

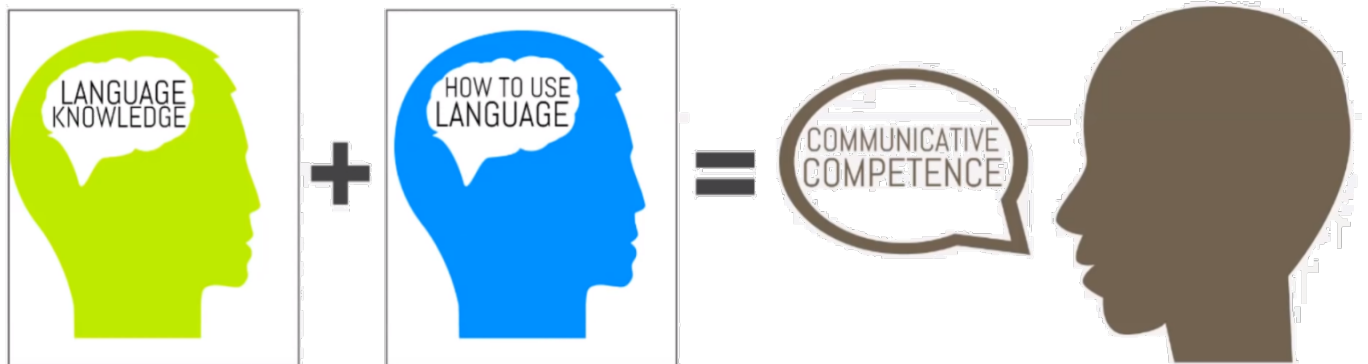
Communicative Approach from Information Gap Activities in ESL class

Tanaporn Lertritsumpun (Pond)
Grade 5 ESL Teacher

As it is well known in Plearnpattana community that the school focuses mostly on constructive learning whereas students need to use their schema to build up their new knowledge and learning skills with guidance from teacher. It is important that teacher develop lesson plans that help the classes to become more communicative rather than teacher-centered. As an ESL teacher, it is very significant to first be knowledgeable and resourceful in order to develop such plans. Teachers should always find new things that interest the students and also find ways to not only insert academic knowledge but also input life values and learning skills within the lesson plans.

In term 3 of the academic year of 2018-19, I was asked to open my ESL class for the school academic team with Teacher Paad as the lead observer and other ESL teachers from Keystage 1 and 2 to observe and construct plans for the Grade 5 students to learn English language more effectively. In the beginning, the team would study the first lesson plan according to how it was originally planned with only a few suggestions on how to make it more student-centered. After that, we had a meeting about the style of teaching and evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching method. Teacher Paad observed that the normal ESL lessons in the school focuses a lot on scaffolding. This means that the teacher demonstrates the methods to solve the situational problem and step back to support students when they need. He suggested that we try use the **Communicative Approach** to develop the lesson plans. This approach says learners need the knowledge of the language as well as the knowledge of how to use the

language to achieve communicative competence. This means that learners can learn language best when they actively use it. Moreover, with the communicative approach, learners benefit most from activities that provide meaningful communication. In order to achieve this, teachers should act as facilitators rather than instructors and provide more student-centered learning atmosphere where students are more comfortable to use the language and learn from each other more.



During the Open class post meeting, our team came up with the following conditions for each lesson plan:

1. Step 1: Get students ready to use English through hearing and speaking by applying short activities like tongue twisters, rhymes, chants, etc.
2. Step 2: Situational problems require English communication to complete the task.
3. Step 3: The sharing part should allot equal time for both presenting and student interaction.

With the conditions, our team came up with the **Information Gap Activities** for situational problems to get the students to talk. The person with the problem had to gather information to find out the missing information. This is a common type of activity to get students to talk, because that is the point of communication—to exchange information meaningfully and purposefully.

Alex loved eating. He ate burgers and fries for breakfast. He ate hotdogs and chips for lunch. He ate chicken, ham and ice cream for dinner. And, before going to bed he snacked on chocolate and doughnuts.

One day, Alex fell ill because of his unhealthy eating habits. He had toothache, stomachache and rashes. His mom brought him to the doctor. The doctor said Alex had to change his unhealthy eating habits. He gave his mom a list of food that Alex could eat and how often he would eat these foods. He also warned Mom about giving Alex nuts because these gave him allergy.



Situation: Visit the Doctor.

Situation: Alex is sick. The family go to see the doctor. The doctor tells which foods Alex should always, usually, often, sometimes, seldom, rarely, or never eat.

