

# Method Used in Teaching English in Language Laboratory and Its Result

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Roughly speaking the purpose of learning English in Japan is divided into two fields. One is to enhance the level of one's own culture, by reading books in English which are related to the Western culture or by speaking with people of the West whose native language is English. In the case of self-refinement, English seems not to be related to his future or present occupation. On the contrary, the other purpose is for practical use. In this sense the English language seems to bear directly on what he is now or what he is going to be. It is indispensable for his present or future life. He faces a number of situations in which he must use English as one of the means of communication for his study, his research work or his occupation.

Whatever the aims of English learning may be, at the first stage of learning that is in the first year students of junior high school in Japan, the students do not seem to have such a clear intention for

his English learning. They begin to learn English simply because English class is scheduled in the program. They try to study hard as they are interested in it and they like it. They may be compared to some Alpinists who make the ascent because there is a mountain which draws their attention and because they like climbing. As time passes by, what seemed unique and fascinating in their learning somehow seems to fade. There must be something which extinguishes their keen interest.

I would like to insert here what Prof. Tajima, Kobe Foreign Language University, stated in his report given in Japanese. He wrote. "Whenever I find some university students who are outstanding in their English ability and have especially a very good command of oral skill, I usually ask how it is that they were able to obtain such a high level in learning English. There are the two same elements in their different responses. One is that they like English very much. The other is that they had an oral English class outside of the school campus and were trained by native speakers." The professor suggested a couple of things that we, Japanese English teachers, should consider very carefully. First, we must notice the barriers that make students dislike English and try to overcome these barriers. Second, he implies the necessity of application of a language laboratory because there is little possibility of their being trained by native speakers in a face-to-face situation in small groups due to the very small number of qualified native speakers of English available.

I have had only a year and a half experience of teaching junior high school which is attached to our college, and my teaching has been proceeded on this basis in the language laboratory. I often recognize their precise enjoyment and wonder at the first stage of

learning a foreign language. The very moment when they just began the lab practice, some of them uttered on the spot, "Oh, real English! I can understand what the teacher says!" "Wonderful!" And when they have finished relatively long substitution drill without any mistakes, some of them actually jumped out of the booth and exclaimed, "Nice going!" I think these are simply expressions of their keen desire for learning, and I should continuously make an effort to develop this positive attitude towards English.

I admit that learning a language without knowing the grammatical structure is trying to build a house without using a plan. At this stage of language teaching in Japan, we who teach and learn are obliged to concentrate for the preparation of entrance examinations for senior high school. Therefore, both the teachers and the students usually spend many hours in explanation or understanding something about English. The excessive and complicated explanation in the Japanese language, which occupies most part of class hour, is likely to result in the feeling that English is quite difficult and that it lies beyond their comprehension. Under the pressure of entrance examinations, this kind of feeling forms and the enjoyment and interest in studying weakens.

Language itself is not consciously known facts and rules, but a set of skills which are used as unconscious habits. (Hugh Brown, Director, English as a Foreign Language Program and Head of High School Foreign Language Department, American School in Japan, Tokyo) Much of the language learning is the learning of complicated skills. (S. Pit Corder) Therefore, learning a language means developing the four skills. Even the advanced self-expression by speaking or writing cannot be built without this sound foundation. Those skills

depend on adequate and effective practice. (S. Pit. Corder) We can improve the students' skills in reading and writing in the conventional classroom but we had better provide them with some equipment to create a special environment of hearing and speaking. Trying to improve their hearing and speaking ability without facilities where they can hear the voices of native speakers and respond in English is as if we were trying to teach music without a score and an instrument or to teach swimming without a pool. Here exists an immediate need of having language laboratories (or LLs as abbreviated henceforth) in a great number of schools not only in the private schools but even in many public high schools. However, having a LL, which ranges from a simple equipment to an expensive and elaborate one, does not always mean that there is victory and successful development in forming habits of skills. It is a powerful aid if properly used, but a waste of time and money if improperly used. The language laboratory is a tool, and like any tool, useful only in the hands of a craftsman who knows how to use it. (S. Pit. Corder)

Then what should follow after setting up the LL? First of all, members of the staff who are to be in charge of teaching in LL, should have full understanding of the practical implications of using the LL for language teaching. Associate prof. Grant Taylor notes three questions which were most commonly asked in connection with the use of LL. They are : "What can one actually do in the laboratory?" "What technique should be followed in preparing these materials?" "Which of the various things that can be done are most suitable for use with our students?" He says that it is not difficult to answer in general terms. Virtually anything which is done in the classroom can also be done in the LL. Considering the fact that having

LL is an expensive project, still it is a general tendency to set up this type of a modern equipment throughout the country. Therefore, there should be some specific functions accomplished which we cannot accomplish in an ordinary classroom. As to these specific functions, Jay A. Johnson, Teachers' Consultant Yamagata Board of Education, mentions as follow.

