

Analyzing Characteristics of and Promoting Ways for Communication in the EFL Teaching in Elementary Schools in Korea

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Abstract. The study was to explore the characteristics of and promoting ways for communication shown in a good EFL in elementary school. The five types of communication were found three in the teacher-focused (e.g., teacher vs. whole students; teacher and one speaker, listeners, and bystanders; and students' uniformed communication) and two in the student-focused (e.g., student's free communication and communication with IT materials). As for the flows of communication, the lessons for the both third and fourth grades were mostly the teacher-focused, however the student-focused was increased as the lessons went on. The promoting ways for communication were divided into the aspects of contents, materials, and activities by customizing lessons to students, minimizing anxiety, and evoking student's active participation. It suggested that it needs more research to provide guidance and education for teachers to reconstruct curriculum.

Keywords: good lesson, EFL teaching, communication

1 Introduction

Researches on good instruction have been conducted not only in the area of language arts but in other subjects. The characteristics of the good lesson are positive classroom environment, high level of concentration, clear lesson structure and individual motivation (Meyer, 2004). The aims of English as a foreign language (EFL) curriculum in elementary school are to improve students' levels of basic communication skills and increase interests in English (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2009). To accomplish the purpose, teachers need to strive to develop suitable activities. There are some researches on communication in English lessons but these researches mainly focus on communication, not on 'good lessons in EFL'. Therefore, it is essential to explore in what kind of activities in communication boosted students' communication skills. In this research, it aims to explore the characteristics of communication and ways to improve such communication in the good English class.

2 Literature Review

In the elementary level, the goals of English are to 'get attention and interests and understand and utilize basic English using in daily life'. Kim (2010) told the common interaction in English class was following teachers' commands and answering simple questions asked by the teacher as a group or as a whole. Meyer (2004) stated that there were ten characteristics of good lessons in the relationship between a research on 'good lesson' and communication, and he introduced 'meaning providing communication'. Savignon (2001) also mentioned the essence of communication focused on English class was students' active participation in the activities. Therefore, it emphasized the role of teacher in communication. According to Thornbury (1996) and Lockhart (1996), teachers should ask meaningful questions and focus on what students want to speak in communication. In the foreign language class, most of interaction is done by teacher initiation, student response and teacher's feedback on student's response. It is summarized as IRF structure. Previous researches have focused on communication and interaction in the English lesson, however, there are few studies on the characteristics of a good English lesson in elementary level. Therefore this research explores characteristics of and promoting ways for communication which is one of characteristics in good English class in elementary.

3 Research Method

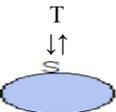
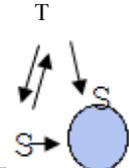
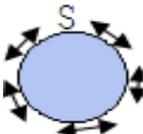
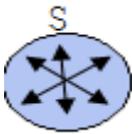
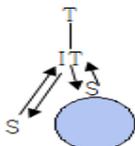
To select the good lessons, the Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS) has provided a service of providing information and uploading some video clips recorded in classroom on its website, called Edunet. The lesson clips are chosen through national competition of the good instruction among teachers, and uploaded by KERIS so all teachers could actively use them. In the research, total 24 lessons were chosen: 13 were from the third grade and 11 were from the fourth. The lesson clips were played and transcribed for analysis. Then a tree map was designed to represent activities and characteristics of communication shown in the lesson to find out the major communication types. Most lessons showed a differentiated structure in the introduction, development (beginning, middle and end) and conclusion parts. The frequency of each part was analyzed to observe which type was dominant. Finally, various methods used to promote communication were analyzed.

4 Results

4.1 Five types of communication in English lesson

In the research, the communication in English lesson for the third and fourth grade classes was classified into five types which showed some characteristics in common.

Table 1. Types of communication in English lesson

types of communication	symbol	formula	Teacher-centered vs. Student-centered	explanation
teacher and whole students	△		teacher>student	Teacher asks or explains to whole students, and students as a whole answer uniformly.
teacher and one speaker, listeners, and bystanders	▲		teacher>student	Teacher asks a question to one student and the student answers back. Teacher gives feedback. Others listen to them as either participants or bystanders.
Students' uniformed communication	□		student>teacher	Without teacher's involvement, students talk in a uniform way. They talk altogether or divide into two groups and ask and answer each other.
student's free communication	■		student>teacher	Students participate and communicate individually or as partners or as group. Various education materials are presented. Teachers mitigate and provide help to students with difficulties.
communication with IT materials	☆		teacher>student	Students answer or repeat with IT materials provided by teachers, answer questions in paper, or with pictures. Students ask and listen in IT materials.

4.2 Patterns of communication

The steps of the lesson were classified into three parts; introduction, development and conclusion. The pattern of the communication was mainly the teacher-centered for both grades. Until the beginning in the development the teacher-centered communication was dominant, and after the middle part of the development the student-centered communication was presented. For the third graders individual presentation and questions were asked after the uniformed communication was done in the introduction part.

4.3 Promoting ways for communication

Teacher struggled to present different activities according to different levels of learners within the same class. Activities with students' different levels of English proficiency were prepared and the students choose the suitable activities according to their levels. At the end of the lesson students did a self check and saw if they achieved their goal. It helped students to actively participate and promoted communication. Teachers adjusted and tailored the materials reflecting students' levels as well. Ways used to promote communication showed three characteristics: the class was designed especially for students; the methods were used to lower the affective filter and get rid of anxiety; and teacher did their best to make the students involve actively.

5 Conclusion

The result in the research showed that the communication could be classified into five types with the teacher-centered (e.g., teacher and whole students; teacher and one speaker, listeners, and bystanders; and students' uniformed communication) as well as the student-centered (e.g., student's free communication; and communication with IT materials). Regarding the flow of the communication, it presented that in the beginning it started as the teacher-focused but as the lesson continued the center of the communication shifted towards students. It meant that teacher altered the lesson to reflect students' level of English and to lower their anxiety. To encourage them to participate actively in class, teachers focused on students' interests. Also most of the teachers did not use the textbook directly, instead they altered and tailored activities and materials based on the textbook. Nunan (1987) pointed out that interactions in EFL were mostly decided by teachers, and even with the same curriculum in the same grade teachers tended to reform the lessons according to the students'.

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