

Use of the Emergency First Response program as a tool for Teaching English as a Foreign Language

A discussion

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Background Summary

Using the Emergency First Response program as a tool for English Foreign Language teaching was first proposed at Gyeonggi English Village, in Paju, Gyeonggi Province. Part of an overall initiative to promote first aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training among both staff and students, the idea of using such a course to teach and encourage practice of English language was put forward as a way to provide a quality English teaching program that was congruent with GEV's teaching objectives while providing a mechanism of establishing financial feasibility of an overall first aid training program at the Village. In the original proposal submitted to GEV in February, 2008, it was argued that an EFL teaching version of the EFR course would offer:

- an emphasis on the need for clear and careful communication
- the opportunity for participants to take part in simulated scenario training that mimic real life situations
- useful knowledge and recognized CPR/first aid certifications
- an enjoyable way to learn and practice English
- the chance to promote responsible citizenship among participants

The Emergency First Response program was considered an ideal program to be modified for the purpose of EFL teaching. It is a well structured, learner-centered program that includes a range of high-quality teaching materials (workbook, video etc.). Though the actual course requirements could not be changes, it was felt that a few complimentary materials developed by the instructor could provide what was needed to make the course suitable for English Language Learners.

In November, 2008, a pilot class of the EFL version of EFR was run at English Village for staff members. The staff ranged in English level from lower-intermediate (B1) to native speakers. The curriculum for the class followed the EFR Primary/Secondary Care and Care for Children courses. Participants were required to fulfill all objectives and requirements of the courses. Some additional teaching materials, including a power-point accompaniment, and a few teaching games, were made by the instructor. A survey was completed by participants which mainly addressed the class in the context of an EFL teaching tool.

Introduction

The idea to use the Emergency First Response (EFR) program as a tool for English Foreign Language (EFL) teaching was first proposed based on my own experience as both an EFL teacher and EFR instructor. For me, the parallels between CPR / First aid training and teaching EFL were quite clear. The EFR program offers a structure which emphasizes the need for communication. It offeres participants a new an interesting way to practice English, while gaining useful skills and a recognized certification in CPR and/or First Aid. The program requires participants to take part in scenario practice sessions, where the goal is to mimic real-life situations in the classroom. Finally, it offeres a way to promote English knowledge while also promoting Emergency preparedness, a subject which everyone should have at least a basic knowledge of. Those who are trained in first aid often help others, and sometimes save lives.

Considering the potential benefits, a proposal was submitted to Gyeonggi English Village (GEV) suggesting the establishment of both a staff training program, as well as a student program designed to support EFL teaching and practice.

The proposal was accepted by GEV, and two pilot classes were supported. Results were documented in several reports. The purpose of this paper is to offer a supplementary discussion of

lessons learned from the pilot classes. Findings from the pilot classes will be discussed using references to relevant literature and existing learning theories. Finally, some recommendations will be made regarding the potential of continued development of the Emergency First Response / English Foreign Language (EFR / EFL) concept.

Multiple learning strategies

The Emergency First Response (EFR) program is an extension of the overall Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) educational program, and therefore employs its educational philosophy. As part of this philosophy, PADI education seeks to employ training methods which will accommodate the greatest diversity of people (PADI, 2009). To achieve this goal, course design seems to have been influenced by theories of learning which recognize the diversity of learning styles among individuals.

One such theory is Gardener's theory of Multiple Intelligence, which suggests a series of intelligence types that people may favour, or may work to develop (Smith, M.K., 2008). Some people will favour their kinesthetic intelligence, and therefore would prefer a hands on approach to learning. Others might favour their interpersonal intelligence, and therefore would prefer to learn in group situations. In contrast, some individuals may favour their intrapersonal intelligence, and might choose to study on their own.

Another well accepted theory of learning which emphasizes individuality in learning preferences is described by Klob (Businessballs.com). Klob's established his learning cycle as a model to understand the process behind learning as well as preferences in learning styles among individuals. Klob describes a circle of learning using four different stages: reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation and concrete experience. Individuals tend to favour different transitions between these stages. This favoritism is recognized as their learning style.

Consideration should also be given to Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains. In the 1950's a committee led by Benjamin Bloom identified three domains of educational activities:

- Cognitive – pertaining to the development of mental skills
- Psycho-motor – an area focusing on physical or hands-on skills
- Affective – mainly concerned with developing concepts connected with feelings and/or emotion.

