

## Adapting Task-based Language Teaching in a Japanese Public Junior High School

### 1. Context

- (1) Level: Junior high school second year students
- (2) Class size: 5 classes with 18 students (We divided each class into Group A & Group B. I taught Group A, and the other two teachers taught Group B throughout the year when the students were in the first grade. I taught Group B for the first half year and taught Group A for the latter half, and the other JTEs did vice versa when the students were in the second grade.)
- (3) Textbook: New Horizon English Course II (Tokyo Shoseki)

### 2. Problems & Goals

I started my action research two years ago with the belief that communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is not just about using communicative activities or language games. Language activities should be carefully tailored so that they will develop learners' English communicative abilities successfully. For example, Willis and Willis (2007) point out "Our learners are not learning English so that they can play games outside the classroom" (p. 16). Similarly, Lee and VanPatten (2003) state "Many paired exercises differed very little from the classic ALM pattern-substitution drills" (p.13). Having started to develop this kind of feeling by myself, I decided to refine my way of teaching and communicative activities that I regularly use. I tried to provide more meaning-focused and enjoyable intake and output activities for grammar introduction and practice at various stages of learning. I also tried to vary the activity type (quiz, matching pairs, paired conversation, etc.) and the activity format (i.e., individual work, pair work, group work, the whole class activity) since students could be bored with similar kinds of activities.

This report introduces what followed in the second year of my action research: my attempt to adapt Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) to improve communicative activities furthermore. I set my new goal as to create and use more tasks in my lessons, adapting Willis and Willis (2007)'s definition that a task should give its primary focus on meaning, allow students to speak freely, have connections to the real world, and have a specific goal for students to achieve. Although TBLT has gained prominence in foreign language teaching in recent years, little is known about how teachers actually use TBLT in their classrooms. It appears promising but also challenging to adapt TBLT in a Japanese public junior high school context because the students are complete beginners of English and teachers are required to use a given textbook and to prepare students for examinations and communicative abilities at the same time. Thus, the goal of my action research this year also became an attempt to investigate how to adapt TBLT in a way that matches the unique contextual features of Japanese public junior high schools.

### 3. What I did

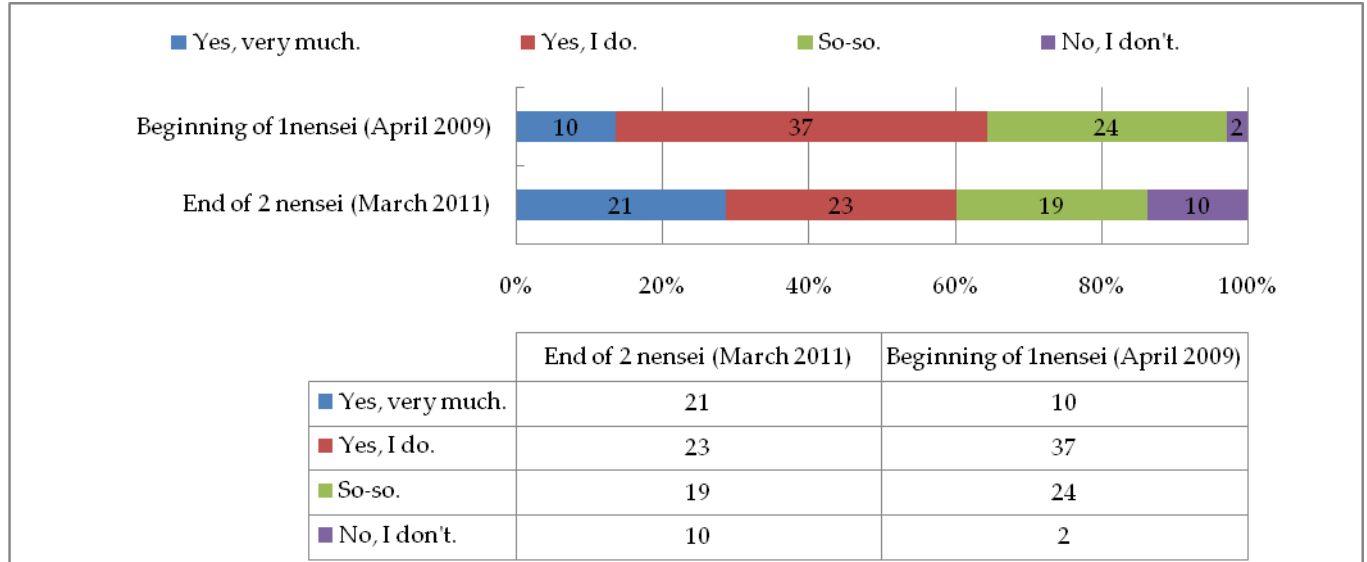
- (1) Making activities more meaningful, open-ended, and goal-oriented real life tasks
- (2) Sequencing tasks to make an integrated task-based lesson
- (3) Giving students more freedom to express their feelings and opinions in English
- (4) Teaching students more conversation strategies to improve their fluency and effectiveness in expressing their thoughts in English communication
- (5) Increasing formative, informal assessment as part of lessons

