Creating a Learner-centered Communicative Classroom for Student Teachers

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Abstract

Student teachers are the future of education. Fostering a genuine aspiration to become a good EFL teacher is a reflection of English Language Teaching (ELT) for the teaching profession. Going through a learner-centered communicative and interactive classroom, student teachers can become a good EFL facilitator during a one-month Teaching Practicum (TP), making meaningful links between theory in ELT class at university and practice, as experienced on TP. This paper discusses the findings of a five-year empirical study of creating a learner-centered communicative and interactive ELT classroom for student teachers. This is part of ELT education for student teachers at a Japanese university, highlighting communicative tasks in the current integrated communicative approaches as key components of teacher's expertise. The study practically suggests six steps to create a learner-centered communicative classroom for student teachers. This paper also discusses the writer's ELT class for the teaching profession in practice from 2000 to 2004 on practical basis with students' feedback at Konan University, Kobe, Japan. An ultimate purpose of this study is to enable student teachers to create a learner-centered communicative and interactive classroom in their teaching practicum in the lower and upper secondary schools. Creating a learner-centered communicative and interactive ELT classroom for student teachers is an invitation to be challenged and all ELT instructors are invited.

Key words: ELT, student teachers, communicative tasks, integrated communicative approaches

1. Introduction

It is true that many ELT classes for the teaching profession at a tertiary level are not a role model for EFL student teachers, but it could be a mirror to reflect their future EFL classroom. Given a classroom teaching without any received knowledge, student teachers tend to follow their own experiential knowledge. Basically they repeat the same teaching styles as they have learned in their previous language education in their

secondary schools and universities. The main purpose of ELT education for student teachers is to balance their experiential knowledge and received knowledge, applying the current integrated communicative approaches to their teaching practicum in order to meet the needs and levels of their future students. The process of converting student teachers' experiential knowledge into more effective received knowledge through integrated communicative tasks in a learner-centered context is quite challenging for both student teachers and their instructors. It is not too much to say that ELT classes for teaching profession at university level have been scrutinized by our own students as they are to go through teaching practicum in public schools and come back with plausible feedback and assessment by experienced EFL professionals in public schools.

The success or failure of ELT education for the teaching profession largely lies in how much an ELT instructor can encourage their student teachers to take an active part in a series of integrated communicative tasks in the target language as a mirror of their future classes. The key to opening the door of a successful EFL classroom is how both ELT instructors and student teachers can create a leaner-centered communicative and interactive classroom with a lower affective filter without any fear and anxiety of using a target language. This context could lead them to become a member of a communicative *"language home"*.

This paper mainly discusses the possibility of creating a learner-centered communicative and interactive classroom for student teachers at Konan University in Kobe, Japan. This class involved 120 Japanese university students who took a course of study for the EFL teaching profession from 2000 to the end of the first semester in 2004. These trial and error experiments in ELT education provide evidence for the merits of the enhancement of student teachers' motivation to acquire teaching expertise to become a more effective EFL facilitator in their teaching practicum. Designing and implementing a learner-centered communicative classroom for student teachers is a challenge for university ELT education.

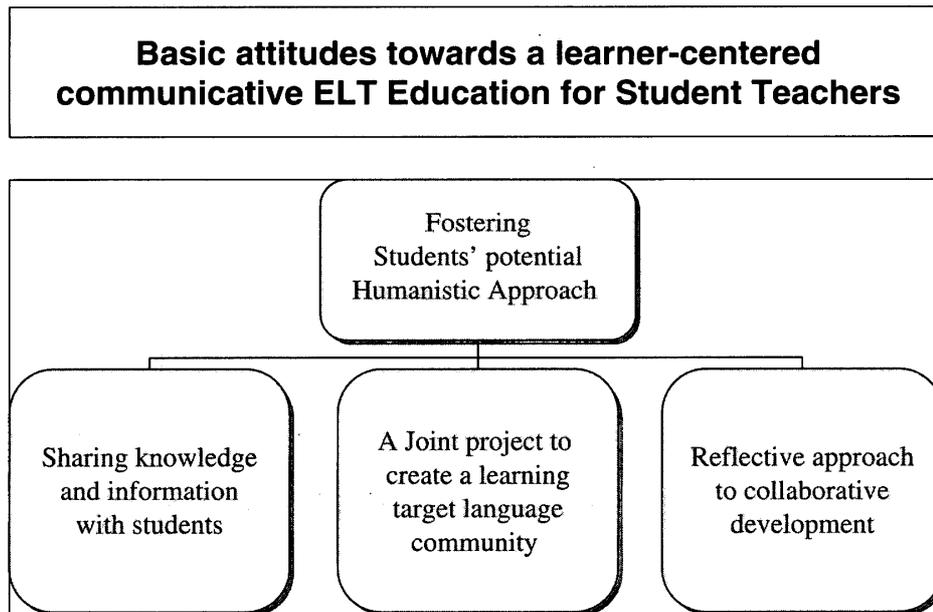## 2. The Basic Attitudes towards ELT Education for Student Teachers

In creating a learner-centered communicative and interactive classroom for student teachers, the ELT instructors should always try to instill the following attitudes in the minds of student teachers in order to transform a traditional language classroom into a communicative *"language home"*.
1. Teaching is fostering students' potential through the humanistic approach.
2. Teaching is sharing new knowledge and information with students.
3. Teaching is a joint project to create a learning target language community.
4. Teaching is a process of reflective approaches to collaborative development.

