

Three Activities for Teaching Both ESL and JSL Students in the Same Class

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In the 2018 TD/CUE Forum, I presented activities which accommodated both students learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and students learning Japanese as a Second Language (JSL) in the same classes. I was one of a pair of homeroom teachers for first year high school students (15-16 years old). There were 25 students, 19 of which were ESL students from Japan, and 6 of whom were JSL students from various countries—including The Philippines, Australia, Germany, U.S.A., and others. Although all the JSL students' English was quite advanced, and some students were native speakers, JSL students were still required to go to all ESL classes. This is because there were not any JSL classes offered to them, with the administration's logic being that this was a cultural exchange, not a language study program. I felt this was a massive wasted opportunity because all the JSL students had studied Japanese in their home countries, they were interested in learning more, and if they studied more Japanese then their quality of life would improve while in Japan. Also, if they chose to take the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), then this would look good for university

admissions. Lastly, this situation became a problem because naturally the 6 JSL students were extremely bored in the ESL classes, so they would often fall asleep, draw on the desks, pass and throw notes to each other, behave in other distracting ways, and, worst of all, they weren't learning anything for 3-4 hours every day. To combat this, I decided to find ways that they could use this time to work on their Japanese. At the TD/CUE Forum, I explained a few of the activities that allowed both ESL and JSL students to work on their respective languages, the pros and cons to these activities, and how this ended up creating a more communicative and autonomous classroom.

Activity One: Daily Vocabulary Listening and Writing Quizzes

Vocabulary knowledge (in terms of orthographic, phonological, and semantic components) has been linked to increases in skilled reading (in terms of comprehension and speed) (Nation, 2009). The quality of each of these three vocabulary knowledge components reflects the overall quality of the lexical representation of a word. Skilled readers are those who have more high-quality word lexical representations, while less-skilled readers have fewer. One critique of typical vocabulary quizzes has been that students often

don't know how a word is pronounced. Therefore, I decided to find ways to improve vocabulary of both sets of students at the same time, combining listening as well as vocabulary knowledge and writing.

The first activity I decided to implement was a daily vocabulary quiz for the ESL students. They had a daily vocabulary quiz of 15 words, where they had to listen to me say ten sentences and write down which vocabulary words were used. This took approximately 20 minutes every morning homeroom, during which the JSL students were sleeping, arriving late, chatting, or doing homework for other classes. This was very distracting.

Therefore, the JSL students were given 30 kanji a week to study from a JLPT 5 list. For their daily vocabulary test, they had to write the onyomi and kunyomi readings in hiragana for five kanji, or vice versa. I had ESL and JSL students practice with each other before the quizzes. The JSL students asked ESL students for word meanings and spelling. The ESL students asked the JSL students for meanings and to write various words. After the quiz, they exchanged papers and did peer-correction. That was achievable for both sets of students. The ESL students could easily correct the JLPT level 5 kanji without teacher intervention. The JSL students could easily correct the ESL vocabulary test, and I also put the answers on the board, in order for ESL students who had exchanged quizzes with other ESL

students to be able to correct. This turned each student into a mini-teacher and reduced my grading time outside of class, too. Please see Appendix A for examples of the ESL and JSL vocabulary test templates.

Reactions from students were mixed. Some conceded that it was helping them learn a lot of words, and it was probably important, but generally it was unpopular. However, all students' reading speed and test scores improved. Therefore, I would liken this activity to brushing your teeth; it's not the most fun part of your day but it's certainly good for you.

Activity Two: Once Weekly Journals

The second activity I implemented was a weekly journal writing activity. The journal writing was implemented with reasons similar to Vacca & Vacca (1999), in that journal writing "underscores informal learning...and it creates a nonthreatening situation for students who may be hesitant to take risks because they are overly concerned about the mechanics of writing" (p.269). Journal writing was also implemented with Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis in mind, in that opportunities for output play a key role in acquisition, and suggests that "output may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended, non-deterministic, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production" (p.128).

