

Action Research Final Report 2010-2011

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1. Title: Improving students' English skills and motivation

2. Context:

(1) Level: 3rd year students of junior high school

(2) Class size: 38 students (2 classes)

(3) Time: 45 or 50-minute-class, 4 classes per week

(4) Textbook: New Horizon English Course 3

(5) Problems:

- a. Some students think English is too difficult for them. They attend easy activities, but give up at once what seems difficult.
- b. More than half of the students think listening to English is difficult, because it is too fast, and catching native speakers' English is hard.
- c. Writing English sentences is also difficult for nearly half of the students. They have difficulty in vocabulary, grammar and word order.

3. Goal: Improving students' skills and motivation to communicate with foreign people in English

In the questionnaire in April, more than half of students answered that they wanted to improve their listening, reading and writing skills. I planned to give communicative activities to motivate students and improve the skills. I thought that I would also need to give other special activities to improve the skills.

I want students to be willing to communicate in English, talking with their classmates, writing compositions and reading what their classmate wrote.

4. What I did

(1) 'Cell Phones --- For or Against?'

The topic of Unit 5 was "Cell Phones." Students wrote their opinions: Junior high school students may have cell phones or not.

In Step 1, they brainstormed the reasons why they were for or against the opinion. They looked up words in Japanese-English dictionaries and wrote the reasons in English. They talked and exchanged opinions with their classmates, and then finished their composition.

(2) Poster Session

After learning Unit 6, students made a speech and a poster on a famous person, character or group that they like. They made a speech in a group of four, showing their poster. After the speech, the audience asked the speaker questions by turns, and the speaker answered the

questions and tried to continue conversation in English after the questions.

In the next lesson, students wrote self-evaluation and the final report.

(3) 'My Future Family Rules'

After reading Let's Read 2 'Family Rules' in the textbook, students wrote about their future family rules. As the children in the family in the text were five and fourteen years old. I got my students to think of rules when their children are at the same age. The procedures were like those in writing about cell phones. They first wrote their ideas in Japanese and wrote family rules and the reasons why they wanted to make the rules, using dictionaries. Before talking, I taught a conversation strategy (partly shadowing). After talking about the topic with classmates, they finished final writing.

5. Results

I am glad that more students came to like English in February than in April.

I asked the students if the activities in English classes were useful to improve their English. More than half of them answered that they were very useful or useful, but in 'Easy True Stories' the number of students who answered it was very useful or useful was almost the same as the number of students who answered 'I can't decide.' I need to revise the procedures next year.

Students wrote many comments about the question 'How did you change in learning English?' One student answered there was no change and a few students didn't write anything, but the others wrote positive comments.

6. What I learned

I revised my survey questions, referring to other teachers' surveys. I asked my students the question 'How did you change in learning English?' for the first time. I am very happy to know that many students felt their improvement in English.

In April, they felt uneasy when they talk with classmates, but in the third term more students were willing to talk in English, and helped each other in writing.

7. Future issues

This year students talked in activities to practice target sentences, to exchange opinions in writings, to talk about the topic in Easy True Stories, etc. They answered questions in interview test by the AET. I would like to try timed-conversation and give more chances to talk in English and use conversation strategies.

In the first term, I got them to make a skit and give presentation. I thought poster session was better because they could speak more and got less nervous. I would like to try poster session in the first term, too.

Note: The numbers in the tables show the number of the students.