A prerequisite of ELT education is nurturing and fostering students' potential with a humanistic approach, as the process can be compared to nursing a variety of seeds in the field of education.

The linkage of the basic components of the teaching philosophy of ELT education for student teachers can be illustrated as Diagram 1.

Diagram 1

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│        Basic attitudes towards a learner-centered  │
│     communicative ELT Education for Student Teachers│
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

                    Fostering
                 Students' potential
                 Humanistic Approach

   Sharing knowledge    A Joint project to    Reflective approach
   and information      create a learning     to collaborative
   with students        target language       development
                        community
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3. Suggested Steps towards a Learner-Centered Classroom for Student Teachers

There are six relevant steps to fully activate a learner-centered communicative and interactive classroom as a *"Language Home"*.

3-1. The First Step: Encouragement, Enjoyment, Enrichment and Enlightenment

First of all, ELT instructors should always *encourage* their student teachers in class activities so that they can raise a strong desire to use the target language. By using the target language, English as an international language, not specifically British or American English, student teachers can have a confidence in their communicative competence at an acceptable level. Also, both student teachers and their instructors should *enjoy* the ELT class as a learning target language community, *enriching* the scope of their knowledge and information on the subject matter. Finally student teachers should be *enlightened* by the ELT instructor so that they can acquire a learning autonomy for self-development as a facilitator of human education. Consequently both

students and the ELT instructor are mutually encouraged to build a communicative *'language home'* as a result of a joint project in the context of EFL. The interrelationships of the four components (encourage, enjoy, enrich and enlighten) in ELT education for student teachers can be illustrated as Diagram 2.

Diagram 2

## The Four Components of ELT Class for Student Teachers
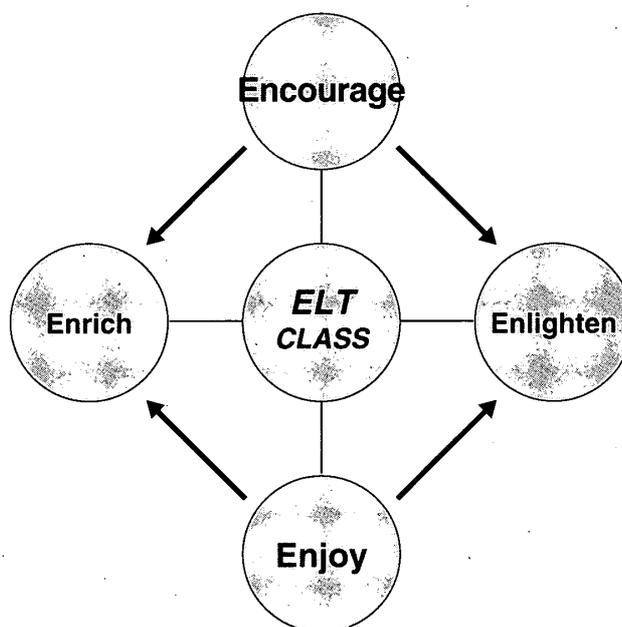
Encouraging student teachers can foster their confidence and desire to become a good EFL teacher. Enjoying class as an instructor and student teachers can bring about the pleasure of participation and a sense of belonging to the class. Enriching the contents and scope of the new knowledge and information on teaching methodologies and approaches enables both student teachers and an instructor to learn from each other in order to become good cultural informants. Finally, reflective teachers tend to produce reflective students. Enlightening student teachers with a reflective and transformative learning attitude enables them to become more reflective learners, and consequently they can translate their received knowledge into more meaningful actions in EFL class in their teaching practicum and thereafter. These four components revolutionarily transform the traditional language classroom, making it into a more enjoyable target language community, or possibly a language home. Furthermore, the process of the transformation of ourselves involved in reflective teaching and learning will lead to a higher phase of human education. Thus, student teachers could explore the possibility of becoming a good EFL teacher in the near future.

3-2. The Second Step: Creating a Learner-centered Communicative 'Language Home'

The second step in creating a learner-centered communicative and interactive classroom is to involve our students into a series of communicative tasks associated in current integrated communicative approaches in order to create a *language home*. Consequently, students can lower the affective filter by eradicating any fear and anxiety of using a foreign language. We can easily picture the components of creating a learner-centered communicative and interactive classroom as illustrated in Diagram 3. Thus the creation of a *"language home"* will be arrived at in EFL education.