#### 4. Results

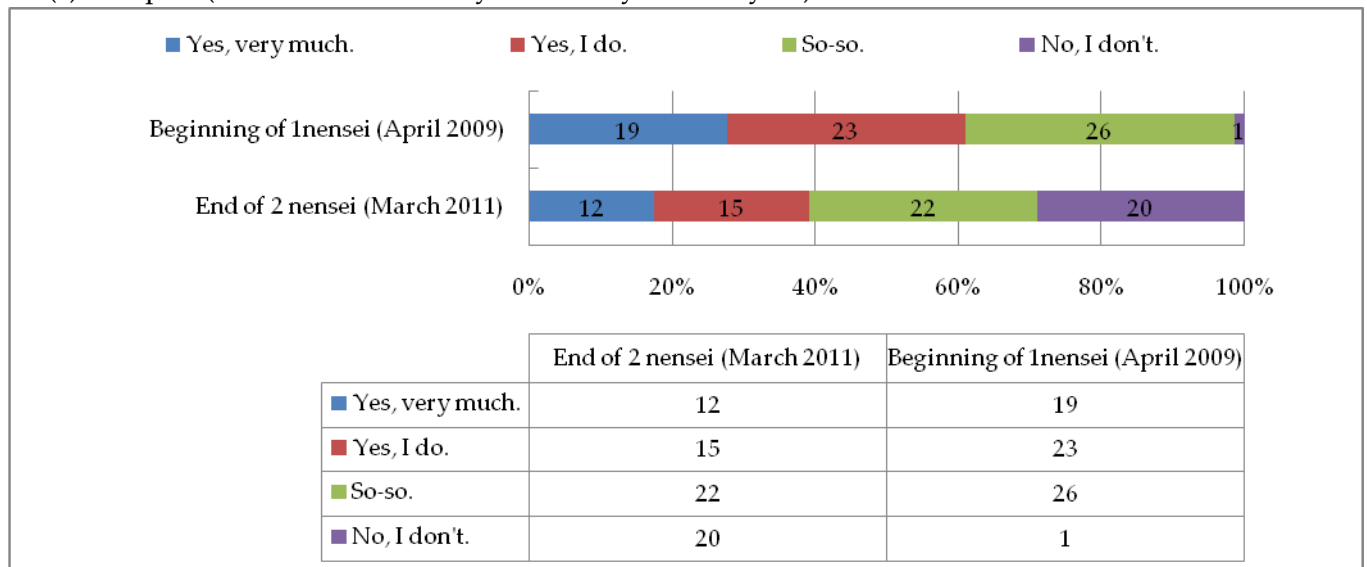
##### (1) Do you like English?

I surveyed all of my students (both Group A and Group B students) in April 2009, which is right after they became first graders of the junior high school and in March 2011, which is when they finished the second year of English learning at the junior high school. The following are survey results of those who received my lessons throughout the first year and another half year of their second year (Group AA, n=73) and those who received my lessons only a half year in the second grade (Group BB, n=69).