| 1 Do you like English? | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|-------------------------|
| | Yes, very much | Yes, I do | I can't decide | I don't like it | I hate it |
| April | 5 | 19 | 23 | 20 | 5 |
| July | 9 | 16 | 27 | 16 | 4 |
| February | 12 | 24 | 19 | 7 | 2 |
| 2 Do you like English classes? | | | | | |
| | Yes, very much | Yes, I do | I can't decide | I don't like it | I hate it |
| July | 4 | 20 | 37 | 10 | 1 |
| February | 4 | 24 | 29 | 6 | 1 |
| 3 Can you understand English spoken by your teacher? | | | | | |
| | Very well | mostly | about half | Not very well | Not at all |
| April | 4 | 20 | 20 | 17 | 3 |
| September | 10 | 24 | 24 | 11 | 4 |
| February | 8 | 28 | 21 | 6 | 1 |
| 4 Can you fill in the blanks of English songs, listening to them? | | | | | |
| | More than 90% | More than 70% | about half | Less than 1/3 | Not at all |
| April | 4 | 12 | 21 | 20 | 6 |
| September | 11 | 10 | 31 | 17 | 4 |
| February | 9 | 21 | 20 | 11 | 2 |
| 5 Can you read the dialogs and the texts in your textbook? | | | | | |
| | Can read with appropriate stress | Can read mostly, but not with stress | more than half | Not well | Not at all |
| April | 8 | 27 | 18 | 10 | 1 |
| September | 8 | 50 | 9 | 5 | 1 |
| February | 16 | 29 | 13 | 5 | 1 |
| 6 About the target sentences in the textbook | | | | | |
| | Can make your own sentences with the grammar | Can put Japanese into English and write it | Can put Japanese into English and say it, but can't write it | Can understand what the sentences mean | Can't understand at all |
| April | 15 | 20 | 15 | 10 | 4 |
| September | 14 | 28 | 15 | 10 | 6 |
| February | 19 | 27 | 11 | 5 | 2 |
| 7 Can you understand the content of 'Easy True Stories'? | | | | | |
| | Can understand it in the 1st reading | Can understand it in the 2nd or 3rd reading | Can understand it at the end of the class | Can understand about half | Can't understand at all |
| April | 6 | 32 | 15 | 6 | 5 |
| September | 7 | 38 | 15 | 8 | 6 |
| February | 15 | 28 | 12 | 5 | 4 |
| 8 In writing the skit and 'My School Trip' | | | | | |

| | Can write fluently | Can write by yourself, referring to the textbook and a dictionary | Can write with help of your classmates and teacher | Can't write very well | Can't write at all |
|---|--|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| September | 5 | 32 | 24 | 7 | 5 |
| 9 In writing the speech for Poster Session and 'My Future Family Rules' | | | | | |
| | Can write fluently | Can write by yourself, referring to the textbook and a dictionary | Can write with help of your classmates and teacher | Can't write very well | Can't write at all |
| February | 0 | 35 | 19 | 7 | 1 |
| 10 In speaking activities | | | | | |
| | Can talk actively in English without using Japanese at all | Can try to find partners and take part in the activities actively | Can finish the activities | Can't say partly, but try to speak English | Can't speak English at all |
| April | 1 | 15 | 29 | 16 | 1 |
| September | 3 | 22 | 30 | 14 | 4 |
| February | 4 | 25 | 22 | 9 | 2 |
| 11 Is 'Singing a song' useful to improve your English? | | | | | |
| | Very useful | Useful | I can't decide | Not very useful | Not useful |
| July | 25 | 25 | 16 | 3 | 3 |
| February | 19 | 28 | 13 | 1 | 3 |
| 12 Is 'Activities to practice target sentences' useful to improve your English? | | | | | |
| | Very useful | Useful | I can't decide | Not very useful | Not useful |
| July | 13 | 30 | 27 | 2 | 0 |
| February | 15 | 32 | 15 | 1 | 1 |
| 13 Is 'True or False' useful to improve your English? | | | | | |
| | Very useful | Useful | I can't decide | Not very useful | Not useful |
| July | 12 | 33 | 21 | 5 | 0 |
| February | 12 | 33 | 17 | 1 | 1 |
| 14 Is 'Q&A' useful to improve your English? | | | | | |
| | Very useful | Useful | I can't decide | Not very useful | Not useful |
| July | 9 | 35 | 23 | 4 | 1 |
| February | 15 | 33 | 15 | 0 | 1 |
| 15 Is 'Phrase reading' useful to improve your English? | | | | | |
| | Very useful | Useful | I can't decide | Not very useful | Not useful |
| July | 8 | 18 | 33 | 10 | 3 |
| February | 9 | 28 | 26 | 0 | 1 |

| 16 Is 'Easy True Stories' useful to improve your English? | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-----------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Very useful | Useful | I can't decide | Not very useful | Not useful |
| July | 10 | 25 | 31 | 4 | 1 |
| February | 11 | 22 | 28 | 1 | 1 |
| 17 Are 'Cell Phones--- For or Against?' and 'My Future Family Rules' useful to improve your English? | | | | | |
| | Very useful | Useful | I can't decide | Not very useful | Not useful |
| February | 14 | 30 | 16 | 3 | 1 |
| 18 Is 'Poster Session' useful to improve your English? | | | | | |
| | Very useful | Useful | I can't decide | Not very useful | Not useful |
| February | 11 | 25 | 24 | 3 | 1 |
| 19 What kind of English proficiency could you improve, comparing that in April? (Each student chose none, one or more.) | | | | | |
| | Reading | Listening | Speaking | Writing | Others |
| February | 42 | 37 | 20 | 36 | 1 (Thinking) |

Students' comments (February 2011)

Parenthetic numbers mean the number of

students answered.