These three domains are more commonly referred to as Knowledge, Skills, Attitude (KSA) (Clark, D.R., 1999). Additionally, each of these domains may be broken down into various categories. As with Gardener's and Klob's models, it can be expected that levels of development within each domain as well as subsequent categories will vary greatly from person to person. Individuals would therefore show more strength learning within more developed domains than in less developed domains.

The EFR program seems to draw from each of the theories discussed above in an attempt to accommodate the greatest range of learning styles. EFR offers participants a range of course materials, including workbooks, videos, quick reference cards and more, all designed to support a range of learning preferences. Diversity can also be found in the course structure. The courses are designed to support self-study, hands-on learning, cooperative learning with other participants, as well as traditional lecture-style teaching and demonstrations from the instructor. Emotional development is considered a high priority with the EFR course, and much time is spent promoting self-confidence within participants. By using such a diverse educational foundation in developing course content and lesson plans, both instructor and participant are offered the flexibility needed to emphasize the methods most suited to the participants' needs.

Results of the English Village pilot course support the benefits of such a broad educational philosophy (Cordice, 2008). Participant responses to the course survey indicated a range of preferences regarding what they considered most helpful to their learning process. Some found the workbooks helpful, some found demonstrations helpful, some found the interactive games designed by the instructor helpful, and a few appreciated the accompanying course video. It was clear that participants favoured the aspects of the course which most fit their individual requirements for learning. However, the fact that 100% of the participants offered a positive impression of the course reinforces the fact that each was able to satisfy their unique needs as part of the learning process.

Practice of Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking

Over the past two decades, the goal of teaching English to speakers of other languages has been shifting from linguistic competence to communicative competence (Yan, S., 2006). Such a change is reflected in recognized tests like the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), which have added a speaking and writing component to their testing system (Educational Testing Services, 2009). Ideally, all four pillars of language foundation should be included as part of a complete English program. However, learning of each pillar requires practice, and practice can be a challenge, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language Teaching. The structure of the EFR program provides opportunity for practice of reading, writing, listening and speaking. There is room for some customization within the courses, and individual practice in any of the four pillars may be emphasized. More basic courses, such as Primary Care, offer greater opportunities for practice of English comprehension rather than two-way communication. More advanced courses, such as Secondary Care and Care for Children, offer greater opportunities for practicing communication. Such difference could contribute to customization of classes for different English proficiency levels.

The pilot course at English Village was a more advanced course, and emphasized communication as its primary English practice component. Participants all responded positively when asked whether they found the course a good way to practice their English skills. Additionally, all participants would recommend the course to others as a good way to practice English skills. Thus, results of the pilot course indicate that an EFR / EFL program would indeed be a beneficial tool for practicing English communication skills.

“Can do” Evaluation

The EFR program states clear objectives that participants are required to satisfy if they are to successfully pass each stage of a course. These objectives are reminiscent of the “Can do” Project supported by the Association of Language Teachers in Europe (ALTE). Just as the ALTE “Can do” statements, the use of clear objective statements offer a dependable way of comparing results from different methods of teaching / learning (ALTE, 2002). This offers some flexibility, allowing instructor and participant to formulate a path to their educational goal which is most suited to their learning needs. However, in the context of English and a Foreign Language Teaching (ELFT), these statements provide the added bonus of allowing a potential for some modification of the program to enhance practice and teaching of English as part of the lesson plan. The statements are also useful in ensuring that CPR/First-aid instructional goals are not sacrificed or reduced for the sake of EFLT.

Cultural Considerations

Cultural differences with a class, especially when teaching a class of English Language learners, must be considered in terms of lessons used. An instructor must be careful to minimize misunderstandings due to culture, and must ensure that all students share the background knowledge and references required to understand a lesson (Cummings, J.). During the pilot course at English Village, some issues were raised regarding culture. For example, the instructor chose a carpeted room as the venue for the course since much work is done on the ground. However, consideration was not given to the need for floor mats, which would be preferred by Korean participants, even though the floor was carpeted. The nature of first aid and CPR training does involve some practices, such as physical contact between participants, which may offer some challenges within a culturally diverse class. Also, specific issues potential disease transfer may be a greater perceived danger for some cultures, and may require additional sensitivity and care during discussion. An evaluation of possible cultural concerns should be made as early as possible by the instructor.

