

Voices from the Field: Creating Positive Engagement in the EFL Classroom

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Teaching Contexts

- Level: Senior high school (12th grade)
- Class size: 20
- Class meetings: 50 minutes, 4 times a week
- Textbook: *Vision Quest English and Expression II Ace*, published by Keirinkan (2018)

Problem

My students have difficulties remembering grammar points, phrases, and words. I used to use traditional grammar teaching: I made students repeat after me and I explained the target grammar rules. However, I saw that my students got bored and some of them fell asleep. I realized that teacher-centered teaching takes away students' interest in English, and they cannot remember grammar points, phrases, and words since they do not get to use them.

Solutions

Since my students are in 12th grade and will take an entrance exam for universities, I hope they will improve their four skills in English. Through activities in which students use all four language skills, I aim to enable them to use phrases and words they learn in the textbook and get interested in communicating in English. Also, I would like them to learn how to communicate with others in English. After learning about focus-on-form instruction, I decided to try it in my classes. By implementing collaboration in focus-on-form activities, I would like to provide opportunities for my students to engage in their classes more actively.

Here are the activities I used in class as solutions:

- Focus-on-form activities (students do communicative activities using the grammar points in the textbook and exchange their opinions in pairs)
- Conversation strategy practice (using conversation openers, conversation closers, shadowing, rejoinder)
- Performance test (speaking)

The Appendix shows an example of a lesson that implements all of these elements in lesson 9 from *English and Expression II*.



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After implementing this change in the first semester, I saw my students' confidence grow in the performance test. Based on the results of the performance test and my survey, more than 50% of students felt that they were able to use conversation strategies. As for speaking, many students answered that at the beginning of the semester, they could only talk for less than 1 minute, but now almost half of the students answered they could talk for 1 to 2 minutes. It seems that the timed conversations helped them improve their speaking. At the end of the semester, students wrote comments such as "I come to like English more," "I enjoy talking with others through group works," "I could express what I want to say in English more than before," and "Please continue this group work." However, a few students hated communicating with other students and working in different pairs in every class. So, in the future, I will explain how important it is to communicate with others even if their partners are not their close friends. I will tell my students communication is the most important skill when they start working.

Conclusion

I believe that it is important to enable students to have conversations with each other in student-centered lessons.

References

- Nomura, K. et al. (2017). *Vision Quest English and Expression II Ace*. Keirinkan.
- Sato, K., Iwai, R., Kato, M., & Kushiro, M. (2009). Focus-on-form instruction (FFI) and its effect on student learning. In A. M. Stoke (Ed.), *JALT2008 Conference Proceedings*. (p. 522). Tokyo: JALT.

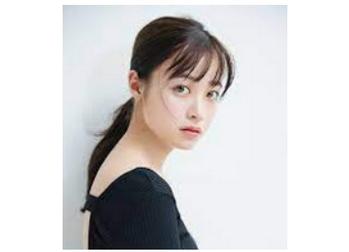
About the author

Yuria Tajima attends the MA TESOL program at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies. She is interested in how the Communicative Language Teaching method can be used to create positive engagement in EFL contexts, including integrating speaking and writing skills in focus-on-form instruction.

Appendix

English Expressions II: Lesson 9 現在完了形

1. (Input) Who are A, B, C, and D?

	<p>(A)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have sung and danced for 9 years. 2. We have attended the Grammy Awards four times. 3. We are _____. 	<p><i>Check your answers with a partner.</i></p> <p>A: Who do you think A is? B: Well (Let me see)... I think A is _____ . What do YOU think? A: I think so, too. (I don't think so. I think A is _____.) B: OK. Who do you think B is? A: Well (Let me see)... I think B is _____ . What do YOU think? B: I think so, too. (I don't think so. I think B is _____.)</p>
	<p>(B)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have played table tennis for 19 years. 2. I have won an Olympic medal twice. 3. I am _____. 	
	<p>(C)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have been an actress for 11 years. 2. I have played Chihiro since March. 3. I am _____. 	
	<p>(D)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have taught English for 3 and a half years. 2. I have been to Korea more than 6 times. 3. I am _____. 	

2. (Focus on Form) Fill in the blanks.

