the concept was not successful

2 relating to in-class activities to activities outside the classroom

Goal: Fluency

Important point other than teaching skills

Willingness to learn their language and their culture

ISSUES for REFLECTION

1 teaching specific English as well as general English

2 consider students' needs

3 designing project requiring their English into practice

4 knowing their country and culture

CASE #4

Teaching English in Mexico and China

Adults; University

Salvador Venegas Escobar

A Subject English

Differences between Mexico and China

- 1 Size of the class in China is bigger than that in Mexico
- 2 Class manners: punctual, respectful but silent in China in contrast to the case in Mexico
- 3 Their first language: Chinese in China, Spanish in Mexico (same as that of teacher)
- 4 Learning Style Accuracy-oriented in China, Fluency-oriented

Pair and Group work was successful in both countries

ISSUES for REFLECTION

- 1 Classroom procedures can vary from country to country
- 2 sharing common language with your students is advantage when explaining a difficult word and a hard grammar structure

CASE #5

Teaching Conversation in Canada

Adults: Adults Education; College

Carmen Valero

A multi-cultural environment such as Canada means

- 1 many migrants who are new or fairly new to the country
- 2 having to prepare for the diversity of a multi-cultural classroom

Advantage and disadvantage

Having to have a background in sociological and sociopolitical issues (i.e., culture, emotional settlement issues, appropriate conversation topics, not to make them offensive) which is also rewarding for your experiences

ISSUES for REFLECTION

- 1 knowing taboo in students' culture such as okey sign to Brazilians,
- 2 need to know something of politics, geography, history and culture

CASE #6

Teaching Conversation in Qatar

Adults: Bridge Program

Bob Campbell

Goal: To prepare the country's top high school graduates for success in universities

Difficulties

- 1 There are many taboos in Qatar because it is a conservative Muslim country.
- 2 Coeducation, which is unheard of in Qatar
- 3 Paying little attention to accuracy
- 4 Maintaining the students' motivation

ISSUES for Reflection

- 1 Avoiding unacceptable topics in conservative culture (i.e., sex, dating, drugs, alcohol, religion, politics and the ruling family)
- 2 unfamiliar education style such as coeducation in Qatar
- 3 teaching accuracy where English is used for communication
- 4 need for conversation topics and specific tasks with the help of books on speaking, Internet sites, conferences for "how to" ideas for the classroom

The Art of Teaching Speaking

Chapter 3 What Does a Conversation Class Look Like? Case 7~11 (pp.75 ~ 87)

Case 7

- **Place:** Japan
- **Students:** University students
- **Course Description:** 90 minutes, once a week. Language of instruction is in English.
- **Course Goal:** General education requirement
- **Course's challenge and management:**

Challenge	Management
① Class size and motivation: (Class size of 8~70 students, average of 35 students with various motivational levels)	● Give clear instructions. Stick on a specific task for a few weeks. ● Structured activities are essential. Students need scaffolding (足場づくり), or a step-by-step preparation before a free-discussion. (Ex) ① Students make questions ⇒ ② Teacher feedback ⇒ ③ Pair work ⇒ ④ free discussion
② Classroom: (Unmovable tables and seats were obviously not appropriate for conversation)	

Reflection:

- ① Be aware that not all the students are motivated
- ② Routine makes students comfortable, even if it may seem boring
- ③ Keep activities simple. Students usually find instructions in a foreign language difficult to understand.
- ④ Provide a step-by-step process to lead the students to a conversation. For instance, "Discuss the topic" is too difficult as a first step.
- ⑤ Conversation tasks could work in a large-sized class if they are appropriately adjusted.

Case 8

- **Place:** Vietnam
- **Students:** University students
- **Course Description:** English program held 3 hours a week. Teachers had the authority to choose the classroom materials and tasks. Western authors' textbooks were popular.
- **Course's challenge:**

Challenge

- ① **Pronunciation:**
(Students were good at grammar and spoke quite accurately. However, their first language, Vietnamese, transferred to English. Some of the English sounds are unique for them.)

② **Shyness:**

(Students showed respect to their teacher and friends. However, they were shy to speak in front of the whole class, including role plays. If students lack confidence, Vietnamese would be used.)

③ **Topic Choice:**

(Because the textbooks were designed for ESL, some of the topics were not appropriate for EFL)

Reflection:

- ① Time is limited. It is a challenge for the teachers to maximize the time for English conversation practice, especially in an EFL setting, where classroom is probably the only place where the students could practice English.
- ② Role plays could work, depending on the personality of teacher and students. (See Chapter 4, Activity 15 for more details)
- ③ Teaching grammar does not equal to teaching speaking. Give students enough opportunity to speak.
- ④ Teachers are expected to teach pronunciation to some extent. Having knowledge will be helpful (See Appendix B for more information).
- ⑤ Choose topics that students are familiar (ex. EFL vs ESL)

Case 9

- **Place:** Brazil
- **Students:** Language school
- **Course's issues and key:** Teachers are expected to know and understand the Brazilian culture, which is different and unique from other Spanish-speaking cultures. The courses' key was in understanding and accepting the Brazilian culture.

Issues

① **Communication style:**

Students were highly motivated and eager to express their opinions. Sometimes, they interrupt into someone speaking. Although this may be rude in other cultures, such an interruption is a custom in Brazil. Topics such as religion, alternative lifestyles, and politics were taboo. Teachers were expected to correct pronunciation as the students involved in the conversation.

② **Concept of time and punctuality:**

Not strict. Students don't feel hesitated to come late to class and join the conversation suddenly.

③ **Social space and physical contact (=スキンシップ):**

Students desire to establish closer relationship first, instead of concentrating on the task right away. They are friendly, and often embrace (=hugs) and kiss cheeks with each other.