##### (i) Group AA (Those who received my lessons for one and a half year)



##### (ii) Group BB (Those who received my lessons only for a half year.)



##### (2) Students' comments about the change in their feelings toward English. (all the students; n=159)

##### (i) Reasons behind positive changes

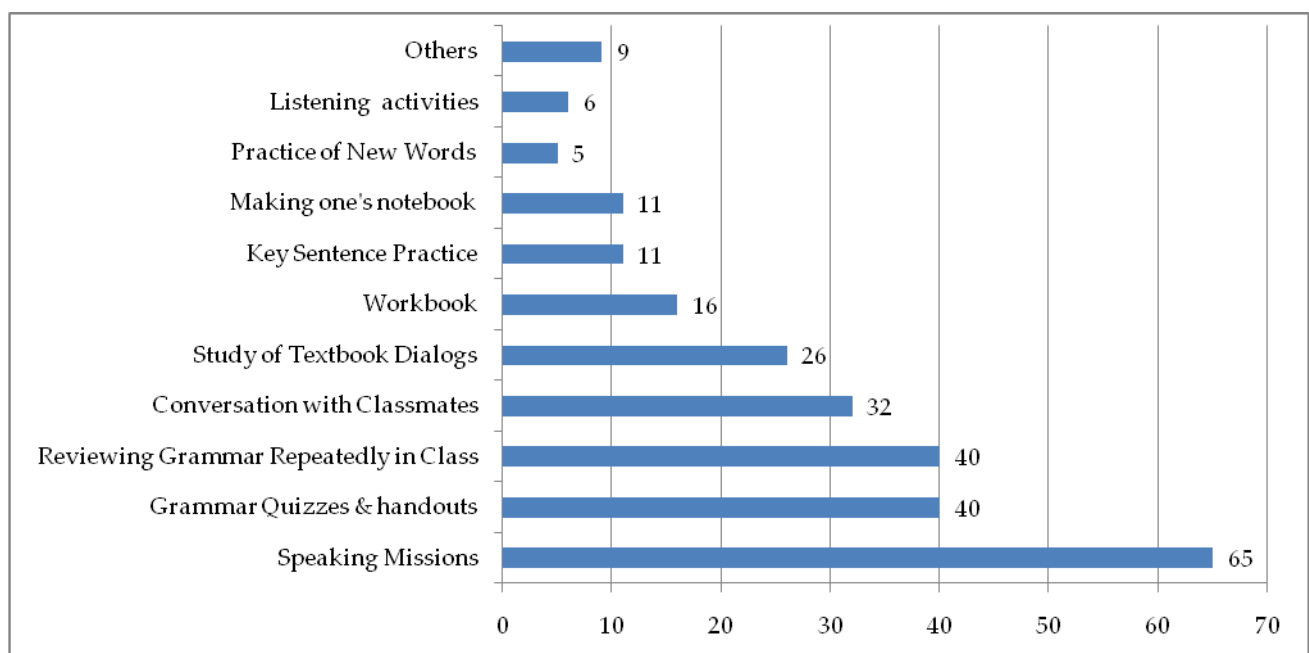
- ◎ だんだんわかるようになってきた (28)
- ◎ テストでいい点がとれているし、得意な方だから好き (7)
- ◎ 授業で英語のおもしろさに気づいた、英語は楽しい (6)
- ◎ 英語が少しでも話せると楽しいし、話せる英語が増えてきてうれしい (4)
- ◎ 友達と英語で会話とかできると楽しい。テストとかは難しくても会話ができると「英語好きだなあ」と思う (4)
- ◎ 英語ができると外国人みたいで嬉しい (2)

- ㊤ 勉強の仕方や仕組みがわかってきたから、やりやすくなった (2)
- ㊤ 小さいころから英語を習ってきているし、英語は好き (2)
- ㊤ もともと英語をやっていて、中学に入ってからさらに自信がついた。もっと上を目指したい (1)
- ㊤ 英語は大人になってからも使えるからいい (1)
- ㊤ わからないところがあってもだんだんできるようになっていくのが楽しい (2)
- ㊤ 話すのが苦手であまり好きではなかったけど、今は楽しく話せるようになってきたし前より英語が好きになった (1)
- ㊤ 英語での会話で、みんなの意見をたくさん聞けるようになってきて英語が好きになった (1)
- ㊤ いろいろな表現を学んだことで、いろんなことが言えてわかるようになってきたし楽しい (14)
- ㊤ あいづちとかいろんな表現を覚えて難しい文とかもできるようになったから、さらに好きになった (1)
- ㊤ ふつうの生活の時こたみに使うとおもしろいから、英語は好き (1)
- ㊤ 部活で英語の話とかになって、楽しくなった (1)
- ㊤ T シャツやボトルなどの身近に書いてある英語が読めて、意味がわかるようになってきたからうれしい (1)
- ㊤ 2年の初めに英文が長くなって心配になったけれど、だんだん慣れてきたし、英語は楽しく頑張ろうと思っている (1)
- ㊤ 最近洋楽やハリウッド映画にはまって、英語が好きになってきた (1)
- ㊤ 努力するようになって英語が苦手なわけじゃないことに気づいた。英語が好きになってきたから、がんばろうと思った (1)
- ㊤ 最初は好きという感情はなかったけど、英語が上手な人を見て憧れてから好きになっていった (1)