Before the journal writing activity, ESL students and JSL students in small groups spoke in English for 10 minutes, then spoke in Japanese for 10 minutes, and decided which topics they would like to write journal entries about. Each group came up with 10 topics. Examples of student-generated topics include: Last weekend, favorite movies, favorite J-pop groups, favorite sports to play or watch, best place to go shopping, best place to hang out, favorite anime, favorite restaurant, favorite YouTuber, favorite website, favorite actor/actress, favorite free time activity, tell a story from last year, tell a story from junior high school, tell a story from elementary school, tell a story from a vacation, which university do you want to go to?, and more. After that, every week from everyone's topics I would choose three topics and write them on the board, and students would have to choose one and write about it. The idea was that student-generated topics would be more interesting and relatable than topics a teacher would choose.

The ESL students had to write one page (skipping every other line), while the JSL students had to write a half-page with skipped lines. The requirements gradually increased throughout the school year, so that eventually ESL students were writing three pages with skipped lines, while the JSL students were writing a page and a half with skipped lines. Skipping lines was important for corrections.

ESL and JSL students would switch journals and do peer correction before the journals were due. This gave them some autonomy because they talked about the content, different mistakes made, and/or tried to explain to each other in a mix of English and Japanese about what was OK in their respective languages. It turned each student into a kind of mini-teacher, which gave them confidence, and they started asking each other more often for help, even long before journals were due or I asked them to. This created many communicative discussions based on language learning and exchange. This also helped to reduce anxiety, as making mistakes was normalized and something to laugh and puzzle at instead of fear. Unfortunately, permission was not granted to show examples of student writing. Please see Appendix B for journal corrections for ESL entries.

Activity Three: Atypical Extensive Reading with Book Circle

The third and best activity was an atypical extensive reading (ER) with book circle. ER is defined by Nation (2009) as when learners read large amounts of simplified texts where “95 to 98% of the running words in a text are already familiar to the learner.” This processing of large amounts comprehensible input should improve learners' speed of reading, reading comprehension, spelling, familiarity

with genres, and confidence with reading (Nation, 2009).

Unfortunately, the ESL graded readers available at the school library were fairly limited, and yet far outnumbered the JSL graded readers available. Both sets of students were allowed to read with the help of dictionaries, however the percentage of words already familiar to students was far lower than Nation's recommended 95-98%; for ESL learners it was 90 to 95% while for JSL learners it was much less. However, with a bit of internet sleuthing, news and magazine articles, word puzzles, jokes, short stories, and myths on websites for JSL learners are easily found. These texts just needed slight tweaking in order to make them more comprehensible (such as dictionary definitions of harder words, furigana over kanji, cultural difference explanations, and so on). The school librarians were extremely helpful and pulled Japanese picture books and comics from the elementary school level for us. Although it was an imperfect system and not a pure or perfect extensive reading, I still felt it was better for them to begin to enjoy independently reading than not try reading.

Both ESL and JSL students had to keep word counts and new vocabulary lists with definitions and example sentences. Only the ESL students were also required to keep track of number of words, reading level, titles, and authors. Once every 2 weeks the students would get together in book

circles and talk about what they had read. They were required to just summarize the story, talk about their favorite scenes, some good and bad points of the story or reading experience, and whether they recommended the book or not. Each student spoke for a minimum of 3 minutes. Students had double-sided handouts in Japanese and English to fill out about each group member's book. At the end of the semester, each student spoke in front of the class about their favorite text for 3 minutes. Please see Appendix C for examples of these handouts.

This ER program, although atypical and imperfect, helped their language skills grow unbelievably. They became faster at reading, increased their vocabulary, learned about new things in their L2, had interesting conversations with some depth, and started to enjoy using their L2 rather than just studying it decontextualized. The hardest part of all of these activities was finding reading materials for the JSL students, but it can be done with some extra effort. The best part of these activities is that students have real communication; gain confidence and language skills; and become more autonomous learners. Student reactions were very positive, and some mentioned that they started to enjoy reading for the first time in their lives. ESL students who took IELTS tests for study abroad programs were accepted in record numbers.