Minimum requirements of English Proficiency

In her paper Key issues in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Curriculum Development, Kristen Gatehouse speaks of the challenges she faced developing a course which caters to students at various language levels in the same class (Gatehouse, 2001). As she points out, sometimes the ideal situation of setting minimum language level requirements simply cannot be met, and a class (for various reasons) may include students who will find the English level in the class too much of a challenge. A similar situation was seen during the pilot course. The pilot actually took the situation one step further, in that it also included native English speakers. It was difficult to cater to the language needs of such a diverse group.

However, the result of the class was quite positive even with such diversity. This can be attributed to the flexible nature of the EFR course, which allowed some customization and additions by the instructor. One of the most helpful measures taken was to allow participants who found English more challenging to use class materials, specifically workbooks, in their own language. Though not a standard practice in EFLT, this case was considered an exception. It should be noted that participants whose English level was sufficient were only offered English materials. Also, groups established during skills practice sessions were chosen to include as broad a spectrum of English language levels as possible, ideally with each having either a native speaker or advanced English level participant. It was hoped that this would provide support for those who found English more challenging.

In contrast, one of the measure taken did not have a positive outcome, and indeed seemed to have a negative effect on the participants as a whole. The final test multiple choice test of the EFR course is a required component, and must be completed for participants to receive certification. Though suitable for most participants, there was concern that those who found English more challenging would find the test difficult. EFR tests, like PADI tests tend to be written using more difficult grammar and vocabulary as a method of testing that participants have a good grasp on what has been taught. It was feared that such difficulty would discouraging for some participants, and would damage any confidence in English communication gained during the course. To reduce this problem, the instructor accompanied the class by reading questions orally, one by one, and providing time for any clarification which might be necessary. Though some found this helpful, the practice actually an annoyance for participants at the B1 and B2 levels of English. These participant felt they were held back by the reading, and would have preferred to answer the questions without the distraction.

Instructor knowledge of EFR and EFLT

In her paper, Gatehouse also speaks of the gap between language instructor and the individual who had expertise in the subject being taught (Gatehouse, 2001). She found that close collaboration was important, both in terms of curriculum development and in course delivery. In this particular case, this challenge was less of a problem, since the instructor was both an EFL teacher as well as a first aid instructor. However, this should still be a consideration in the context of future use of this program. It would be difficult, in this case, to team-teach the EFR course. Though the requirements of the course could be satisfied, it is probable that the quality of both first aid training and English teaching would suffer significantly. A person only trained in first aid may not adequately address the needs of the English language learner. In contrast a teacher of English as a Foreign Language who does not instruct first aid may not adequately demonstrate skills or provide complete information. It is the preferred situation to have an instructor who is trained in both disciplines.

Labeling the Program

Attempting to classify the EFR / EFL program into a specific category is difficult.

Task-based learning may have some relevance to the EFR / EFL program. David Nunan, professor of applied linguistics at the University of Hong Kong, defines a task as "...a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form." (Nunan, 2006). Considering this definition, many of the skills practice exercises that are part of EFR courses would constitute tasks. However these skills are much more than just individual tasks. Each exercise is designed to build on experience and knowledge from the previous exercise, similar to Vygotsky's idea of scaffolding (Coffey, H.). So, though task-based learning can be considered part of the overall learning process, it is not sufficient for a description of the whole.

It was thought that Experiential learning could apply in this case. A committee under the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University adopted the following definition of experiential learning:

"...Experiential learning occurs when students are placed in a situation where they think and in, learn in and from a real-world setting."

This definition does not seem to apply in this case as the scenarios and skills practice cannot be considered real-world. The Cornell report goes on to clarify that learning should occur in or simulate a real-world experience. Considering that simulating real-world experience is considered part of experiential learning, it could be considered applicable.

However, the term scenario-based learning may be considered more accurate, as it specifically relates to simulations of real-world events (Yan, S, 2006). This is the goal of first aid and CPR training, to simulate a real event so that participants will be prepared if they should ever have to deal with a real situation. However, as with task-based learning, the description of Experiential-based and/or Scenario-based cannot be considered a holistic label of the program.