Among the many functions that a language laboratory can perform there are five that deserve mention here. It can provide

1. the speech of native speakers.
2. increased contact with the language.
3. additional controlled practice that will help to reinforce the patterns and pattern relationships.
4. individual practice with problems in pronunciation and rhythm.
5. a means of determining progress.

After these functions are thoroughly understood, the next important problem is the material used in the LL. Without carefully prepared material, practices in the LL result as being unsatisfactory and dull, so the LL itself remains nothing but a tool which costs dearly. Prof. Lado insists on the importance of LL materials. He says that materials must be clear, graded, purposeful, and based on linguistic facts and psychological laws of learning. Merely recording something for use in the lab does not make it a good exercise. It must be a good exercise to begin with.

Taking the above into much consideration, the following materials were carefully arranged based on the words and sentence patterns in the textbook which are actually used in an ordinary classroom. The aim of the materials is to help junior high school students to form the habit of skills that make possible the use of the language in

speaking and hearing through different types of drills. Each unit is divided into four parts: presentation, pronunciation of new words, text, and pattern practices.

## I. PHASE OF CLASS SCHEDULED

- (1) Attendance: compulsory  
scheduled  
by class
- (2) Supervision: constant  
by teacher using check card  
records kept
- (3) Materials: integrated with class  
completely self contained  
fixed program
- (4) Hours: 2 class periods (50 minutes) a week.  
1 class, Lab study and 1 class, Pre-Lab in  
the room where a teaching machine and  
a taperecorder are equipped. 5 classes in  
an ordinary classroom by another Japanese  
teacher

## II. PROCEDURE IN LAB STUDY

- (1) Use a tape of English songs for junior high school students for five minutes before the class. The ending of music is the signal for the class to begin.
- (2) Greeting
- (3) Calling the roll by call button.
- (4) Introduction of new material - Basic sentences and new words.
  - a. Listening only
  - b. Listen and repeat (No Reinforcement)
- (5) Text.
  - a. Listening only

- b. Paced reading after the tape.
  - c. Paced reading after the tape again.
  - d. Listening only.
- (6) Five minutes' break
- Out of actual experience, the use of the tapes of English songs, poems, and easy stories is recommended to relax the students' mind during the short rest interval.
- (7) Pattern practice.
- a. Repetition
  - b. Conversion
  - c. Intonation and rhythm practice
  - d. Substitution (1) Item substitution  
(2) Person-Number substitution
- (8) Response Drill (Question and Answer)
- a. Repeat each question after the tape
  - b. Short answer and complete answer from the students
  - c. Correct short and complete answers from the tape
  - d. Confirmation

### III. CLOSE CONNECTION WITH THE TEACHER OF THE CONVENTIONAL CLASSROOM

Both in LL and in the classroom use "teacher's report form" describing in detail the day's schedule and some comments or difficulties on their study.

### IV. LL ASSIGNMENT

After a certain numbers of lessons are finished, the students turn in a prescribed portion of the lessons recorded on their own tape. Those tapes are transcribed on to one master tape and the tape is kept on record. Then students' tapes are returned with some comments.

### V. CONSIDERATION MADE IN MAKING THE MATERIALS

- (1) Each pattern practice is closely related to their textbook.

- (2) Each exercise is arranged from simple to more complicated ones.
- (3) Use the charts in the textbook as much as possible, to help their understanding and to give them some situations.
- (4) In order to avoid a monotonous practice, different types of exercises are provided.
- (5) Arranged so that students listen to two examples, and they immediately begin the exercise. Correct response from the teacher follows each item. (Anticipation Mode)

## VI. RECORDING

Place: Osaka Jogakuin Language Laboratory.