In conclusion, if you have international students join your English classes, it can be daunting at first, but there are a myriad of ways to accommodate them. You can make this an advantage for both ESL and JSL students by focusing on ways to have real communicative practice and interaction. For your own advantage, you can use the JSL students to brush up on your own Japanese or as mini-teachers. There were other activities that I wasn't able to talk about at the 2018 TD/CUE Forum, given the time limit, but if you would like to email me at nicoleamoskowitz@gmail.com, I would be happy to share those other ideas as well.

References

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Author Bio

Nicole Moskowitz has been teaching English as a Second Language in various capacities for 15 years in Japan. Her focus is research that is pragmatic and useful in the classroom, for teachers as well as students. Currently, she is focused on developing students' fluency and autonomy, as well as decreasing feelings of foreign language anxiety. She is also focused on helping teachers by explaining various activities to develop fluency and autonomy. She is currently teaching at Kyoto Sangyo University. In her limited free time, you can find her hiking, doing yoga, reading, and travelling.

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Appendix A: ESL and JSL Listening Vocabulary Quiz Templates

Name: _____ Seat Number: _____
Date: _____ Grade: _____

Checker's Name: _____

English
Japanese

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

名前： 座席番号：

日付：

直した人の名前：

漢字 (かんじ)

音読み (おんよみ) 訓読み (くんよみ)

1

2

3

4

5

Appendix B: Correction Guide for ESL journal entries

sp.=spelling

Example:

- ① happilly
- ② probrems
- ③ favorit
- ④ Junaary
- ⑤ 3th

⑥ elemently skool

g=grammar

Example:

- ① To get Ootoshidama was most happily for me.
- ② Before, I can't used to ride on a roller coaster.
- ③ My sisters and me ___ very excited.
- ④ I was very enjoy to read it.
- ⑤ It was very excited.
- ⑥ Gifu was very snowing and driving ___ ___.

w.c.= word choice

Example:

- ① This was a different book to read.
- ② We prayed and pulled a sacred lot.
- ③ I experienced an albeito in the post office.
- ④ I went to Yamagata to play ski.
- ⑤ We made a snow play.
- ⑥ So, my thinking was written in English.

m.w.= 1 missing word, m.w.x2= 2 missing words, m.w.x3 = 3 missing words, etc.

Example:

① Japanese ____ more bread than rice.

② So, I had a stomach ____ from eating too much.

③ I wanted to ____ the best novel.

④ ____ Three days ____ are going to Tokyo on weekend.

⑤ This story is about Kipper ____ helped ____ small people fight ____ giant men.

pl.=plural (*__y > __ies , __s > __es)

Example:

① ① Point

② Mistake

③ Ability

④ Difficulty

⑤ Guess

⑥ Mess

What was your book about?

It was about

Who was the main character?

The main character was

What was the most interesting part?

The most interesting part was when

Do you recommend this book? Why?

Ask a partner and write their answers!

What was your book about?

It was about

Appendix C: Extensive Reading/ Book Circle Hand-outs for ESL and JSL learners

Name:

Seat Number:

Date:

Who was the main character?

The main character was

What was the most interesting part?
The most interesting part was when

この本をお勧めしますか？ どうして？

パートナーに尋ね、答えを書いてください！

あなたの本は何についてでしたか？

それは～についてでした。

Do you recommend this book? Why?

名前： 座席番号：

日付：

主人公は誰でしたか？

主人公は

あなたの本は何についてでしたか？

それは～についてでした。

一番面白い部分は何でしたか？

一番面白いのは、

主人公は誰でしたか？

主人公は

この本をお勧めしますか？ どうして？

一番面白い部分は何でしたか？

一番面白いのは、