1. Read the story of Alex.
2. Decide on roles: Mom, Dad, Doctor, Alex, Alex's sister/brother.
3. Talk in group, using role play card.
4. Put the label and the food in the plate.
5. Practice your roles and present to the class.

Role Play Cards

Mom and Dad

- Tell the doctor about Alex's sickness.

Alex

- Answers doctor's questions

Alex's sister/brother

- Reminds Alex to follow doctor's advice

The family will help put the food in the plate.

Doctor will ask:

1. How do you feel today, Alex?
2. What kinds of food do you love to eat?
3. What do you usually eat before you get the rash?
4. How often do you eat vegetables and fruits?
5. Do you drink eight glasses of water?

Doctor will tell how often Alex should eat the food.

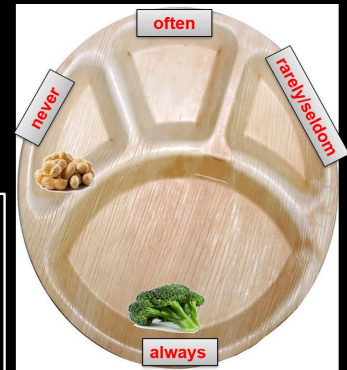
Let's go shopping and plan Alex's meals.



Step 1: Study the list of foods and plan which food could Alex eat never, rarely/seldom, often and always.

Step 2: In a plate, try to proportion the food accordingly. Paste the pictures of the food where it belongs.

Step 3: Show and explain your output.



Lesson 502 Term 3 "Good food for Alex" (Open Class)

The figure above showed an example of an information gap task. The result was mostly satisfying because the students learned from their groupmates and classmates when each group presented their output through a role play. However, the issues that we faced were that the instructions were not explained clearly and the situational problem was too complex for the students. Therefore, students spent too much time to figure out each step and we could not have enough time to do the AAR. After my ESL open class, I have determined to follow Teacher Paad's suggestions to develop Term 4 lesson plans with Communicative Approach by using the conditions to help my students learn English effectively.

Before writing the KM, I feel that I have pushed myself further in the past term to be more resourceful in terms of finding activities that I hoped to help the class become more communicative. From my

observation from previous terms, it appeared that when that class became teacher-centered, students lost their focus easily because they didn't seem to be interested in what the teacher was telling, especially when they could not share ideas or argue. However, when teacher gave chances for students to communicate with less teacher's interference, surprisingly, students paid more attention to their friends. Moreover, they were able to gain more knowledge from their peers when they had more chances to share and discuss ideas with each other. Some of the success came from the information gap task from the communicative language teaching approach. Each week I tried to include at least a situational problem that required students to use English language to complete the tasks. The condition of the problems was that the students would work in pairs with one of them receiving a situation card and the other getting an information sheet. The task would stimulate a real-life situation such as asking for help from a police officer or calling for an ambulance. In order to measure the effectiveness of these situational problem, I documented their outputs, recorded in my Lesson Study, and discussed with my class observer to ensure the result.

In the first week of Term Vimungsa, lesson plans for grade 5 students were the introduction of community heroes. In the first plan, the students got to read facts about Police Officers and they had to figure out the meaning of words using inferencing skills. In the subsequent plan, we continued the theme by stimulating a situation where a child got lost and they needed to ask for help from a police officer. The police officer had to obtain necessary information such as their parent's name and address from the lost child to help them find their parents. There were four different situation cards for the lost children and informational cards for the police officers. In order for students to come up with the proper questions and answers, the teacher demonstrated to the class how to make a conversation in such situation. Then, during the task, the teacher approached some students who needed help in completing the task.



Situation!

The Lost Child

Example:

Situation Card

- You are lost in a supermarket in the morning. You cannot find your mom.
- You last saw your mom near the milk zone at 9 o'clock.



Your mom

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____
 Address: _____
 Parent's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Homework
Page 11



I'm lost.

Police Officer

THE LOST CHILD

Information Card

Name: _____ Age: _____

Problem: _____

Place: _____

Time: _____

Home Address: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Parent's Phone: _____

Parent's Appearance: She has long brown hair. She's wearing a white shirt, a red vest and black pants. She's carrying a brown briefcase and a blue bag. **Describe how the child looks.**

The boy has short black hair. He's wearing a blue and white shirt and brown pants. He's also wearing a gray cap.

Lesson 103 Term 4 "Lost"

Situation Card

- You are lost in a book shop in the evening. You cannot find your aunt.
- You last saw your aunt near the toilet at 5.30 pm.



Your aunt

Situation Card

- You are lost in Siam Paragon in the afternoon. You cannot find your dad.
- You last saw your dad near Oishi restaurant at 12.30 am.