Speaker: Mrs. Miyoko Uzaki, Mr. John C. McDonald.

- Osaka Jogakuin Junior College.

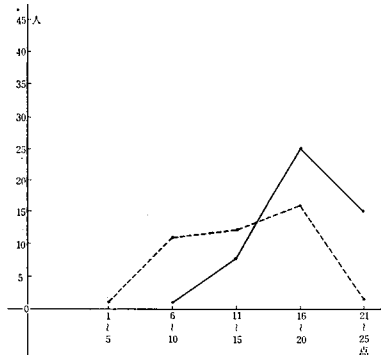
- (1) Make master tape with straight reading by the above native speakers.
- (2) Make tape for practice which has proper pauses.
  - a. Listening only.
  - b. Listen and repeat (No Reinforcement)
  - c. 4 cycle style (With Reinforcement)

## VII. EVALUATION: What valuable and effective contribution did the LL make in the language learning in 3 month period?

We tested the students in two different classes. One has 5 hour English class and 1 hour pre-lab study and 1 hour lab study. The other has 7 hour English class only - no LL, no Pre-lab study. They were not intentionally divided. The latter class was not able to have LL study because of unexpected events. We gave both of the classes the same hearing test in LL and then two weeks later gave them the same test as a written test. The following are the result.



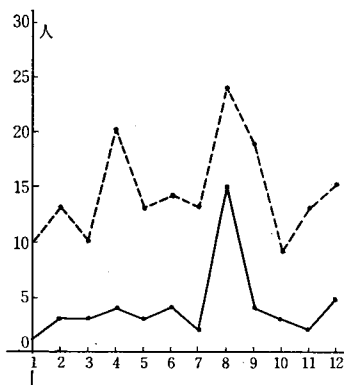
GRAPH 1 Distribution curve of the correct answers given by students.



— indicates Class A.  
 ..... indicates Class B.

The curve of the A class shows a tendency to incline more to the right and higher than the B class. It reveals that in hearing comprehension the students in the A are better than those in the B.

GRAPH 2 Distribution curve of the students whose answers were incorrect in Question II.

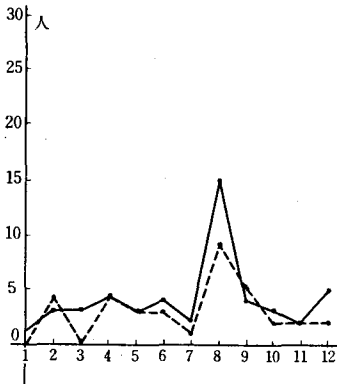


— indicates Class A.  
 ..... indicates Class B.

The percentage of incorrect answers in the A class is 15%.

The percentage of incorrect answers in the B class is 25%.

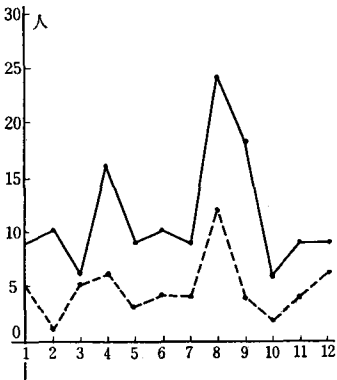
GRAPH 3 Distribution curve of the students in the A class whose answers were incorrect in the hearing test as well as in the written test. The same questions were used for the written test as well as in the hearing test.



— indicates hearing test Class A.  
 ..... indicates written test Class A.

Both curves have a close correlation. This reveals that their comprehension in both written and spoken English is fairly balanced.

GRAPH 4 Distribution curve of the students in the B class whose answers were incorrect in the hearing test and the written test.



— indicates hearing test Class B.  
 ..... indicates written test Class B.

There exists a gap between the two curves, which means that their comprehension in written English and spoken English is unbalanced.

附記：この実践報告は一部フルブライト交換教授・Dr. L. N. Brosnahan に送附したところ同氏より数々の助言と心あたたまる批評をいただいた。ここに教授の私信の一部を掲載して、その好意を衷心より感謝したいと思う。

Thank you very much for your letter and for the copy of your article. I was very interested in it and find it a very good contribution to improving English teaching in Japan. Your situation appears more favorable than the average teaching situation since you are using about the best available text and have a language laboratory available. Still, your findings are very significant and give ammunition to the teachers who are urging more effective teaching methods.