Finally, the term English for Specific Purposes (ESP) deserves some consideration. As the paper written by Gatehouse (2001) described ESP background information, her development process,

challenges faced and results of the Language Preparation for Employment in the Health Sciences, several parallels to both the development and execution of the pilot class for the EFR / EFL program could be made. Many of these parallels have already been mentioned. Also of interest is the attention she gives to Cummins theory of a dichotomy between basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency. She proposes three abilities instead of two that must be considered as part of an ESP curriculum:

- use of jargon characteristic of the specific occupational context
- an ability to use a more generalized set of academic skills
- ability to use language needed for effective informal communication

The point of interest comes in Cummins' and Gatehouse's agreement that attention must be given to general interpersonal communication. The EFR / EFL program offered two different points of view. In one view, the EFR program is a means to the higher goal of EFL teaching and practice. In the other view, EFR training is the primary objective, with the English component being an additional tool (i.e. preparing participants to deal with a medical emergency in an English speaking country, or when dealing with an English speaking patient). The original concept of the EFR / EFL program highlighted the former view, and was put forward as a way increase proficiency in English for general communication, rather than for a specific purpose. This fact does seem to conflict with the original description of ESP. However, the importance of general communication skills highlighted by Gatehouse, and originally by Cummins, does bring ESP much closer to being a suitable label for the EFR / EFL program.

In the end, if one label needed to be chosen, English for Specific Purposes would be the best choice. However, care must be taken not to reduce the great flexibility and potential of the EFR / EFL program by limiting its category. It is clear that the program could be categorized in several ways, which will be beneficial as development of the program continues.

Conclusion

This discussion has been varied, including several different topics which were indicated during the development and execution of the pilot course of the Emergency First Response / English as a Foreign Language program. This work is not meant to be conclusive, but indicative; it is meant to indicate support for the findings of the pilot course within available literature. A search of relevant literature was not done as part of the original development of the program. However, information found while writing this paper have offered support for the original premise of the EFR / EFL program, both in its conceptual design as well as its practicality. In the future, a more complete and extensive literature search should be made, going back to many of the primary sources found while researching this essay.

This paper is also meant to identify and discuss specific challenges indicated by the results of the pilot course as a basis for the next stage of program development. All discussions of this essay should be considered seriously when making any future curriculum modifications as part of the EFR / EFL program. And, it is clear that a future for EFR / EFL is warranted. The next course attempt should include a more detailed survey, and, if possible, video footage that can be analyzed after the course. Attempts should also be made to run a pilot class using younger English learners, representing, child, pre-teen and teenage years.

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APPENDIX

Cordice, K. (2008, December). *Survey Summary and Analysis - EV Staff First Aid program, Pilot Class.*

Cordice, K. (2008, December). *Notes from the Instructor - EV Staff First Aid / CPR, Pilot Class.*

Survey Summary and Analysis

EV Staff First Aid program

Pilot Class

**November / December
2008**

Participants of the English Village Staff First Aid Program were asked to complete a short survey (15 questions) to assist in the evaluation of the first aid course. The purpose was to establish the participants perception of the effectiveness of the course, its importance to them, their satisfaction level, and to receive feedback regarding its potential value as a tool in facilitating English language learning.

A total of 13 surveys were completed. 12 surveys were submitted from course participants. One survey was submitted from a guest observer of the course. The survey from the guest was accepted as a valid survey.

Summary of Results:

- 12 participants offered an overall rating of the course as 'Great'. - 1 participant offered an overall rating of the course as 'Good'.
- 9 participants felt that they had a little knowledge of first aid before they started the course. 2 felt that they did not know very much. 2 felt that they knew a lot about first aid.
- All 13 surveys reported they information explained clearly and easily understood during the course.
- 7 participants felt that demonstrations by the instructor were helpful to them. 7 participants felt the quiz game was beneficial to their understanding of the material. 4 participants felt the text book for the course was helpful. Only two participants found the video demonstrations of CPR helpful.
- 5 participants chose that English was their native language. However, there were only 3 know native English language speakers who were part of the class. This discrepancy may be due to the questions being misunderstood, written incorrectly, or possibly that there were additional native English speakers who were not known by the instructor. Of the remaining participants, 5 felt their English level was 'OK', 1 felt they had a strong English level, and 2 felt their English language skills were excellent.
- 4 participants found the course English level challenging, but a good way to improve their English level. 6 participants found the course English level to be easy. 1 participant found the English level difficult only sometimes. 2 participants found the English level very difficult. It should be noted that one of these two participants also identified themselves as a native English speaker. On the survey. However, also of interest is the indication from the other participant, who identified the text book as a good resource in helping to understand material in the course.
- 10 participants felts that the course was a good way to practice their English. 3 participants chose that they were native English speakers (correct number as per knowledge of the instructor). A typing mistake in the questions did reduce its reliability for survey purposes.

