

English Lessons Using the Tea Ceremony

Manami Tanaka and Junko Matsuzaki Carreira

茶道を取り入れた英語授業の実践
田中 真奈美・カレイラ松崎 順子

Abstract

Many correspondence course students have a long break away from studying English, which they feel they are not good at. Therefore, it is important to think about how to improve their motivation to study English. This lesson plan is focused on improving students' communication skills during a short period of tuition. The goals of the lessons were for students to participate actively in the lessons and to experience hands-on activities through the tea ceremony. After the final lesson, we asked the students to fill out a questionnaire about the hands-on activities using the tea ceremony. According to the results, most of them were satisfied with the lessons and they enjoyed making the presentations. The hands-on activities and presentations about the tea ceremony in English worked well and it was fun for students. This lesson also succeeded in reducing their English learning anxiety.

Keywords

tea ceremony, intensive course, hands-on activities, culture

1. Introduction

Many correspondence course students have a long break away from studying English, which they feel they are not good at. The English levels of the students vary: Some students are in grade pre-1 level of the Test in Practical English Proficiency and some are in grade 5. Therefore, it is difficult to study English in the same class.

Some students have a strong English learning anxiety. At the welcome parties after the entrance ceremonies and the orientations at our university, most students say that they worry about English lessons. They do not want to take any English courses if they are not required. They are afraid that they will not be able to perform well in English lessons. Most students say that they are not good at English and do not like it. Thus, it is important to think about how to improve their motivation to study English and to reduce their English learning anxiety.

2. Correspondence Course Programs

Several researchers have conducted studies on correspondence course programs. For example, Kuroda et al. (2008) studied the effectiveness of the combination of schooling and e-Learning. Nagao et al. (2007) studied the educational significance and agenda in a two-year nursing correspondence course. However, there has been little research focusing on English correspondence course programs. Hiranoi (2004) conducted summer English lessons that used movie and drama workshops. She discussed how the hands-on activities were effective for English learning.

3. Total Physical Response (TPR)

Total Physical Response (TPR) was introduced by Asher (1965), showing how language can be taught using commands: A teacher gives the command and models the movement, and students perform the action. Students are not asked to speak, only to try to obey the command and perform the action. Asher (1972) revealed that adult TPR students of German who had only 32 hours of instruction outperformed two control groups who had 40 hours and 80 hours of traditional instruction. Watanabe and Kawabuchi (2008) found that in a Japanese junior high school, TPR was an appropriate and effective teaching method for promoting acquisition of comprehensible input in a natural way and leading to its long-term retention for active use later. When they compared the results of tests administered before and after the summer vacation, the control group tended to have lower scores on the reading test, while the TPR group maintained their previous scores. This showed that TPR helped students retain the ability to read words and sentences.

4. The Tea Ceremony

There have been several studies related to the tea ceremony. For example, Takehana (2006) discussed the cultural meaning of the tea ceremony, focusing on the Hansho-an teahouse. She discussed the tea ceremony as a symbol of Japanese culture and the spirit of the tea ceremony. Sakuraba et al (2000) revealed that holding a tea ceremony was an effective tool for educating students with either auditoral or visual handicaps. Kawamorita (2009) studied the tea ceremony as a means of learning Japanese culture. Kawamorita emphasized the importance of learning Japanese culture. As seen above, several studies on the tea ceremony have been conducted. However, we found that there has been little research on introducing the tea ceremony into English lessons.

5. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to improve the students' English learning motivation and reduce their English learning anxiety by applying hands-on activities in English lessons. This practice was focused on improving their communication skills during a short period of tuition. The goals of this class were for the students to participate more actively in this class. The tea ceremony was used as a hands-on activity for this research.

We believe that introducing Japanese culture to foreigners is important. When Japanese people meet foreigners, they are often asked about Japanese culture. Therefore, it is important to be able to explain Japanese culture in English. We chose the tea ceremony for this study because correspondence course students are usually in their 30's and 40's, so they may be interested in it. Also, the tea ceremony includes many Japanese cultural aspects such as calligraphy, ceramics, lacquering, and architecture. So, it is a good activity for learning Japanese culture. Furthermore, the tea ceremony has many hands-on activities such as entering the tea room, making a cup of tea, and viewing the utensils, so we believe that it is a type of TPR. Through it, the students can learn English using movements so they can study English more easily and

enjoyably.