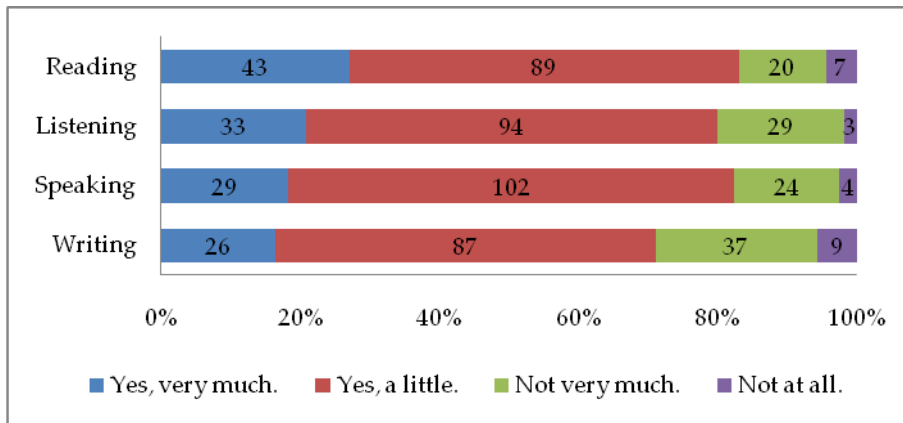
### (ii) Reasons behind negative changes

- ㊤ 英語はわからない、だんだん難しくなってわからなくなってきた (40)
- ㊤ テストや評定があまりよくない (10)
- ㊤ いろいろな単語や文法が増えて複雑になってきて、覚えられない (7)
- ㊤ 長い英文の意味がわからなかったり、単語の並べ方がわからなかったりする (2)
- ㊤ 初めは知っている単語や文が多かったが、学習していくにつれて難しくなっていき、文の成り立ちを何回聞いても覚えることができなくなってしまった (1)
- ㊤ 最初は単語が少ないためか文が成立したけども、最近は単語が多いためかなかなか話せない (1)
- ㊤ もともと勉強自体が好きじゃない (1)

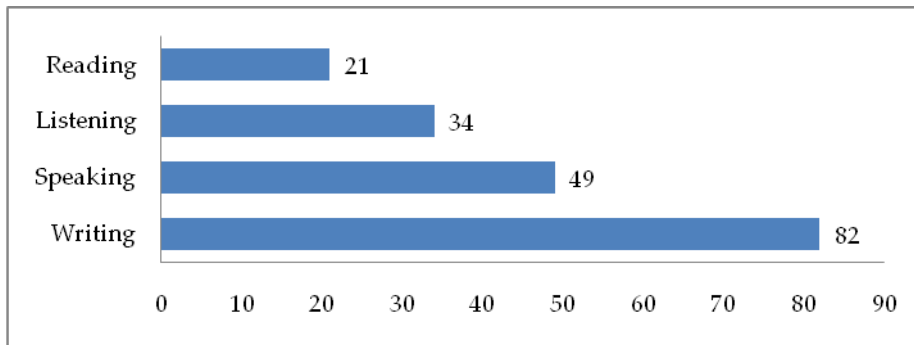
### (3) What activities do you find the most useful in learning English? (all the students; n=159)



(4) Did the following skill improve as you studied English in the second grade? (all the students; n=159)