Your dad

Situation Card

- You are lost at a bus stop in the afternoon. You cannot find your uncle.
- You last saw your uncle in front of the mall around 3 o'clock.



Your uncle

Situation Card

- You are lost near the cinema in the evening. You cannot find your older sister.
- You last saw your older sister near the ticket counter at 8 o'clock.



Your older sister

Lesson 103 Term 4 "Lost" (Situation Cards)



THE LOST CHILD
Information Card

Name: PANNA Age: 10

Problem: lost
lost in cinemas

Place: the ticket counter

Time: 8 o'clock

Home Address: Bangkok blorler road
sathorn pinkha Village

Parent's Name: Pure

Parent's Phone: 081-558 2118

Parent's Appearance: Wear the orange shirt
yellow head band carry the phone
and purple bag carry hair, black skin
Describe how the child looks.
Wear uniform school

THE LOST CHILD
Information Card

Name: Amnisa Sirindomsit Age: 10

Problem: She was lost with her aunt

Place: near hotel

Time: 11:30 pm

Home Address: satek Sivalee village Rakhprad
1 Dang Kongro ng Bang Krui Nonthaburi

Parent's Name: Amicha, Aronca Sirindomsit

Parent's Phone: 091-299-5520, 091-299-5520

Parent's Appearance: She has brown long hair
she wears brownish T-shirt, blue pants and
brownish shoes.
Describe how the child looks.
She wears black and yellow t-shirt,
blue pants, white shoes, she has black long hair

THE LOST CHILD
Information Card

Name: Ryuu Age: 11

Problem: I lost my card

Place: Siam Paragon

Time: 12.30 am

Home Address: 99/16 Supalai Montara
village Phutthamonthon cai 1 Rd Bangkok

Parent's Name: Kamphan sutthiphichet

Parent's Phone: 099 655 1177

Parent's Appearance: Blue T-shirt
Black Trogers Black shoes
Black hair
Describe how the child looks.
Blue shirt

Lesson 103 (Students' Outputs)

During the activity, I have observed that most students tried their best to communicate in English to find the information from their peer. However, a lot of students were unable to write words and asked their partner to write for them. I have also observed that some students communicated in Thai to make sure that their peer understood the information accurately. To measure their language usage, teacher acted as the parent of a few of the lost children after the pairs finished the task. What I did was that I asked all police officers in the class to find my lost sons and daughters by giving them information from the situational card and the appearance of the kids. The students would listen to the information given and check their information cards to find out the missing children and bring them to me. The result was that most students were able to identify the lost kids from listening and checking their cards. This part of the activity was voted to be the most exciting part of the plan and it helped the teacher check their language usage skills. Students also indicated that the activity was not very hard but not too easy from them to carry out and they had fun talking to their friends. In this case, it was clear that students were able to use more or less of their previous English language knowledge such as adjectives and question words to communicate throughout this activity. This information gap activity allowed students to create meaningful language that can be used in real-life situations and the teacher was the facilitator who supported them as needed. Still, there were some problems that some students mostly communicate in Thai or just copy from the situation cards instead. In the subsequent class, my teaching partner and I set another condition for students to use English to get the information. If they did not use the language, they would have to do the task in front of the class. The reason we gave to them was that we would like all students to practice using English with the task to get the information. Afterwards, there was less use of Thai language and the students could use more English.

Another activity that applied information gap for the communicative learning was on the fourth week. In that week, students

read ORT6 “To the rescue” Nonfiction story about different types of rescue such as fire rescue, ambulance rescue and sea rescue. After the reading and completion of the comprehension exercise in their E-Pad, we introduced students to the situational problem. I asked students to imagine what they would do if they were in an emergency situation. Their answer was to call the emergency number for help. Then, I questioned further about what information they would tell the operator about the situation. They indicated that they should tell about the place, the problem (injuries, accidents, or other conditions), and their contact number. With their answers, I showed them the task which they needed to pair themselves up and took turn being a person who saw an emergency and the emergency hot-line operator. Similar to the previous activity, I provided the situation cards and the information cards for all students. There were also many choices of the situations. This information was the suggestions for the caller and the types of rescue the operator would send. In this part the students would use their schema about the rescue types and the rescuers’ role to save the situation. Moreover, we provided more time for the students to take turn after they finished their first round so that they could be in both roles. Before the task began, I demonstrated the situation by being the operator and noting down essential information from the class who was the caller. Moreover, I asked some volunteer to write down the questions I used on the board so they could have more ideas of how to ask the questions with ease.



Situation!

You are faced with different emergency situations. You have to call for help as fast as you can. Describe your location and give relevant information like address, famous landmark and contact number.

