

## Philosophy and Mechanics of English Education

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Despite more than sixty years and countless yen put towards English education, most ESL students in Japan make disappointingly little progress with English. The barriers are complicated, but not difficult to overcome. While my position and level of influence keeps me from addressing all of the obstacles, I am able to offer my knowledge and experience to possibly assist veteran and rookie teachers alike in considering how they may approach ESL teaching.

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### Part 1 ~ Artful Approach

Looking back on almost twenty years of teaching, I find it difficult to synthesize everything into a mere page or so that can somehow reveal who I am as a teacher. However, if there is one essential lesson I've learned and always impart to young teachers it is that teaching is both an art and a science. Every teacher is trained in the systematic methods learned over years in school and in the classroom. We first become knowledgeable in our field. I was fortunate to study with some of the finest professors in the fields of English (linguistics) and Education at The University of Oregon and UC Berkeley. I not only acquired the necessary knowledge to teach my chosen subject, I was given the wisdom of the "educare method". Too often teachers simply transmit information for students to remember. This information is then spilled out during major tests, and the student is once again empty. Rather than teachers being founts which fill the student's cups, they must learn to draw out and connect the students to the subject (educare). We must understand, empathize, and engage. Having been a foreign language student myself, I find it quite easy to understand and empathize with language students. They are asked to view the world using an entirely different map. One which is familiar in its landmarks, but whose roads are unexplored and intimidating. They rely on us to help them learn the way to their chosen destinations. We should display our own enthusiasm for the materials, and encourage each student's enthusiasm for the subject. Creating multifarious lesson plans and materials of a high standard is the cornerstone of a good classroom experience. Lessons must be diverse, so that they reach everyone while removing boredom that may develop from overuse or

familiarity. A broad tapestry is woven with fundamentals (grammar; vocabulary) forming the warp, and several complimentary subjects (literature; rhetoric; composition; idioms) forming the weft. These combine to create a strong, exciting, and useful education for English language students. The final touches are added with bright and colorful lessons in the culture of the people who use the language. As a language student, I've found that learning about the subject culture is invaluable. It gives students a context for thought. It enables them to gather expressions faster and use them more naturally. They can begin to understand the rhythm and beat at the heart of the language. As they begin to discern nuances, they come to understand the mind of the people which allows them to understand at times even when they do not comprehend. They begin to interpret what they see and hear rather than translate it. Finally, the students must be given as many opportunities as possible to use their growing skills. Student interaction within and without the classroom can help them form more natural expressions. They should be given chances to role play in class to help them develop quick thinking and problem solving skills necessary for handling real-world situations.

Knowledge and materials can only take a teacher so far, though. I have seen some teachers who are incredibly capable of writing textbooks, but are unable to reach students in the classroom effectively. This is where the art of teaching takes the stage. Some of it can be learned, but some of it is inherent. As the cicerones of language we must be gifted with language. We must entertain without being entertainers. A difficult and new path is comfortably followed when your conductor is intriguing. Teachers should learn to vary presentation methods and take into account different learning styles (visual/aural; inductive/deductive; holistic/analytic). Tasks and foci should evolve as the students develop. Each task must be judged by its meaningfulness to the students. Teachers have to note the superficial qualities of the students (interests; reasons for study) and be a quick judge of character to be able to discover the deeper qualities (expectations; needs; handicaps). Teachers must also be quick on their feet, shifting seamlessly whenever a connection is being lost with the students. Correction and leading students back when they are lost is another artful skill. A teacher should make use of tools such as language function, paraphrase, diagrams, time-lines, and all other assorted methods of responding when students are confused. In correction, an artful teacher knows how and when to give both types of feedback, and be open to counter-feedback.

We are guides, not drivers. We seek to make all of our students better people by giving them the most necessary skill for mankind - communication. Language is not simply

another subject to be passed. It is our best hope for relating our thoughts and feelings to everyone so that we may contribute our uniqueness to the world. Communication is a key to sharing everything we have to offer. It will open the door to new friendships and unforgettable experiences. I am confident that I will always be able to fashion the perfect key for each student who wishes to open the door and begin the journey. After all, I was born with the heart of an explorer myself. That's why I became a teacher to students of a language other than my own. I get to explore their world, and I tell them of my own. We draw everyone closer through language. We form a new society of diversity and acceptance. It is noble, and I am proud to have been born a teacher.

## Part 2 ~ The Mechanics

Philosophy is the guiding light, but rolling up your sleeves and doing the job of guide and teacher is a whole other matter. It is after all, the purpose. There are many teachers in academia who have studied and researched education for decades, but are unable to manage a class or course. They perform mental exercises to develop methods with controlled and predictable environments. Their ability to make use of these "ideal methods" in a real classroom is limited. I have seen brilliant people impart volumes of knowledge to classes, but in the end they are reaching no one. To do so, training and experience in a variety of classroom settings is the only way hone your skills. I have developed a general template for courses that covers what I believe are key points while also allowing flexibility.