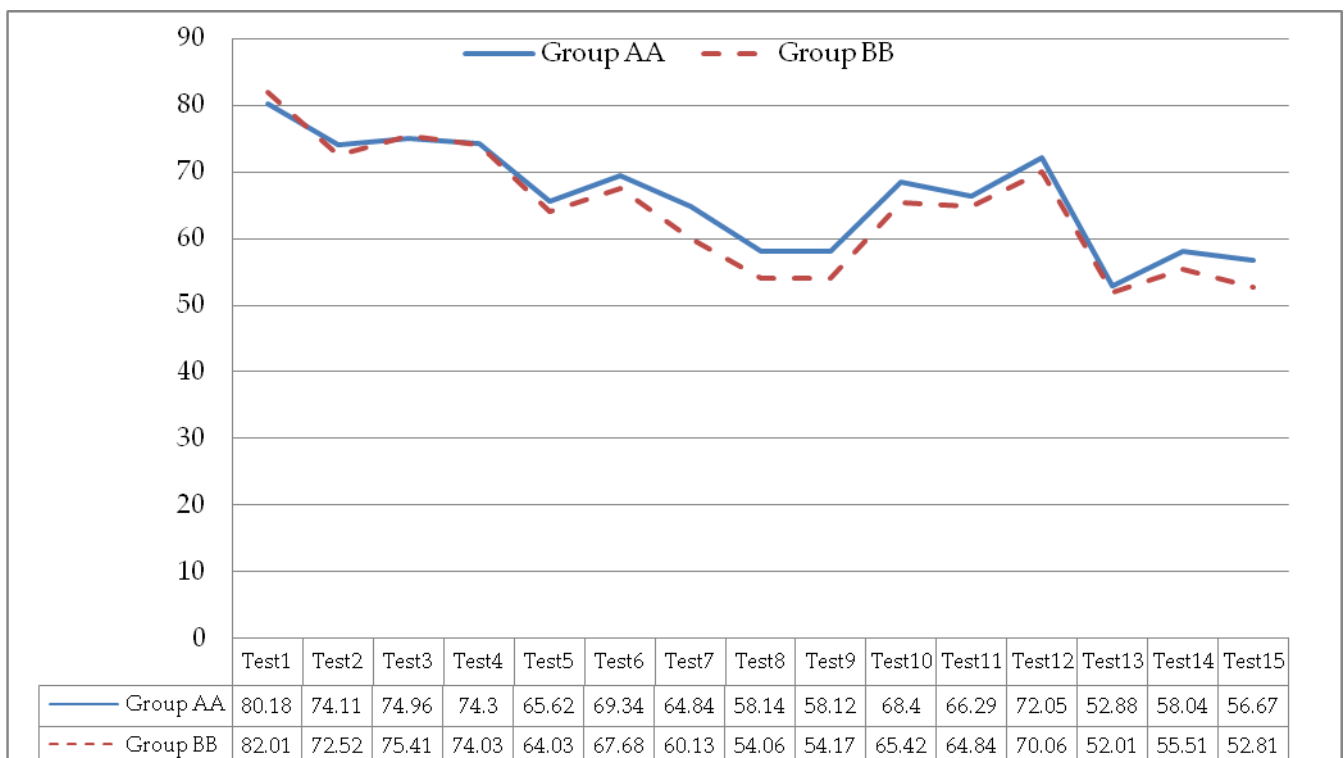


(5) What skills do you want to improve the most? (all the students; n=159)



(6) Student Performance on Tests

Student performance on tests are presented below for Group AA (those who received my lessons throughout the first year and another half year of their second year) and Group BB (those who received my lessons only for a half year in the second grade). Test 1 through Test 7 was given in the first grade, while the rest was given in the second grade.



## 5. What I learned

- (1) Students find speaking tasks (Speaking missions with their ALT; Conversation with classmates) enjoyable and useful in learning English. Many students, even those who tend to perform poorly on written tests, enjoy having English conversation with their classmates and have desire to develop communicative abilities in English.
- (2) Students start to develop negative feeling toward English when they can't follow English classes and/or score poorly on tests. On the other hand, they start to develop positive attitudes toward English when they develop better understanding of English and their test scores improve. Thus, I believe that it is important to review and recycle the most important grammar repeatedly in class so that students can recognize what they need to know and master them. It is also necessary to provide effective learning opportunities/ materials (speaking tasks, handouts, a workbook, etc.) and assessment opportunities (quizzes, tests, speaking tests, etc.) so that they study and master the most important basic grammar. Unfortunately, quite a few students procrastinate and/or won't study if there is no pressing need to study.
- (3) Students feel their receptive English skills (reading and listening skills) improved more than productive English skills (speaking and writing skills). They wish to have more instructional support to advance their writing skills.
- (4) Those who received more TBLT lessons (Group AA) showed more positive attitudes toward English and improved their test scores over time. Thus, it seems that TBLT not only help students develop English communicative abilities but also increase students' motivation in learning English, which then results in the development of grammar accuracy needed for tests and exams.
- (5) Teaching conversation strategies and giving students frequent practices to engage in short conversations seems to have developed students' confidence and fluency in communicating in English. Students enjoy and find it exciting and amusing to use conversation strategies.