Diagram 3

A Learner-centered Communicative and Interactive Classroom
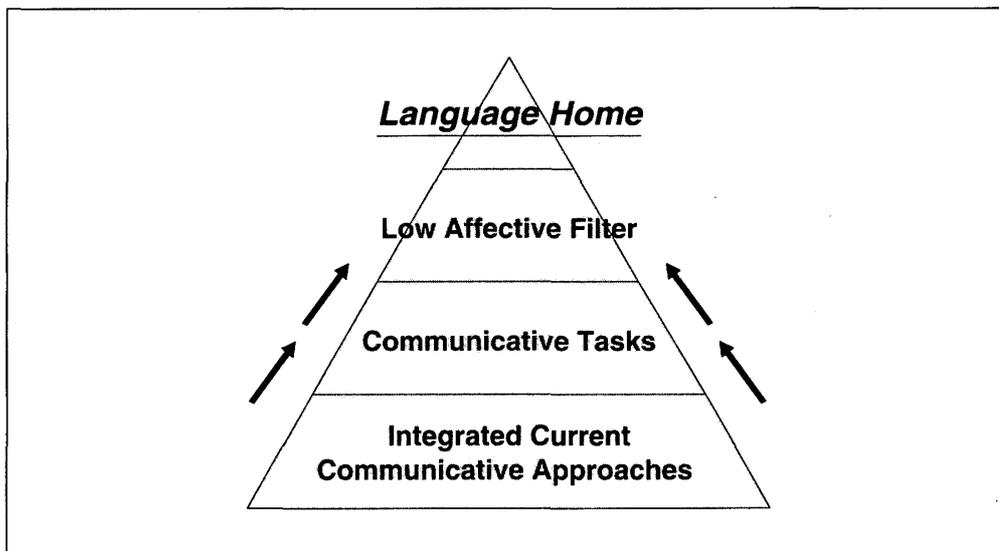
Nunan (1997) states that a major impetus to the development of learner-centered language teaching came with the advent of communicative language teaching. A communicative view of language and language learning has become the mainstream in ELT. Therefore, a learner-centered communicative classroom should be a point of departure for ELT education for student teachers who are preparing for fruitful teaching practicum.

3-3. The Third Step: Involving Student Teachers in Communicative Tasks

What is vital in fostering EFL student teachers is to enable them to activate necessary and relevant communicative tasks in the target language. Communicative tasks give students a dramatic power, strength and force in terms of creating a learner-

centered classroom, and in language acquisition as well. It is, therefore worth while familiarizing student teachers with the nature and roles of communicative tasks. Nunan (1989) defines a communicative task as a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. He continues that the task is a piece of meaning-focused work involving learners in comprehending, producing and/or interacting in the target language, and that tasks are analyzed or categorized according to their goals, input data, activities, settings and roles.

Some examples of relevant communicative tasks are as follows: *Rotating Communication* in pairs at the beginning of the EFL class; *Questions and Answers* in a situationally realistic context (in a check-in counter or customs in an international airport); *Self-Introduction* in class; *Introducing* your friends to your family; *Interviewing; Role Playing; Improvisation; Recitation; Peer Editing; Peer-teaching; Oral and Written Presentations; Democratic Discussion; Problem-Solving Discussion; Logical Debate.* These examples need to be situationally realistic and contextually rich for the purpose of the oncoming teaching practicum. As Widdowson (1987) emphasizes, classroom activities should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible. This classroom climate will raise a higher motivation and desire to use the target language, in which the joy of learning a foreign language lies. The communicative tasks should be relevant to the goals of the class, classroom input, activities and the teacher and students' roles and settings. Nunan (1999) illustrated a framework of analyzing communicative tasks as follows. Student teachers should be fully aware of the following framework of communicative tasks in their classroom teaching in order to conjure up a learner-centered climate.

Diagram 4

Communicative Task
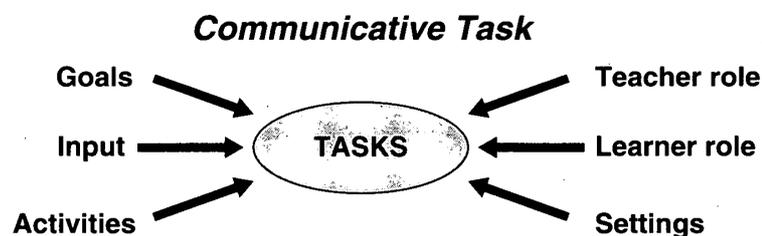
A framework for analyzing communicative tasks (Nunan: 1999)

3-4. The Fourth Step: Implementing Integrated Communicative Approaches

Effective communicative tasks should be based on current integrated communicative

approaches. The communicative approach, an academic approach and a problem-solving approach should be linked as integrated communicative approaches in order to cultivate student teachers' expertise in EFL classroom. Specifically, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) must be the kernel of current integrated communicative approaches. Influenced by the increasing interdependence in the European Unions and the rest of the world, and by the necessity of global communication, a communicative view of language and language learning has become the mainstream of ELT. Richards and Rogers (2001) summarize the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as follows:

> Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
> Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
> Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
> Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
> Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error.