- 12 participants felt the instructor was 'very good' in helping them understand course material. 1 participant felt the instructor was 'OK'. It should be noted that this participant was also the single participant who choose 'good' for their overall description of the course, indicating either a lower general level of satisfaction, or consistent conservatism in responses.
- 8 participants felt that the instructor's use of English was easy to understand. 5 participants felt the teacher was sometimes difficult to understand. Of those 5 participants, one identified themselves as a native English speaker (possible conflict in information), one felt their english was strong, but 3 felt their English level was 'OK'.
- All participants would recommend the EV Staff First Aid program to their co-workers.
- 10 participants would still have been interested in taking the course, even if they were required to pay part of the costs. 3 participants would not have taken the course if they were required to pay part of the course cost.
- All participants would recommend the course as a good way to practice English language skills.

Additional Comments: The responses of the participants were generally positive. There was clear indication of the participants' feeling that the course was both important and useful/relevant to their current duties at English Village. The use of such a class to practice and improve on English language was supported, specifically with respect to the use of multiple methods of teaching (Oral, demonstrations, video, written text).

Notes from the Instructor

EV Staff First Aid / CPR

Pilot Class

**November / December
2008**

Summary

The pilot class, in the instructor's opinion, should be considered a success given that:

- overall, the students provided positive feedback, and seemed to be satisfied with the course
- the class was able to raise awareness of the need for first aid training, especially when working with children.
- the class resulted in 12 additional staff members of English Village being trained to respond to medical emergencies that may take place in the village.
- The pilot clearly demonstrated the value of the concept with regard to English language training and practice, a concept supported by the participants.

Class time: The use of the two hour classes, as well as the overall length of the course (12 hours) worked quite well. However, it was also easy to see that delays due to language comprehension could easily have resulted in delays without proper care being taken. Caution should be used regarding the flow of the class and required time for activities. For those with a reduced level of English fluency (basic to lower-intermediate), the instructor should consider limiting training to Primary Care. It would also be beneficial to add further scenario practice into the schedule. The use of an increased number of CPR manikins will significantly reduce the time pressure of the course.

A true-life discussion of the medical emergency at English Village: The use of the medical emergency that occurred during the last day of the course was opportunistic, but became an extremely valuable teaching tool for the course, and should be sometime that should be added permanently to the program. The classes ability to analyze the situation using the knowledge gained during the course was an excellent way to show the participants the practical applications of their training, and was also a good way to prepare them to face future emergencies if the need should arise.

Written Tests: The choice to provide an oral accompaniment to the written test was adequate, but problematic. Though it was helpful to intermediate level participants, upper-intermediate and advanced participants considered the oral component distracting, and would have rather written the test on their own without the oral accompaniment. Use of a 'game show' style test of information, followed by the written exam either in English, or Korean language, would be more appropriate in the future. Another option would be to rewrite the test using more clear English. However, this may provide a challenge regarding the test validity for certification purposes.

Course Quality: The instructor, considers the overall quality of the course presented good, but also thinks it could have been better. The course was a pilot program, and it should be considered that

the standard Emergency First Response course is not designed for English Foreign Language teaching. However, considering the challenges, the course went very well, with satisfaction of the participants high, and all requirements for certification being achieved by the participants. Course quality can be expected to be even higher in the future if lessons learned during the pilot are considered.

Equipment / Material Orders: Orders for necessary equipment were received in good time, and fulfilled the requirements of the course. Materials ordered from the Emergency First Responder corporation arrived in good time. However, it should be noted that there were customs questions regarding the shipment. And, though the shipment arrived with no duties or other charges, consideration should be given in the future to establish a procedure for ordering if the English Village will be the recipient of the order.