

Implementing Text-Based Pedagogy in Jr. High Schools

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It is essential to have texts as authentic teaching materials for teaching languages. Surely, we have learned our first language with visual aids, gestures, pictures, facial expressions, which are all forms of texts assisting us in understanding what is said or written.

In junior high school English classes, we made use of several of these authentic texts. First, we used a Class Journal (CJ, Fukuda, Fujikawa, Hashimoto, 2011) which has spaces for information that identify students' names, hobbies, and club activities. Additionally, the CJ has free spaces in which students can write about how they feel or what they learn in the class. At the end of every class, we give students time to write freely. The teacher, then, reads and writes comments by the following class. On the CJ, students and teachers hold authentic communication with these written texts. Reading these authentic texts, or teacher comments, has proven a lot more meaningful than reading textbook passages which have no personal connections to the students.

Second, we publish a class Newsletter to have the students read other examples of authentic texts. For instance, when we learned the phrase *There is / are...*, students were invited to write about their local area using the target phrases. I, then, picked up a few exemplar sentences by the students and added them on the Newsletter with the intent of having other students read them. As a result, because of this personalization, other students instantly gained interest in what others had to say and were absorbed in reading them. We believe this is where natural and meaningful learning with authentic texts take place.

Third, we held speeches in class. The students created speeches on topics about what they liked or disliked and their interests. After the speech, they completed a questionnaire asking how they felt after holding speeches. From the result of the questionnaire, we found out that students actually like to express their feelings no matter what language they use. Moreover, they expressed a keen interest in hearing about their classmates. Though in need of further investigation, in this case where listening to authentic texts took place, we could speculate that authentic texts are potentially associated with student motivation. Interestingly, while students were preparing and practicing their scripts which they had a personal connection with, they naturally learned language, such as *I'm going to talk about...*, without the necessity of the teacher providing extrinsic motivation.

Finally, we implemented a Video Letter Project. Students created a video of asking questions to international students from a local university in English. Afterwards, the international students answered the questions in English creating a Video Reply. Then, the two teachers in charge combined the two videos in a Q&A format. In the process of making the video, students had to make some questions in English and practice them many times so that they could make themselves understood. The students, on their own initiative, asked various questions concerning pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, as the teacher explained simply after that. Moreover, when they attentively watched the reply from the international students, the students were willing to listen to what the international students were saying trying to make meaning of the text more than once. All this was from the students own initiative, in their own interests, which eventually led to learning many things naturally.

When authentic texts are used, a personal connection is formed. Therefore, students are wanting to know (learning motivation) and making meaning (meaningful learning) in a natural way they were born to do. When people are motivated to know things, meaningful learning takes place without any external force. In sum, authentic texts potentially create situations of meaningful learning, or in other words, the following equation:

Using authentic texts + personal connection = learning motivation + meaningful learning

Reference

Fukuda, S., Fujikawa, N., & Hashimoto, N. (2011). Relationships do matter: Enhancing communication and building student-teacher relationships with class journals. *Journal of University Education Research*, 8, 101-112.