Furthermore, based on the principles of CLT, Richards and Rogers (2001) emphasize that the goals of language teaching are:

- to provide opportunities for naturalistic second language acquisition through the use of interactive pair and group activities
- to provide opportunities for learners to develop successful learning and communication strategies
- to enhance learner motivation and reduce learner stress and create a positive affective classroom climate

In today's English language classroom, CLT seems to have gone beyond a narrow interpretation of the communicative approach. Recent EFL/ESL education is exploring the integration of current communicative approaches. Today, many EFL/ESL instructors at lower, secondary and even university levels are applying these effective current communicative approaches to several levels of learners depending on their own proficiency level, ability, needs, motivations and potential.

Table 1. *Integrated Communicative Approaches*

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
The Natural Approach (NA)
Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)
Content-Based Instruction
Communicative Task-Based Language Teaching
Process Approach, Academic Approach and Problem-solving Approach
Humanistic Approach
Reflective Approach

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) encourages both teachers and students to use the target language for communication. Task-based teaching activates a series of effective tasks for communication, which lead to a natural process of language acquisition and active participation in the EFL classroom. Despite the wide range of criticism of the Natural Approach, the essence of the five hypotheses within it still enlivens many EFL classrooms in terms of the natural process of language acquisition.

Content-Based Teaching (CBT) can stimulate our desire to acquire new knowledge, and widen the scope of information on the subject matter. CBT raises students' motivation to learn, analyze, examine, and ultimately it can pave the road to academic and interdisciplinary world in the long run. Most current ESL/EFL textbooks are compiled in the direction of CBT and CLT.

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) through pre-reading, brain-storming, peer preparation, peer editing or peer-revising and peer-teaching can lower the affective filter of an EFL classroom, which can open up the way to a communicative *'language home'*. Richards and Rogers (2001) state that in second language teaching, Cooperative Language Learning has been embraced as a way of promoting communicative interaction in the classroom and is seen as an extension of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching. It is viewed as a learner-centered approach to teaching held to offer advantages over teacher-fronted and teacher-directed classroom methods.

The Problem-solving Approach, in which student teachers are encouraged to learn the process of defining the problem, analyzing the causes and effects of the problem, suggesting workable solutions, selecting the best solution and then implementing the best solution with practicability, reflects life education itself. The Process Approach of highly evaluating the process of achievement rather than the end results also has a dramatic impact on EFL students.

The Humanistic Approach derived from educational passion and love for students is a point of departure for human education and can activate classroom rapport through individually guided instruction. Encouraging students to participate in meaningful activities in the real world context which can give the joy of learning and a sense of belonging, enlarge the scope of knowledge and transform the way of life is the kernel of the humanistic approach.

Finally, the Reflective Approach is the core of EFL student teachers' and instructors' progress in relation to self-development and co-development in the teaching profession. McKeon (2002) and Bax & Cullen (2003) emphasize the collaborative aspect of reflection and teacher development which encourages teachers to share their reflection and ideas with each other. Reflective teachers can be a mirror of the reflective students. It is self-evident that students do not want to learn much from a teacher who has stopped learning and self-development.
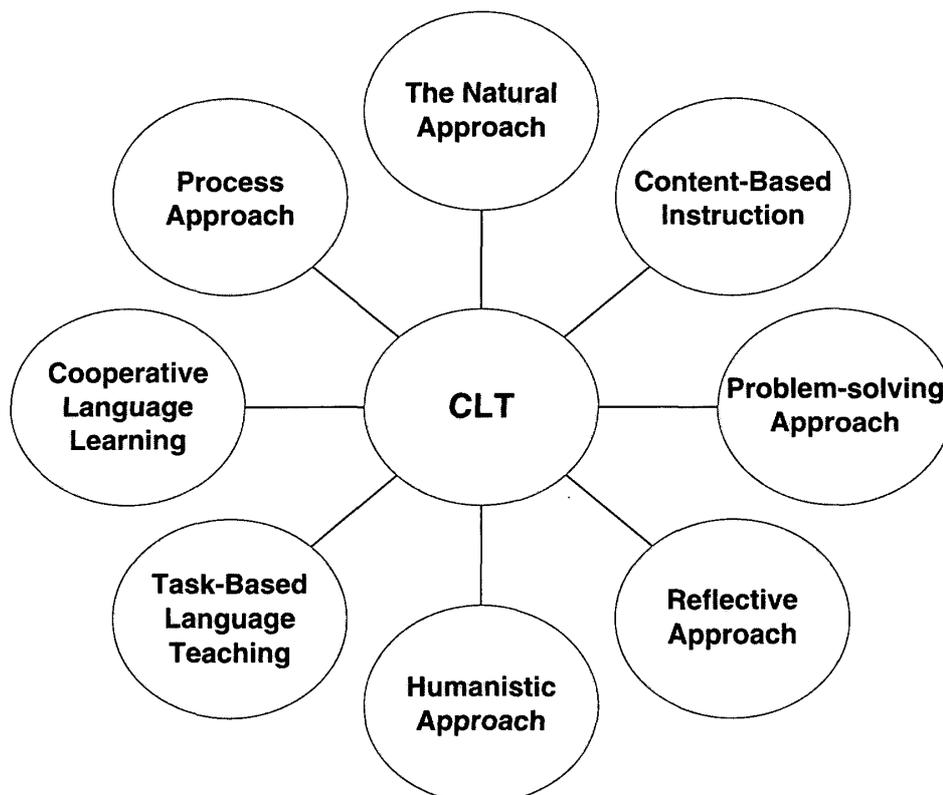
Going through these integrated communicative approaches, naturally we can create a learner-centered classroom based on the philosophy of the humanistic tradition, which argues "Learners first, learning second". As Richards and Rogers (2001) emphasize, "Learner engagement is a priority".