Based on the above considerations, the following research questions are addressed:

- 1) Is it possible to improve students' English learning motivation and reduce their English learning anxiety?
- 2) Are English lessons using hands-on activities related to the tea ceremony effective?
- 3) Can the students feel that learning English is fun after finishing the hands-on activities?
- 4) Are the students aware of the importance of learning culture?

6. Methods

6.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 19 freshmen of a correspondence course majoring in child psychology at a private college in Japan. They took English Communication I, an intensive course. There were 5 males and 14 females. Their ages ranged from 20 to 50 years old. Lessons are offered 6 times a year, two summer intensive courses, two 3-day (Saturday, Sunday, and Monday) courses, and two two-weekend courses. English Communication I is offered twice: one summer intensive course and one 3-day course.

6.2. Lessons

The students took 12 lessons (for five days) for 90 minutes in August 2007. The textbook *English for Use in The Way of Tea* (Urasenke International Division, 1993) was used. First, students studied the technical words of the tea ceremony and learned the basic etiquette of the *Omotesenke* style tea ceremony. Then, the students chose a theme related to the tea ceremony and created presentations. The focus was on how to explain the tea ceremony etiquette to foreigners. When the students made their presentations for the final lesson, we rented a tea room and invited some foreigner guests. We used the tea room in Adachi Local Museum.

The lessons were conducted as follows:

First Day

First and Second Periods

The students learned about the tea ceremony in English and memorized specific terms.

Second Day

Third and Fourth Periods

A tea ceremony master lectured on the tea ceremony in Japanese. The students discussed it in English.

Third Day

Fifth and Sixth Periods

The students created scripts in English for presentations where they introduced the tea ceremony to foreigners. A teacher checked the scripts and gave feedback to them.

Fourth Day

Seventh and Eighth Periods

The students practiced their presentations in English.

Fifth Day

Ninth through Twelfth Periods

In a tea room, the students experienced the tea ceremony and made presentations in English. In Manabipia, the learning center of Adachi ward, the students reflected on the lessons.

6.3. Questionnaires

We conducted a questionnaire of the students who attended the 2007 summer intensive course. The questionnaire was specifically designed for the purpose of the research. It consisted of 7 items, assessing various student attitudes toward English learning and cultures. Each item of the closed-ended statements was rated with a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The closed section of the questionnaire consisted of the following seven statements:

1. Learning English is fun.
2. I want to speak English with foreigners.
3. I want to introduce Japanese culture to foreigners.
4. I want to take Japanese cultural lessons, including the tea ceremony.
5. I want to learn about foreign culture.
6. I want to talk to foreigners about culture.
7. It is worth learning English in order to learn about foreign cultures and introduce Japanese culture to foreigners.

Students also wrote freely about what they thought about these three questions;

1. How was this class where students learned about the tea ceremony in English?
2. Please write your reflections about your presentations.
3. Please write your opinions and reflections about this class.

Table 1 Results of Question 1 through Question 7

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7
1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
2	3	1	4	3	3	4	0
3	10	8	11	8	6	7	9
4	6	9	4	8	10	8	10

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree

7. Results

7.1. Results of Question 1 through Question 7

After finishing the course, the researchers conducted a questionnaire to find out about the students' opinions and feelings. Nineteen students answered this questionnaire. Table 1 shows the results of question 1 to question 7. The numbers under each item indicate the number of students who chose each answer.

7.2 Results of Free Writing

1) "How was this class where students learned about the tea ceremony in English?" Answers to this question are divided into four categories.

It was fun - 12 students

- *Hands-on activities were fun.*
- *It was fun and I felt that I should study English harder.*
- *I am interested in both English and the tea ceremony so this class was fun because I could learn both.*
- *It was more fun than I expected.*
- *It was great fun and I could learn in a comfortable situation.*
- *Honestly, it was fun.*

Using the tea ceremony was interesting - 8 students

- *I had a slightly negative image of the tea ceremony and that it was difficult. After finishing this class, however, my image of the tea ceremony changed and I came to be interested in it.*
- *This class was a good chance for me to learn the tea ceremony.*
- *I learned a lot. We studied the tea ceremony and learned how to explain its etiquette.*
- *I had wanted to learn the tea ceremony and it helped me to learn English.*
- *It was very new to me because I did not know the details of the tea ceremony.*
- *It was the first time for me to learn the tea ceremony and I felt that I want to be a person who can introduce Japanese culture to foreigners.*

Learning Japanese culture is important - 7 students

- *Not many Japanese people can introduce Japanese culture to people in English but it is important. I want to study English and introduce Japanese culture to more people.*
- *I learned the difficulties of explaining Japanese culture. To explain Japanese culture, we have to understand it deeply. I felt that we should learn more about Japanese culture.*
- *I had a great time learning about Japanese culture.*

Negative answer - 2 students

- *We should learn the tea ceremony in details in Japanese first, though I knew that time was limited.*
- *The instructor of the tea ceremony should use more English in the tea room.*

2) "Please write your reflections about your presentations."