Students wrote comments in Japanese. I put them into English.

How did you change in learning English?

I came to like English (6)

I got (more) interested in English songs.

(26)

I want to listen to more English songs. (2)

I croon English songs. (1)

I didn't know English songs, but I could learn many English songs. (1)

I listen to English songs outside classes. (6)

When I watch movies, I can find some words I know in English songs and movie subtitles. (2)

I came to like English books and songs and want to read and listen more. (1)

I got able to catch words in English songs better. (7)

I got able to catch words in English

movies. (1)

I got able to surf the Internet in English sites and play English games smoothly. (1)

I got able to understand English animation. (1)

I became able to read the textbook

fluently. (1)

I got interested in English movies. (1)

I got able to understand English a little.

(2)

I got able to understand English gradually and studied more at home. (2)

I couldn't get good scores before, though I studied hard before the term test. Lately I reviewed classes and could get good marks without cramming English just before the test. (1)

I got able to answer reading comprehension questions. (1)

I could improve listening proficiency.

(5)

I got good at listening quiz in entrance exam for public high school. (1)

I could improve reading proficiency. (2)

I got able to read English essay faster.

(1)

I could improve English but not in writing. (1)

I try to listen to English when I watch

(movies) on TV. (2)

I am better at English than in April. I can fill more blanks in English songs and answer English questions more easily. (1)

I came to feel I wanted to listen what people say on TV. (1)

I came to feel I wanted to write English sentences better. (1)

I got able to say what I wanted to say in English. (1)

I sometimes talk with my friends in English outside the class. (1)

I could understand grammar and felt it was fun. (1)

I want to become good at

English. (3)

I got able to put Japanese in English a little. I try to read all English sentences aloud. (1)

I got able to write sentences because I learned a lot of grammar and idioms. (1)

I want to talk with foreign teachers and students in high school. (1)

I want to be a good English speaker and go abroad. (2)

I want to get a job which needs English proficiency. (1)

I could learn sentences easily by repeating many times. (1)

I could write more in English composition than last year. (1)

I stopped giving up. (1)

1. Level: 3rd graders of junior high school
2. Class size: 2 classes with 38 students
2. Textbook: New Horizon (Tokyo Shoseki)
4. Goal & Objectives:
 - (1) Students can use modification with participles and indirect questions.
 - (2) Students can write their opinions about cell phones.

5. Procedure

Day one: Pre-reading & Starting Out (this class)

- (1) Singing an English song [Handout 1]
- (2) Pre-reading [Handout 2]
- (3) Target Sentence (Input and communicative activity 1 [Handout 3])

Day two: Starting Out

- (1) Singing an English song
- (2) Review of pre-reading
- (3) Target Sentence (Input and communicative activity 2 [Handout 4])
- (4) Oral introduction
- (5) New words & phrases
- (6) Practice reading the text and check the content

Day three: Dialog

- (1) Singing an English song
- (2) Target Sentence
- (3) Oral introduction
- (4) New words & phrases
- (5) Practice reading the text and check the content

Day four: Reading for Communication (1) (p.52)

- (1) Singing an English song
- (2) Oral introduction
- (3) New words & phrases
- (4) True or False
- (5) Q&A
- (6) Phrase reading [Handout 5]
- (7) Reading check

Day five: Reading for Communication (2) (p.53)

- (1) Singing an English song
- (2) Oral introduction
- (3) New words & phrases
- (4) True or False

- (5) Q&A
- (6) Phrase reading
- (7) Reading check

Day six: Writing Plus 1 & Writing opinions about cell phones

- (1) Singing an English song
- (2) New words & phrases
- (3) Step 1 (p.56)
- (4) Step 2 (p.56)
- (5) Brainstorming [Handout 6]
- (6) Vocabulary

Day seven: Writing opinions about cell phones

- (1) Singing an English song
- (2) Write the reasons
- (3) Let's talk
- (4) Express your opinions
- (5) Self-evaluation

6. Today's lesson plan:

1) Singing an English song

The students repeat the lyrics after the teacher and sing the song to the CD

2) Pre-reading

The students answer the questions in the handout and ask their partner the questions

3) Target Sentence (Input and communicative activity 1)

Introduce the target sentence, showing pictures and give an information-gap activity