The point is how ELT instructors can develop student teachers' expertise in order to apply effective communicative tasks based on these integrated communicative approaches depending on the need and level of students in EFL classrooms. As a productive synergism, a series of relevant communicative tasks derived from integrated communicative approaches raise students' motivation to learn and participate in communication. Thus, a traditional "language classroom" is then transformed into a communicative *"language home"* with a lower affective filter.

The mutual linkages of the current integrated communicative approaches can be described as follows:

Diagram 5

Current Integrated Communicative Approaches

An experimental assumption here is that the integration of these approaches for the teaching profession can synergetically work. Student teachers can organize a coherent oral presentation on current integrated communicative approaches and map up practical

classroom teaching plan by gathering information and discussing with classmates. Thus this can sharpen their teaching expertise and show confidence in facilitating their future students. Based on the process of an academic and problem-solving approach, student teachers' communicative competence and oral presentation skills should be encouraged within a framework of ELT education for the teaching profession. It can be safely said that integrating current communicative approaches and activating some communicative tasks among student teachers will develop their awareness of a learner-centered communicative classroom as a **'language home'**.

3-5. The Fifth Step: Academic and Problem-solving Approaches to EFL Education
The process of thinking, sharing, discussing and activating effective communicative tasks related to latest communicative approaches is the process of human education. In other words, students go through the process of organizing, drafting and revising an oral presentation with power-point slides on some of the latest teaching methodologies in the first semester. They then performed practical classroom teachings in the second semester. This is the process of an academic and problem-solving approach itself within the framework of ELT education. We can summarize the basic academic approach and problem-solving approach to ELT education as follows:
The Process of an Academic Approach to ELT Education
    1 gathering information on latest EFL methodologies and approaches
    2 sharing effective methodologies and approaches to meet students' needs
    3 processing the necessary information for outlining each oral presentation and for classroom teaching
    4 organizing and constructing one's own oral presentations with power-point and a teaching plan for the classroom teaching

The Process of a Problem-solving Approach to ELT Education
    1 narrowing down one problem in EFL education in Japan
    2 defining that problem
    3 analyzing the causes and effects of the problem
    4 exploring possible workable approaches, methodologies and tasks
    5 suggesting an effective approach or method and communicative tasks
    6 selecting the best approach or method and communicative task
    7 implementing the best approach/method and task
    The merit of using both an academic approach and a problem-solving approach in an ELT classroom for the teaching profession is that of integrating teaching methodology through oral and power-point presentations in a communicative classroom for EFL student teachers.

By presenting their perspectives on effective communicative approaches and effective communicative tasks as the outcome of academic and problem-solving approaches, student teachers are able to develop teaching skills for activating communicative tasks and positive participation in their teaching practicum in public schools.

3-6. The Sixth Step: Reflective Teaching for Co-Development

Reflective teaching is one of the goals of the teaching profession as well as of teacher development. Richards and Lockhart (1994) state that in reflecting teaching both teachers and student teachers collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, and use the information thus obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching.

The evidence of self-reflection and reflective learning can also be seen in the report which student teachers produce during the university ELT class and subsequent one-month teaching practicum at public schools. The theoretical and practical rationales should go hand in hand within the reflective teaching context. There are several important points for student teachers to acquire in the process of reflective teaching in ELT education for the teaching profession. Though one lesson is only the tip of iceberg, it is worth acquiring the following reflective attitudes in ELT education for student teachers. Let us itemize some key points in reflective teaching which can work both during in-class teaching and also in teaching practicum in public schools.

1 **To foster readiness to repair, reform and improve one's teaching styles**
2 **To develop flexible improvement of teaching styles: a teacher makes a decision to alter his or her teaching attitude often in response to cues from students**
3 **To develop a flexible attitude, to transform one's experiential knowledge into received knowledge in teaching**
4 **To observe classroom teaching objectively, analytically and critically**
5 **To discuss critically and constructively after watching videos on ESL and EFL classes**
6 **To videotape one's classroom teaching and analyzing the flow objectively**
7 **To interview students to get enough feedback on one's classroom teaching**
8 **To share lesson plans and attractive self-made teaching materials for communicative tasks among student teachers**
9 **To implement questionnaires and get critical and reflective commentaries from other students**
10 **To learn the core of the Action Research to better one's EFL class**

As Nunan and Lamb (1996) emphasize, reflective teachers are ones who are capable of monitoring, critiquing and defending their actions in planning, implementing and evaluating language programs. As there is no perfect ELT education anywhere in the

world, the door of a university ELT class should be opened for everyone. Once student teachers acquire the basic attitudes of reflective teaching for the betterment of their EFL class, it will bring precious momentum to activate their self/co-development for the rest of their teaching life.