## 6. Future issues

- (1) Including more writing tasks
- (2) Concluding a series of lessons with a summative activity (e.g., fun essay)
- (3) Adding more formative assessment (e.g., evaluating pair works, presentations, and writing tasks)
- (4) Realizing more collaboration among teachers
- (5) Finding more effective ways of introducing grammar target of tasks (introducing grammar more inductively and/or recycle the same task later)

# Lesson Plan

“Let’s go abroad!”

1. Level: Junior high school second year students
2. Class size: 5 classes with 18 students
3. Textbook: “Unit 2: Emi goes abroad” in New Horizon English Course II (Tokyo Shoseki)
4. Goal & Objectives:
  - 1) Students can use English to talk about future plans
  - 2) Students can ask others to show something
  - 3) Students can describe sightseeing spots
  - 4) Students can understand the meaning and usage of “be going to”
  - 5) Students can understand such sentence structures as SVOO and SVOC
5. Procedure

(1) Day one: The introduction to Starting Out

- Learning the meaning and usage of “be going to” (affirmative)
- Task 1: Making a travel plan (Ss read a travel brochure and decide which country they want to visit. They have short conversations, talking about their own travel plans with others.)

I’m going to visit Mexico during summer vacation. I’m going to stay there for seven days.  
I’m going to ride a camel and see pyramids.

(2) Day two: Starting Out & Dialog

(a) The continuation of Starting Out

- Review of the previous lesson
- Understanding and reading aloud the textbook dialogue

A: Do you have any plans for the “Golden Week” holidays?  
B: I’m going to visit Lake Towada by plane.  
C: I’m going to go to Easter Island. And I’m going to leave tomorrow!

(b) The introduction to Dialog

- Learning and practicing how to use “be going to” in interrogative sentences
- Practice asking each other about travel plans

A: What are you going to do during summer vacation?  
B: I’m going to visit Mexico.  
A: How long are you going to stay?  
B: (I’m going to stay there) for seven days.  
A: What are you going to do there?  
B: I’m going to ride a camel and see pyramids.

(3) Day three: The continuation of Dialog

- Review of the previous lesson (“be going to” in interrogative sentences)
- Learning and practicing how to go through passport control with the textbook dialogue (Learning the SVOO structure)

A: Show me your passport, please.	B: Sure. Here you are.
A: What’s the purpose of your visit?	B: Sightseeing.
A: How long are you going to stay?	B: For three days.
A: OK. Enjoy your stay.	B: Thank you.

- Task 2: Passport Control (Ss go through passport control, showing their passports to the

ALT who acts as an immigration officer.)

(4) Day four: The introduction to Reading for Communication 1 (Today)

- Review of the previous lesson
- Learning how to describe sightseeing spots (Learning the SVOC structure)
- Task 3: Let's go sightseeing (Ss hypothetically visit famous travel spots in foreign countries)

(5) Day five: Reading for Communication 1 & 2

(a) The continuation of Reading for Communication 1

- Understanding and reading aloud the text

(b) The introduction to Reading for Communication 2

- Understanding and reading aloud the text

(6) Day six: Reading for Communication 3, Listening Plus 2

- Review of the previous lesson
- Reading for Communication 3 (Additional practice of describing sightseeing spots)
- Listening Plus 2: Listening to airport and in-flight announcements

6. Today's lesson plan

(1) Explanation of today's class

(2) Review of the SVOO structure

(3) Learning how to describe sightseeing spots (Learning the SVOC structure), height, and weight

Look at that! People call it Nana-chan ningyo.

It's 6 meters tall.

It's 600 kilograms.

(4) Practice describing local sightseeing spots in pairs

(5) Task 3: Let's go sightseeing.

- Ss hypothetically visit famous travel spots in foreign countries (Students make groups of four. One of the students in a group reads information about a sightseeing spot and explain that to the other group members. One of the group member write down information on the worksheet as a representative.)

(6) Summarizing today's class

- Each group presents in front of the class, and others check answers.