Reflection:

- ① Know your students, not the stereotype. (ex. Brazil vs Spanish-speaking country)
- ② Some students may become too passionate and involved in speaking English. Maintaining the flow of the class without discouraging them will be an issue.
- ③ Gap between students' native culture (EFL) and English-speaking culture (ESL) may be problematic in the future. Students should be aware of such a gap.

Case 10

- **Place:** China
- **Students:** 80 English teachers of public/ private schools (21~55 years old)
- **Course Description:** Teacher-training course lasting for few weeks. 4 native teachers were in charge.
- **Course Goal:** Train the Chinese EFL teachers
- **Course's challenge and management:**

Challenge	Management
① Multi-level: (Capabilities of students were not reported prior to the course start. On the first day, the students were found with a range of English proficiency.)	Assess students' oral proficiency level using picture scenarios. Divide the students into 4 groups according to their proficiency.
② Class design: (The original course was designed to have 5 periods each day, but there were only 4 teachers. Students were divided into 4 groups too.)	Instead of having 5 classes, 4 classes were open each day. This change made easier for the teachers to adjust their activities according to the students' level.
③ Understanding students' need: (For instance, although the course teacher introduced game as a listening activity, the students would not be able to adopt that to their large-sized class.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Modify the games so that the students could use it in a larger group. ● Since students loved to sing, pop music was also utilized as a cloze-test (=穴埋め問題). ● Use realia (=real-life material), such as coin, to explain English culture

Reflection:

- ① Closed-tests (=穴埋め問題) of songs is a useful listening activity.
Choose slow songs. Delete words that seem feasible to catch when students listen to it.
- ② "You never know how a certain technique or teaching idea will go over. What is successful with one group can often flop with another- and vice-versa." ⇒ Reflect on your teaching
- ③ Use realia to call your students' attention. Internet sites offer you real-life materials such as menu.
- ④ Short-term teaching opportunities in China is posted on-line. Teaching situation should be carefully examined beforehand.

Case 11

- **Place:** USA
- **Students:** Korean, Japanese, Venezuelan, French, Saudi Arabian, Columbian, Kuwaitis

(18~28 years old)

- **Course Description:** Intensive English program for high-intermediate learners
- **Course Goal:** gain knowledge and skills to pursue an American university education (TOEFL)
- **Course's challenge and management:**

What the teacher learned:

Never force speaking:

Allow students to trust you and themselves little by little. Create and practice a situation that the target vocabulary or phrase is used. The students can gradually gain confidence by doing these activities.

Understand students' interest and learning styles:

- **Topic choice is important. For instance, shy Korean students got motivated in "dating styles".**
- **Many of the students were visual learners, who understood new concepts and vocabulary by movie clip or written words on board.**

Reflection:

- ① Write new vocabulary and phrases on the board. Words are the base of conversation. Train the students to write them down on the board.
- ② Grouping vocabulary by theme can assist the students assimilate the new words. In addition, knowing an authentic use of the new phrases is motivating for the students too.

Discussion Questions:

1) In Case 10, the use of realia (=real-life material) was mentioned as an effective way of introducing target language and culture. What realia could be used in an EFL class?

Ex.) **Realia:** USA coins, **Focus/Culture:** American symbols and history

2) In Case 11, the usefulness of connecting new vocabulary with a real-life situation/ theme was explained.

What could be an example of "grouping vocabulary by a theme"?

Please share a set of grammar point and theme that is appropriate in an EFL class.

Ex.) **Grammar point:** present tense (現在時制), **Theme:** hobby

【Reflection after class】

Case 7 to 11 included many EFL situation, including Japan. Among many insights contained in the cases, in class, we focused on the use of realia. Realia is defined as “objects and teaching ‘props’ from the world outside the classroom that are used for teaching and learning” (Nunan, 1999, p.313). The use of real-life objects is helpful in relating the English language to the actual surrounding world (Brown, 2007). In teams, we discussed ways EFL teachers could effectively use realia in their own class (Discussion Question 1). The following are some ideas shared in class:

- **Traditional costumes:** Teachers could actually wear and teach the culture of the target country (ex. Vietnamese national costume: áo dài)
- **National Flags:** Teachers could bring it in class as a topic introduction. The symbol of the flag would be helpful to share the history and culture of the target country. (ex. USA flag: the number of stars is the number of states)
- **Map:** When teaching how to explain the directions, real map could be utilized
- **Newspaper:** Students could learn new expressions, organization, and other writing features in an English paper.
- **Historical movies**
- **Food:** Teachers could bring in food when introducing food culture (ex. Australian vegemite could be compared with Japanese miso)
- **Real menu**
- **Shopping advertisement**
- **Letter:** Order of address could be introduced.
- **Passport:** Colors of the passport are unique.
- **Animation and manga:** Disney clips could be compared with Japanese manga

In class, it was mentioned that “comparison” is the key when adopting realia into a class. By comparing a different culture’s realia with their own culture, students could understand both difference and similarity between the two cultures. If the time allows, teachers could encourage the students to ask “why” there is such a difference. For instance, business cards are exchanged using both hands in Japan, while it is one hand in the Western culture. By asking “why” there is such a difference, teacher could refer to the difference in perception of “politeness” between the two cultures. As Moran (2001) describes this hidden cultural perspective as “all that lies beneath the surface of the sea, out of sight” (p.27), cultural differences in belief are often not visible. Exploring reasons behind the gap between realia could raise students’ attention to such an invisible

perception.

The complexity of culture cannot be automatically learned by simply teaching English as language. What is important for the teachers is to provide students with various cultural experiences that could raise individual cultural awareness. Realia could be one of those experiences that teacher could offer.

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