4. EFL Class for Teaching Profession in Practice (2000-2004)

The First Semester: Student teachers' oral presentations with power-point and critical discussion

The Second Semester: Classroom teachings by student teachers followed by critical and constructive discussion

4-1. Objectives
(1) **To develop student teachers' overall knowledge about teaching methodologies through their oral presentations with power-point, and critical discussion on current integrated communicative approaches.**
(2) **To cultivate students' teaching expertise by involving them in a series of communicative tasks and letting them perform practical classroom teachings.**
(3) **To foster students' reflective attitude towards ELT for the purpose of teacher education and self/co-development.**

4-2. Classroom Procedure (The First Semester)
(1) **Clear explanation of the objectives of the class**

    A clear explanation of the objectives of the ELT class for student teachers, integrating several current communicative approaches into effective communicative tasks. Integrated communicative approaches are introduced while the ELT instructor is visually showing some examples of impressive classroom teaching by the former students of this course. The goals and the process of achievement should be visualized and conceptualized through videos and power-point slide presentations by the instructor.   **(Controlled)**

(2) **Active composition/Oral composition**

    Orally expressing meaningful expressions and technical terms on EFL education among students and between a teacher and students. Students are spontaneously encouraged to orally express useful expressions for ELT and orally explain basic technical terms regarding theory and practice in TEFL.   **(Semi-controlled)**

(3) **Involving student teachers in a series of communicative tasks**

    Student teachers are encouraged to take an active part in a series of communicative tasks provided by the instructor in order to convert their receiving knowledge into

a higher level of experiential knowledge in person. Every week student teachers are encouraged to go through rotating communication in pairs, interviewing, peer teaching and improvising a simulated EFL class. Effective self-made materials made by the former student teachers in this course are introduced and applied.

(Semi-controlled)

(4) Students' oral presentations with power-point on several EFL approaches and methodologies

Students orally explain basic theories and principles as well as technical terms of TEFL using power point or multi-media devices, followed by questions and answers by other students.   **(Free)**

(5) Comments on students' presentations and lectures by the instructor

Encouraging the making of comments on students' oral presentations. Later additional explanations on the subject matter by the instructor using power-point slides and multi-media devices.   **(Semi-controlled)**

(6) Conceptualization and visualization of the EFL class

Students are given opportunities to watch useful videos on relevant classes by ESL/EFL professionals in order to foster their understanding and visualization of a learner-centered communicative and interactive classroom. Student teachers can visualize and conceptualize the ultimate goals of an EFL class by watching these practical videos, including the ELT instructor's EFL class.   **(Semi-Controlled)**

(7) Free discussion on the effectiveness of each approach and method presented in the ELT class

Reflective and critical thinking are essential for those who wish to become EFL student teachers. Encouraging student teachers to express their own opinions and critical analyses on several teaching approaches and methodologies presented in ELT class in terms of teacher education and co-development. The idea is the ELT class is a *joint project* between student teachers and the instructor.   **(Free)**

4-3. Classroom Teaching: Demonstration Class (The Second Semester)

All the students who have completed the first semester of this class are requested to hand in the first draft of the teaching plan for their classroom teaching in the first day of the second semester. In the second semester, all the students registered in this class are supposed to contact the ELT instructor for necessary supervision and advice regarding each teaching plan, teaching approaches or methods, self-made teaching materials and possible communicative tasks. Also, they are required to give a simulated classroom teaching in the instructor's office one week before the class. Preparation and practice outside classroom are prerequisites for student teachers in order to make their classroom teaching in the second semester meaningful and their teaching practicum

fruitful in the fourth year.

The Flow of Students' Classroom Teaching

(1) The explanation of the aim of the day's class by the student teacher

(2) Classroom teaching for 30 minutes, mainly in the target language but with some Japanese explanation

(3) Questions and answers by student teachers and the instructor

(4) Comments on the classroom teaching by other student teachers

(5) Writing an evaluation and reflective commentaries of the classroom teaching observed by the instructor and student teachers

(6) Reflective commentaries and positive encouragement with future assignment by the instructor

4-4. Teachers' Roles as a Facilitator and Learner

Teachers have a key to success of the program. Teacher should play flexible roles as a **lecturer, cultural informant, facilitator, co-communicator, diagnostician, supervisor, action researcher, participant, observer** and most of all, **learner**, to create a learner-centered environment. Throughout these communicative and interactive activities, student teachers are encouraged to use English as an international Language (ELI) at a level acceptable for international communication.