(7) Self-evaluation & reflection

## 2年英語 学年末アンケート

Class \_\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. 英語は好きですか？ 次のそれぞれの時期をふり返って、教えてください。

1 年	1学期の始め	a. とても好き	b. 好き	c. ふつう	d. あまり好きじゃない
	2学期の始め	a. とても好き	b. 好き	c. ふつう	d. あまり好きじゃない
	1年の終わり/2年の始め	a. とても好き	b. 好き	c. ふつう	d. あまり好きじゃない
2 年	2学期の始め	a. とても好き	b. 好き	c. ふつう	d. あまり好きじゃない
	2年の終わり	a. とても好き	b. 好き	c. ふつう	d. あまり好きじゃない

2. 1年の初めから今日までに、英語に対してどのような気持ちの変化がありましたか。それはどうしてですか。わかる範囲で、なるべく具体的に教えてください。

<気持ちの変化とその理由> (例: だんだん英語がわかるようになってきたから、英語が好きになってきた)

3. 英語を勉強する理由は何ですか。一番の理由から順に、1、2、3と数字を書いて、教えてください。

- ( ) 入試やテストがあるから ( ) 将来仕事で使いたいから ( ) 英語で話せるようになりたいから  
( ) 海外旅行で使えたらうれしいから ( ) 英語の歌や映画に興味があるから ( ) その他.....

4. 英語の学習の様子について、教えてください。

(1) 学校以外で、英語を習っていますか。

- a. はい ⇒ { ・ どこで? 学習塾・家庭教師・英会話学校・通信教育・その他 ( )  
b. いいえ { ・ いつから? ( )

(2) 家庭学習(定期テスト・コンクール・小テスト前の勉強、ノート作り、ワーク)は、きちんとできましたか。

- a. いつもできた b. だいたいできた c. あまりできなかった d. 全然できなかった

(3) 大切な文法(文の組み立て方、肯定文・疑問文・否定文の作り方など)は、わかっていますか。

- a. よくわかっている b. だいたいわかっている c. あまりよくわからない d. 全然わからない

(4) これまでに出てきた単語は、どれくらい覚えていますか。

- a. ほとんどの単語の意味とつづりがわかる b. よく使われる単語の意味もつづりもわかる c. よく使われる単語の意味はわかるけど、書けない d. 単語はほとんど意味もつづりもわからないし、書けない

(5) 授業で勉強が終わった後の教科書の本文は、どれくらいわかっていますか。

- a. すらすら読めて意味もわかる b. ゆっくりだけ一人で読めて意味もわかる c. 教えてもらえば読めるし意味もだいたいわかる d. 教えてもらえばなんとか読めるけど意味はよくわからない



5. この1年で、次の力はどれくらい伸びたと思いますか。

スピーキング (話す力)	a. とても伸びた	b. 少し伸びた	c. あまり伸びなかった	d. 全然伸びなかった
リスニング (聞く力)	a. とても伸びた	b. 少し伸びた	c. あまり伸びなかった	d. 全然伸びなかった
リーディング (読む力)	a. とても伸びた	b. 少し伸びた	c. あまり伸びなかった	d. 全然伸びなかった
ライティング (書く力)	a. とても伸びた	b. 少し伸びた	c. あまり伸びなかった	d. 全然伸びなかった

6. 今、特に伸ばしたいのはどんな力ですか。また、それを伸ばすためには、どうしたらいいと思いますか。

伸ばしたい力に、○をつける→	スピーキング (話す力) / リスニング (聞く力) / リーディング (読む力) / ライティング (書く力)
どうしたらいい?	

7. 次の活動は、英語の力を伸ばすのにどれくらい役立ちましたか。1～5の中から選んで○をつけてください。

	とても 役立った	どちらとも 役立った	どちらとも 言えない	あまり 役立たなかった	全然 役立たなかった
① 授業で大切な文法を繰り返し復習すること	1	2	3	4	5
② ピクチャーカードを使った基本文のドリル練習	1	2	3	4	5
③ クラスメートと英語で話すこと	1	2	3	4	5
④ Niall 先生との活動 (ミッション、パスポートを使った活動)	1	2	3	4	5
⑤ 教科書の本文の勉強	1	2	3	4	5
⑥ 朝ドリル・英語コンクール・小テスト	1	2	3	4	5
⑦ ノート作り (予習・整理)	1	2	3	4	5
⑧ ニューリピートワーク	1	2	3	4	5

8. 英語力をつけるのに特に役立ったこと、続けてほしいと思っていることは何ですか。2つ選び、その理由を教えてください。



理由

由： \_\_\_\_\_ )



(

理由

由： \_\_\_\_\_ )

9. 最後にひとこと、英語について自由に書いてください。(質問、困っていること、要望、来年度への意気込みなど)

☺Thank you very much!