1. I **have taught** English ²for 3 and a half years.

私は ²() 英語を ¹() 。

2. I **have won** an Olympic medal ²twice.

私は ²() オリンピックメダルを ¹() 。

3. I **have played** golf ²since last October.

私は ²() ゴルフを ¹() 。

4. I **have been** to the short course ²twice.

私は ²() ショートコースに ¹() 。

5. I **have won** 1st place ²more than 150 times in this sport.

私は ²() このスポーツで一位を ¹() 。

6. I **have lived** in Hawaii ²for three years.

私は ²() ハワイに ¹() 。

3. (Focus on Meaning) Grammar Presentation

have + (never) 過去分詞形 + (~times, before)

どんな意味?

have + 過去分詞形 + (for~, since~)

どんな意味?

4. (Output Pt. 1) Read the sentences and choose the correct word or words in ().

1. I (started / have started) to play golf in 2021.
2. My friends started to play golf at the time. So, I (wanted / have wanted) to play golf too.
3. Since then, I (practiced / have practiced) golf for 10 months.
4. I (went/ have gone) to a short course twice.
5. I (got / have got) a bad score last time.
6. I (didn't practice / haven't practiced) last week because of my job.
7. I (have booked/ haven't booked) the lesson yet. But I hope I can play golf better.

5. (Output Pt. 2) Write your answers for Questions 1 ~ 5 and a ~ e.

Name	Questions	Your Answers
	1. Have you ever met someone famous?	
	2. Have you ever played a video game?	
	3. Have you ever lost something important?	
	4. Have you ever been to an amusement park? (*amusement park: 遊園地)	
	5. Have you ever traveled outside Aichi?	
More Questions		Your Answers
	a) Who did you meet? When?	I met _____ .
	b) What game did you play? When?	I played _____ .
	c) What did you lose? When?	I lost _____ .
	d) What park did you go to? When?	I went to _____ .
	e) Where did you go? When?	I went to _____ .

Now, interview your partner with the following questions, and write down their answers.

Name	Questions	His/Her Answers
	1. Have you ever met someone famous?	
	2. Have you ever played a video game?	
	3. Have you ever lost something important?	
	4. Have you ever been to an amusement park? (*amusement park: 遊園地)	
	5. Have you ever traveled outside Aichi?	
More Questions		His/Her Answers
a) Who did you meet? When?	I met _____ .	
b) What game did you play? When?	I played _____ .	
c) What did you lose? When?	I lost _____ .	
d) What park did you go to? When?	I went to _____ .	
e) Where did you go? When?	I went to _____ .	

6. Reporting: Ask a new partner the following questions.

Questions	Answers
1. Who did you talk to?	
1. Has he/she ever met someone famous?	
2. Has he/she ever played a video game?	
3. Has he/she ever lost something important?	
4. Has he/she ever been to an amusement park? (*amusement park: 遊園地)	
5. Has he/she ever traveled outside Aichi?	
More Questions	Answers
a) Who did he/she meet? When?	He/She met _____ .
b) What game did he/she play? When?	He/She played _____ .
c) What did he/she lose? When?	He/She lost _____ .
d) What park did he/she go to? When?	He/She went to _____ .
e) Where did he/she go? When?	He/She went to _____ .

Answer Key

1. Input

(A) BTS (B) Mima Ito (C) Kanna Hashimoto (D) Yuria Tajima

2. Focus on Form

1. ² (3 年半) ¹ (教えています)
2. ² (2 回) ¹ (獲った)
3. ² (去年の 10 月から) ¹ (しています)
4. ² (2 回) ¹ (行ったことがあります)
5. ² (150 回以上) ¹ (獲りました)
6. ² (3 年間) ¹ (住んでいます)

3. Focus on Meaning

★have + (never) 過去分詞形 + (~times, before)

どんな意味? 一度もない・~回したことがある・以前したことがある
(What does it mean? I have never p.p.・I have p.p. ~times.・I have p.p.before.)

★ha

どんな意味? ~間・~以来~している
(What does it mean? I have p.p. for~. I have p.p. since~.)

4. Output Pt. 1

① started ② wanted ③ have practiced ④ have been ⑤ got ⑥ didn't practice

⑦ haven't booked

5. ~ 6. Output Pt. 2 & Reporting

Answers may vary.