4-5. Teaching Materials and Resources

Text book:

Richards, J. C., and T. Rogers. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Murcia, M. eds. (2001). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle

Handouts:

English Language Education for EFL Teaching Profession by Koji Nakamura (Konan Seikyo)

Other reading materials:

IATEFL Teacher Education and Teacher Development SIG. Spring 2003

IATEFL Teacher Education and Teacher Development SIG. Summer 2003

IATEFL Teacher Education and Teacher Development SIG. Summer 2002

TESOL Quarterly 2001-2002

Audiovisual materials:

TESL Teaching Video Series compiled by Jack Richards

Videos on EFL/ESL demonstration classes

Self-made materials for communicative tasks produced by the former student teachers

of this ELT class

Recommended book:

Nunan, David. (1991). Communicative Tasks and the Language Curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25 (2), 279-295.

Nunan, David. (1989). *Designing Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge.

5. Findings

Questionnaires were given mainly to junior students, and also to some senior and graduate students who took the ELT class for student teachers at Konan University, Kobe, Japan at the end of each semester (from 2000 to the end of the first semester in 2004). The number of participants in this class over these five years comprised 120 students, who came mainly from the departments of English and American literature, Japanese literature and law.

The majority of students generally have a positive outlook regarding the integration of a series of communicative tasks involved in current integrated communicative approaches. The results from the student teachers' responses reveal that a considerable number of students felt the effectiveness of implementing communicative tasks in EFL education (Q5: 82.5%) (n=99), (Q6: 80.0%) (n=96).

Basically almost all students learned the importance of encouraging students to participate in a series of meaningful communicative tasks in a learner-centered context (Q1: 91.7%) (n=110). As for oral presentations with power-point, many students felt the presentation skills in the target language are meaningful and essential for teaching practice. (Q2: 74.2%) (n=89). They also learned the necessity of enough preparation for oral presentations and classroom teaching which enables them to enhance their confidence in facilitating their future students. The majority of students are going to prepare for several communicative tasks with effective visual aids and attractive self-made materials so that their future students can enjoy a full range of communication activities (Q3: 95.8%) (n=115).

As for the three most important things when student teachers teach English (Q4), the majority of students pointed out the necessity of a learner-centered classroom (66.7%) (n=80), encouraging students to express themselves for communication (59.2%) (n=71), the teacher's enthusiasm and individually-guided instruction to create a language home (49.2%) (n=59), the teacher's communicative competence in the target language (45.8%) (n=55), teacher development (42.5%) (n=51), the significance of language acquisition rather than language learning (25.8%) (n=31) and other factors (n=13).

The approaches, methods and tasks that student teachers want to use in their teaching practicum (Q7) fall within the Communicative Approach. (95.8%) (n=115), learner-centered communicative tasks (91.7%) (n=110), the Humanistic Approach with individually-guided instruction (57.5%) (n=69), Role Play and improvisation (54.2%) (n=65), Pair-work and Interviewing (51.7%) (n=62), The Natural Approach with lower affective filters (51.7%) (n=62), the Content-based Approach (50%) (n=60), Audio-Lingual Method (29.2%) (n=35), the Oral Approach (25%) (n=30), Oral presentations (16.7%) (n=20), and Direct Method (4.2%) (n=5).

The most impressive things student teachers found through this class (Q9) are giving oral presentations with power-point in the first semester, giving a classroom teaching in the second semester, watching many videos on ESL/EFL class and analyzing them freely, watching the instructor's EFL class and criticizing it freely, making comments on each oral presentation and classroom teaching, analyzing and discussing senior students' demonstration lesson videotaped during their teaching practicum at public schools, sharing effective self-made teaching materials with other student teachers, fostering critical views on all kinds of language class and activating communicative tasks in class.

In conclusion, most students felt they became more aware of the effectiveness of current integrated communicative approaches and many students are going to use them in their oncoming teaching practice (Q7: 95.8%). The first reason that many students support this communicative ELT class for student teachers is that it allowed them to express their own understanding of each method and approach before the class while acquiring basic EFL teaching strategies and skills for creating a learner-centered communicative classroom. The second reason is that students' motivation to become a good EFL student teacher is significantly raised by the selection of effective communicative approaches and communicative tasks with encouraging and reflective comments from the instructor. The third reason is that they could implement what they have theoretically learned in the first semester through their classroom teaching in the second semester on a practical basis. The final reason is that the dramatic impact of a learner-centered communicative classroom with the philosophy of sharing experiential knowledge and received knowledge with classmates in a trusting classroom atmosphere has created a sense of belonging to this ELT class among student teachers. We could say student teachers became aware of the significance of *language home* through this ELT program.

6. Conclusion

We have empirically attempted in this paper to examine the validity of a learner-

centered communicative classroom for ELT student teachers by involving them in communicative tasks, oral presentations and classroom teaching based on the integrated communicative approaches. We have also discussed the necessity of the teacher's continued encouragement and rapport as well as students' spontaneous participation in class activities.