All comments are positive about making presentations.

- *It was fun and we could communicate well with other students.*
- *All classmates became good friends because we had to practice many times and work together.*
- *I had to study hard because this was a group work. It was successful.*
- *It was a good exercise to work together because I was not good at English.*
- *It was a good opportunity for correspondence course students because we did not have many chances to communicate with other students.*
- *I was very nervous but my group members supported me a lot.*
- *I could feel a little more comfortable with English after finishing the activity, because we had to think and create the presentation in English.*

3) "Please write your opinions and reflections about this class."

All students' comments are positive and there are no negative comments.

- *We had to take many lessons during the summer intensive course, so we were completely exhausted. However, in this class, we could think and practice using movement, so we could participate in this class positively.*
- *My feelings of dislike towards English diminished and this class was really fun.*
- *This class was not lecture-oriented, so I could enjoy learning.*
- *Using the tea ceremony was fun and I want to learn more English and about Japanese culture.*
- *Learning useful English is important for Japanese people and I could learn those phrases from this class.*
- *Introducing Japanese culture in English is suitable for the purpose of this class, English Communication I.*
- *We all enjoyed it. I was very satisfied.*
- *This class was the best English class I had taken.*

8. Discussion

8-1 *Is it possible to improve students' English learning motivation and reduce their English learning anxiety?*

Twelve students said that this class was fun and that using the tea ceremony was interesting. All students' comments for the presentations were positive. For example, one student said that "*It was fun and we could communicate well with other students.*" Another student stated, "*This class was not lecture-oriented, so I could enjoy learning.*" Many students commented that their English learning anxiety diminished and that they felt learning English was fun. Therefore, this lesson plan worked well for this purpose.

8-2 *Are English lessons using hands-on activities related to the tea ceremony effective?*

There was only one negative comment about using hands-on activities related to the tea ceremony. Although one student said that they should learn about the tea ceremony in Japanese first, 18 students gave positive comments. For example, one student said, "Not many Japanese people can introduce Japanese

culture to people in English but it is important". Another student said that this class was a good chance for her to learn the tea ceremony. Further more, as seen in Table 1, some students realized the importance of learning English and Japanese culture. Therefore, we conclude that English lessons using hands-on activities related to the tea ceremony were effective.

8-3 Can students feel that learning English is fun after finishing the hands-on activities during English lessons?

According to the students reflections, they thought that learning English was fun and wanted to speak English with foreigners. They learned the importance of communication. For example, one student said that it was fun and that students could communicate well with other students. Another student stated that it was a good exercise in working together because he was not good at English. They had to communicate with their classmates in order to practice for the presentations that they had to make at the end of the course. This made the students develop close relationships with their classmates. At the same time, it was a good opportunity for correspondence course students to become close to each other and it was fun for everyone. The students usually study by themselves at home and do not have many chances to communicate with their classmates. Therefore, we conclude that students felt that learning English was fun after finishing the hands-on activities during English lessons.

8-4 Were the students aware of the importance of learning culture?

In question 7, "It is worth learning English in order to learn about foreign cultures and introduce Japanese culture," nine students chose "mostly agree" and ten students chose "agree." On the other hand, they want to learn and talk about foreign cultures. All students agreed that it is worth learning English in order to learn about foreign cultures and introduce Japanese culture. Some students stated in their free reflections that it is important to learn about Japanese culture in order to understand foreign cultures. Another student said that using the tea ceremony was fun and that she wants to learn more English and about Japanese culture. From these students' comments, we conclude that students were aware of the importance of learning Japanese culture.

9. Conclusion

This research used the tea ceremony as hands-on activities in English lessons for correspondence course students. The results showed that the participating students were aware of the importance of learning Japanese culture and communicated well with other classmates, which is usually difficult for correspondence course students. Furthermore, the students practiced enthusiastically during the lessons and prepared their presentations well. Several students said that this class was the best English class they had taken. Thus, it can be said that English lessons using the tea ceremony seem to be suitable for correspondence course students.

There has been only a little research focusing on English lessons in correspondence course programs.

Therefore, we should continue to collect more data and create more hands-on activities for improving correspondence course students' motivation for learning English.

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