Work in pairs.



One is a person who sees an emergency.



Another is an emergency hot-line operator.



Situation!

The Caller

Example:

Address/Location: 24 Bangkoknoi Village
Telephone: 085 789 4525
Surroundings: My house is behind Central Pinklao. It is white.



Problem: There is a snake in front of my house. It is near the window. It looks like it wants to enter the house.

The Emergency Operator

Emergency Hot-line Operator - Information List

Name of caller: _____
Telephone number: _____
Problem: _____

Address/Location: _____
Surroundings: _____

Type of rescue: _____
Suggestion: Keep your doors and windows closed. Do not go near the snake.

After you finish, take turn!



Address/Location: Asiatique Market

Telephone: 081 564 8976

Surroundings: Near the food zone
I can see the Ferris Wheel.



Problem: My friend, Kipper, fell into the river and cannot get out. He is holding on to a float. He is 15 years old and he is very thin. He is very cold and tired.

Emergency Hot-line Operator - Information List

Name of caller: Por
 Telephone number: 081 564 8976
 Problem: Kipper fell into the river and cannot get out. He is holding on to a float.
 Address/Location: Asiatique Market
 Surroundings: Near the food zone I can see the Ferris wheel.
 Type of rescue: Sea rescue
 Suggestion: You can swim to help him. (If you can swim far)

Address/Location: Sai 2 Road

Telephone: 063 587 9512

Surroundings: In front of Bake Me coffee shop



Problem: A white Honda car hit a man. He was crossing the road. Now he has a lot of blood on his head. He also says that he could not move his legs.

Emergency Hot-line Operator - Information List

Name of caller: Takrai
 Telephone number: 063 587 9512
 Problem: car accident (to the man)
 Address/Location: Sai 2 Road
 Surroundings: in front of bake me coffee shop
 Type of rescue: Ambulance
 Suggestion: stay there and don't move

Lesson 502 Term 4 (Situation Cards and Students' Outputs)

During the activity, I noticed that all students in the class used English to communicate in order to fill the missing information effectively. The callers spent some time to read and understand the situation before doing the task so they could give sound answers.

Moreover, the operators were able to give out suitable types of rescue and proper suggestions for the callers. Some students who were confused were able to refer to the questions on the board to complete the task. After the first round, most students were able to complete the task twice. Some issues that were noticeable were that some low-proficient students needed a lot of help from teacher to translate some words from the cards, and that a lot of students were not able to spell the name of the places in English since the names of the places came from Thai words. I immediately told the students to write down the names in Thai in the information card because it was not the objective of the task but they could also spell the name out for their peers too. Another problem that surfaced from this task was that all the different situations had the same level of difficulty. Some low-proficient students were not able to read the information without teacher's help and they struggled to answer the questions asked. On the contrary, the high-achievers wanted to create their own situations because they found that the situations in their cards were too easy for them. Students had commented that they liked the activity and it was very meaningful to them since they could apply it in their real life and they liked talking to their friends. Unfortunately, there was not enough time for the students to share their output. This was due to poor time allotment in the lesson plan.

In conclusion, information gap activities are very effective in creating a communicative learning environment in ESL class. Nevertheless, the mentioned activities applied in my classes had some strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as following SWOT analysis below:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The class became student-centered. • Teacher was the facilitator and able to walk and observe students' learning strategies more. • Teacher could support the students who needed help more. • Students had got to use their previous language knowledge activate higher language competency. • The tasks were meaningful for the students because they can use in their real life. • Students had fun with the activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students sometimes just copied the information from the cards instead of communicating. • Students used more Thai than English to communicate. • The level of difficulty of the situation card did not suit the skills of lower Bs and the higher As.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set English-speaking condition or giving rewards to students who use English to communicate. • Provide varieties of the situations with different levels of difficulty to suit all students' learning skills. • Give free choices for students to make their own situation card to promote their creativity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lesson plans were too tight. • The sharing time was not enough.

Information gap activities are practical tools for making the class more communicative and student-centered. However, teachers should set an English-speaking condition, provide more choices to suit different skills of the students and promote their creativity. Another factor is to make sure the lesson plan is not too tight and to allot at least equal time for presentation and student interaction. With all of

the suggestions mentioned, I believe that this kind of communicative activity can be a good way for making ESL class more constructive, collaborative and communicative, and eventually develop student's communicative competence. I am also committed to find other interesting ways to apply Communicative Approach in my lesson plans by keeping on learning from fellow teachers, the academic team, and other available resources. I will make sure to constantly improve myself to become a better teacher in the future.