The results from the students' positive responses to the questionnaires and reflective comments on this program reveal considerable satisfaction with the integration of effective communicative tasks into several communicative approaches depending on students' needs and level, and with the creation of a learner-centered communicative climate in the EFL classroom. The development of the student's oral presentation skills and teaching expertise through classroom teaching gave student teachers positive enjoyment and confidence in teaching English. They have developed and sharpened their own academic approaches and problem-solving expertise through the process of oral presentations and classroom teaching, which can then be applied in their teaching practicum. Consequently, as a result of this ELT class for student teachers, many students could represent themselves and enjoy their own presences in a communicative classroom, creating a warm classroom discourse, closer in an atmosphere to a communicative *'language home'* than to a teacher-directed ELT class for the teaching profession in Japanese universities.

We have thus reviewed a practical university-based experiment conducted to enhance motivation and teaching skills, and have argued that activating communicative tasks in classroom teaching with knowledge of current integrated communicative approaches is a goal that should not be overlooked by ELT instructors and student teachers. The effective use of communicative tasks based on current integrated communicative approaches in an ELT class for student teachers is an invitation to be challenged, and all ELT instructors and student teachers are invited.

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Appendix 1   Students' Survey

Questionnaire   (n=number of students)

(1) What did you learn from this ELT class for student teachers as part of the teaching profession?

(2) What did you learn from your oral presentations on teaching methods and approaches in this class?

(3) What are you going to prepare for your teaching practice in public schools?

(4) What do you think are the three most important things when you teach English as an EFL teacher?

(5) What kind of approaches or methods do you think are the most effective in an English class at junior high school?

(6) What kind of approaches or methods do you think are the most effective in an English class at high school?

(7) What kind of approaches or tasks are you going to use in your teaching practicum?

(8) What do you want your instructor to teach more in this class next year?

(9) What was the most impressive thing in this class?

(10) Your comments on this class

Appendix 2 Students' Comments

The following are some of the comments on this ELT class written by mainly junior students and senior and graduate students in the form in which they were submitted at the end of each semester (2000-2004).

* I have been teaching English at a private institute for three years and I have made up my mind to become an English teacher at public schools. I have been pleased with your ELT class as you always encouraged us to participate in many activities and tried to find good aspects of our presentations and demonstration lessons. Your encouragement has made us more confident in teaching English. I would like to apply what I learned in this class to my teaching practice in my junior high school.   (Mariko)

* I learned from this class how to enlighten your students, how to motivate your students and how to encourage your students by developing your teaching styles and communicative competence as a good EFL teacher.   (Yuji)

* I really enjoyed myself in this class. I was very afraid of my demonstration lesson at first. However, I was very happy to find all the classmates eagerly joined my lesson with positive feedback. I came to know the pleasure of teaching through this class.   (Kanae)

* I am very impressed by your eagerness and love for your students. I think your class really touched my heart. I will never forget what I learned in this class and try to take it into my own English class in teaching practice.   (Maiko)

* Although this class was difficult and challenging it required too much preparation, I learned many things about teaching. I came to change my fixed idea of teaching. It is a very hard job to teach English but it must be a positive joy.   (Narimi)

* In this class all students feel like as if they were a member of a family. Everyone enjoyed studying English together and both the teacher and students were very kind to me.   (Yoko)

* I think it was very useful and good for us to discuss our demonstration lessons each other after we did them. This is because our classmates pointed out good and bad points we ourselves might not have recognized. It was so much fun. In addition, it was good that we students picked up one teaching method or approach and explained it in English. Thanks to these learner-centered tasks, we will never forget the teaching method we explained.   (Miki)

* As this class was the first period I always tried to get up early and tried to catch up with many hard workers. Every week when I was in this class I really wanted to be an English teacher. Because teaching language is wonderful and very challenging, I think. I will never forget what I learned in this class.
                                        (Fukumi)

* This class gave me much stimulation and incentives. I enjoyed taking an active part in this class and I appreciate all the help you gave me.   (Kayo)

* I learned how the methods and approaches in EFL and ESL have been changing compared with my English education in junior and senior high school days. As I learned only grammar and translation method in my senior high school days, I think it is very important to give more chances for students to express themselves through attractive communicative tasks. I enjoyed learning and acquiring many ways to teach English in this class.   (Nozomi)

* This class is useful for a teaching practice in terms of many teaching methods and approaches, however, we need more time for students' practice. However, I have never felt 90 minutes too long in this class.
                                        (Kaeko)

* This class itself has been a learner-centered class as the instructor requested us to make comments and ideas all the time.   (Naoko)

* In this class everyone has high motivation to become a good EFL teacher. Giving a demonstration

lesson was very useful and practical for us. We could share many ideas and comments with each other. Especially the instructor always encouraged us with lots of meaningful advice. I would like to join this class again right before my teaching practice. (Mariko)

* This class was a very challenging class with many learner-centered activities and much preparation before the class. (Izumi)

* This class tried to put theory into practice through our oral presentations, peer teaching, and demonstration lessons. This seemed to work well for teaching practice. (Chisato)

* I learned a lot of teaching methods and approaches in this class. The content was challenging and the flow of this class was quite different form what I learned in my junior and senior high schools. I would like to let my students enjoy and take an active part in my class through attractive communicative tasks in my teaching practice. (Aki)