### *Step 1 - Student Evaluation*

Before any course may begin, a teacher must take a moment and talk with each student. An evaluation should take between 5~10 minutes, generally on the lower end. The evaluation begins with the instructor putting the student at ease. Begin with a simple greeting and the briefest of small talk. Once the student has been warmed up to converse, you begin asking prepared questions for the student to answer. There should always be more questions prepared than you intend to ask, and the questions should vary in difficulty and subject matter. They should not meander, but seem to follow a general theme if possible. The student is evaluated on five categories. They are: comprehension, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and independent engagement and use of specialized forms. Next, the student should be asked to tell a short story (one

minute or so) to determine the student's ability to compose. Once again, the student is evaluated using the above categories with the additions of format/structure and quality. Finally, the student is asked to think of a good question for the instructor. This should be answered honestly and with brevity. This concludes the student evaluation. With the information gained by the evaluation, the teacher is able to consider student needs and interests to make the learning experience more pleasurable and useful. Furthermore, points of weakness can be targeted and the student may be placed in the appropriate course for the best development.

### *Step 2 – Course Planning*

The proper course determines everything. It is the path to the destination to which the student seeks. An incorrect path will discourage students and eventually lead them nowhere. Usually three possible courses are enough to suit the needs of most classes. They are simply: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. The advanced course will likely be eliminated during most terms. Often the number of students is too low to justify it. It is more efficient to create pair classes (two students) or man-to-man (one student) per student and teacher's consideration. These three course should be supplemented by various elective subjects and classes, e.g. debate or rhetoric, composition, cultural studies, idioms, and specialized test classes (TOEIC, Eiken, etc.).

A useful course format/syllabus should also be farther reaching than may seem practical. This has the potential to motivate students beyond expectations. When one wishes to build muscle, one doesn't stick with what is doable.

The course needs to be flexible as well. Rigidity doesn't allow for student needs and it can become uninteresting and stale. There should be parts which are unplugged and replaced, or eliminated due to unforeseen issues. Additionally, courses tend to evolve organically. Teachers may also make changes which are improvements discovered via further training and experience.

### Summation

All of this is well and good. Unfortunately, it doesn't answer the most common question asked by students which is, "How can I become better at English?" The answer tends to take people aback. They seek a magic pill that will transform them overnight. I guarantee there is no such thing. The makers of language skill products and services are misleading people for profit. The development of language skills takes years, and for the truly motivated, it may never end. Academia has come up with a solution, or a compromise. I ask people to think back to how they learned their native tongue. Did they learn it in weeks or months? Never. Did it involve just listening and repeating what an audio recording said? Hardly. Did you use one book or one type of book? No.

The truth is that second language class must be approached like any native language class. The caveat being that we in ESL don't have twelve years with students. Things are further complicated by the fact that students will almost never have the benefit of parent and friend interaction. This can be addressed by having the students create their own "English buddies". There is also the problem of the environment. If the student is overseas, studying in the country whose language they are learning, then they have the benefit of immersion. This is less often true than it should be. All students should study abroad, even for a short time. When this is not possible, the teacher and classmates should try to create "bubble locales" or periods, possibly outside the usual setting. This may involve special class-time or events.

In the end, the best thing to do is incorporate all of the key components of language instruction, albeit in a highly condensed form. These are: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Reading should involve texts and literature. Writing should include small, regular entries in an English diary and essays or other compositions. Speaking and listening are entirely intertwined. Speaking and listening tend to be the main point for ESL students, but real, lifelong education requires all of the parts. Speaking and listening are student/teacher, student/student, and (case allowing) student/unknown.

With the addition of supplemental courses, students will gain a full understanding of the language.

This will no doubt be the best method until the day when we find that magic pill. If I find it, I will throw it in the sea. I am a teacher. I always have been. No magical pill will take that from me.

## 本学における教育研究活動と社会的活動の抱負：

## 英語教育における仕組みと理念

Ashley N. M Hyatt

はじめに

幸運なことに私はオレゴン大学とカリフォルニア大学パークリー校で、言語学と教育学分野では最高峰の教授たちのもとで学ぶことができた。そこで私は必要な知識のみならず、教育方法も習得した。私が言語学教師の職を選択した理由は、より良い人材を育成するためであり、また人間にとって一番必要なスキル（コミュニケーション）を教えることができるからである。

全てを短くまとめるのは難しいが、20年にわたるこれまでの教師としての生活を振り返りながら、本学における教育研究活動と社会的活動に次のように取り組みたいと考えている。

### 1. 巧みにアプローチする

私が学んできた中でひとつだけ伝えることができるとすれば「教える」ということは「技術」と「理論」だということである。教師は単にノートを取ることと暗記することの情報のみを学生に伝える。しかし、それでは情報は頭からすぐに溢れ出し、また空っぽになってしまうだけである。教師は学生の知識を満たす噴水の役目をするのではなく、学生の知識を引き出し、教師と学生がお互いに熱意を持って課題に取り組めるようにしなければならない。このような、より良い授業の基礎を作るためには、多様な授業計画を創造し、高水準の教材を用いることも必要である。

