**Improving English Proficiency through Meaning Making Process**

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**Abstract:** In this paper, the researcher is going to share how to use students' own culture and background knowledge to produce meaningful communication in English. Extracurricular activities using mentoring program, mass media and mobile phones (smartphones) can be used to motivate students. Interdependence hypothesis supports that when students have background knowledge about the world through reading books in their mother tongue, they are willing to express their thoughts in English. The result of this study will show that students have more positive attitude when they get across their intention in English. When English is used as an instrument to share their own culture and their perspective about the world, students can create meaningful small talk in English.

**Keywords:** extracurricular activities, interdependence hypothesis, meaningful learning

**Introduction**

Speaking English is more than short communication in fragmented patterns. When students study English using fragmented and unnatural recorded conversation, students cannot carry quality communication. In the current society, students should be able to express their thoughts in English. They need to learn natural communication strategies which can be used in the real life situations.

Researchers in the EFL countries have conducted studies to help EFL students (Akbari, 2012; Muhanna, 2012; Canbay & Becereb, 2012; Deng & Huifang, 2012; Wang & Zhang, 2012; Siddiqie, 2011). When students are exposed to the authentic and natural environment, their affective filter will be lowered. In this paper, the researcher is going to share how to use students' own culture and background knowledge in English classroom. Extracurricular activities (mentoring program, films, songs and mobile phones) can be used to motivate students. Interdependence hypothesis supports that when students have background
knowledge through reading books in their mother tongue, they are willing to express their opinion in English. When English is used as an instrument to share their own culture and their perspective about the world, students can create meaningful small talk and carry successful communication in the real life situation.

**Meaning making process in English**

Applying Pygmalion effect can make better learners in English classroom. Chang (2011) proves that there is strong relationship between teacher’s expectation and students’ achievement. When the teachers expect positive results from the students, they turn out good result. It is important to have dynamics between teacher and students in the classroom. Education means human beings’ positive change or transformation. Positive comment or feedback by the teacher can influence the students. Since the researcher is teaching lower level of students in academics, the positive relationship with the students plays an important role in the classroom. The role of the teacher is crucial for the limited English proficient students (LEP). LEP students lack confidence about themselves.

Creating extracurricular activities is helpful for students. At Howon University, there is a place where students can communicate with native speakers. Students are supposed to kakao me their photos with a native speaker to prove that they have been to the English café to practice English. Even though their English proficiency is low to communicate, it is important for students to be exposed to English speaking environment. The following extracurricular activities are held in the English cafe in one semester.

a) English pop song contest  
b) English essay contest  
c) English speech contest  
d) English mentoring program  
e) Special lecture by the faculty

It is important to provide an environment for students to use English. When students sing songs in English, they can learn the expressions naturally. At the English cafe, native English faculty members take turns to help students every. By doing these extracurricular activities, students can lower the barrier for communication. One student who has limited English
proficiency said that he was able to use his body language to communicate with the native speaker. When students get across the meaning to the native speaker, they can feel fulfillment and have confidence about themselves. One to one conference with professor helps students to have stronger motivation.

**Using authentic materials**

The following authentic materials can be used to motivate students. Title of songs or movies can be useful method. Through title of the songs, students can learn useful expressions. Students tend to have long term memory since the song titles are memorable. Even one sentence of the lyrics can be meaningful to the students. The examples are as follows:

- “That is all I ask of you.”
- “I dreamed a dream” from Les Miserables
- "How am I supposed to live without you?"
- "Friday I am in love."
- “I was born to love you.”
- “You raise me up.”
- “007 James Bond”
- “Dark Knight”
- “Transformer”

It will take time to memorize all the lyrics of the song. However, students can learn some lines from the lyrics or libretto of the musicals such as “Miss Saigon” or “The Phantom of the Opera”.

Making movies about your life or dream future with groups can be used. Group work can create more positive outcome when they have to produce a movie. At the end of the semester, students can share their product with other classmates in the classroom. Each group will present their movie about 3-5 minutes.
Showing inspirational video from youtube is one of the effective ways to inspire students. There are several inspirational videos available in youtube. Students can be inspired by the video about Lena Maria. Lena Maria is physically challenged person but she overcame her obstacles and became a great singer. Her story inspired many people around the world. They can learn valuable lessons about how to overcome big obstacles in life.

Sharing Korean culture and Korean wave can be used since students have their background knowledge about their own culture. Students will have lots of things to share about Korean wave. Since they know about Korean wave well, students feel comfortable to talk about Korean wave.

Sharing ethnic food recipe can be used. Cooking is one of the wonderful ways to talk about their own country. Instructors can provide some guidelines so that students will have guidance and they can keep in the track.

Kakao is an application which we can use in the Smartphone. Smartphone can be an excellent tool to study English. There are several useful programs available which can be downloaded freely. Students can take advantage of using these applications to improve their English. It is strongly encouraged to use digital gadgets for their development. Smartphone changed the communication style in the 21st century. Students use more phone rather than computer because of the accessibility. Instructors can create chat room in smartphone so that they can have direct communication with their students. Using the phone, students can record their voice easily and send to the instructor. We can use kakao smart ways to help students.

**Conclusion and Implication**

The researcher shared various effective ways to help EFL students. These methods can be modified and used in the classroom. When students are engaged in meaning making process using authentic materials, they can carry successful communication in English. It is important for students to have confidence even though they cannot produce perfect outcomes. In the further research, it is recommended to provide specific lesson plans so that instructors can apply in their classrooms.
References