とある19世紀の偉大な言語学者は、『言語とは音楽のようなものである』と述べている。

“Tell me a few words, but teach me the rhythm”

学生は意味合いが分かり始めるとネイティブスピーカーの心が分かるようになる。これは言葉が理解できなくても意味が伝わるということである。学生たちは訳したものではなく、何を見て、何を聞いたかを理解し始める。

次に高めたスキルを使うため、できるだけ多くの機会が与えられなければならない。そうすることによって、学生も日常的に互いに自然な形で英語を用いて表現することができるようになる。

教師は（エンターテイナーとしてではなく）豊かな言語的才能を持ち、また、様々な習得法や変化に富んだプレゼンテーション方法を学ぶ責任がある。なぜなら、学生の能力が向上するにつれて、教師と学生の課題の難易度は高くなるからである。

### 2. 英語教育の方法

数十年に渡って教育の世界において研究を続けている教師が数多くいる。しかし、授業管理がうまくできない教師もいる。豊富な知識を持った素晴らしい教師であっても、残念なことに学生には何も伝わっていないということもしばしばある。そのようにならないためにも、教師は学生に対してさまざまな授業を経験させることが必要であり、それがスキルを磨く唯一の方法である。

#### ステップ1. 学生のレベル評価

授業前に学生と5~10分程度の話をする。まずは学生が楽な気持ちで会話ができるように、ちょっとした挨拶から始める。慣れてきたら予め準備しておいた質問を始める。あらゆる内容を想定して様々な質問を準備しておく。質問はできるだけ一般的なテーマに沿ったものにする。

次に学生を6つのカテゴリー (comprehension, fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, independent engagement, Specialized form) で診断する。学生自身に1分程度の短い文章を考えてもらう。

上記6つのカテゴリーに文章の内容や構成の出来栄を考慮して、生徒の能力を診断する。

最後に学生に質問をさせる。教師は正直かつ簡潔に答える方がよい。

これを通して、教師は学生に何が必要で、より楽しく役に立つ授業内容にするにはどうすればよいかを導き出すことができる。

### ステップ2. コース・プランニング

すべては適切なコース選びで決まる。

彼らが捜し求めている進路が、もし間違っていたとすれば、それは学生のやる気をそぎ、結局はどこへも導くことはできない。たいていは初級、中級、上級の3コースで十分だ。上級コースに関しては学生数が少ないため学期中に消滅することもあるかもしれない。その場合には、少人数や1対1の授業に変更する方が効率的と考える。この3コースには、討論、修辞学、文章構成、教養課程、慣用句、TOIECなどの様々な課題を用意する必要がある。

有益な授業計画は目的を達成するまでに多少の遠回りをしたほうが、実用的であるように見える。これは予想以上に学生のやる気を起こさせる動機づけになる

また、授業では柔軟性も必要である。過度な堅苦しさは時に必要とされず、つまらなく、古臭いとまで受け止められるかもしれない。

教師も学生もテキストや教材に依存している部分がある。英会話教室や教材のメーカーなどは利益を重視するあまり、人々に誤解を与える場合がある。教材の効果がすぐに表れるように約束されたものは、むしろそれは使うに値しない。英語の上達には時間が掛かるものだ。

次にどれくらいの期間、利用するかを決める。素晴らしいテキストは1年を要する場合もある一方、数週間もしくは数か月で終わるかもしれない。また、教師と学生は学習計画に合ったものを選ばなければならない。

### 3. 社会的活動について

私はこれまで、二つの大学でのインターンシップ、UCパークリー校、AEA、英会話スクール、第一工業大学などで人材育成や教育環境改善など英語を通じた社会貢献やエクステンション活動を行ってきている。

また、私は素晴らしい観光資源のあるこの鹿児島をもっと世界に知らせたいと思っており、外国人観光客のためのボランティアガイドを考えている。

鹿児島県立短期大学においても、オープンキャンパス、公開講座などが開かれているので、それらに対して通訳ガイドの育成やワークショップといった活動を通じて社会的活動を行いたいと考えている。

おわりに

私は学生に対して「どのようにして母国語を学んだのか」と質問することがあるが、第二言語も母国語と同じように身に付くようになるはずだと考える。

英語が上達しない理由には環境的な問題もある。もし、海外にいるなら英語漬けの生活を送ることが出来る。英語習得を希望するすべての学生は海外へ行くべきであるが、それが不可能であるなら、教師はできるだけその環境に近い状況を創り出すこともひとつの方法と考える。

語学力の向上には、時間を要する。

意欲的な姿勢があれば、それを成し遂げることが出来るに違いない。