

# Final Action Research Report 2013

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## 1. Theme of this year's AR:

Integrating Language Skills to Develop Students' Communicative Ability

## 2. Teaching context

- 1) Level: 1st year of junior high school
- 2) Class size: 33×4 classes
- 3) Time: 50 mins×4/week
- 4) Text book: New Horizon English Course 1 (Tokyo Shoseki)
- 5) Problems

The first year students this year have learned English since they were in the fifth grade as *gaikokugo katsudo* or foreign language activities. According to the course of study, the overall objective of *gaikokugo katsudo* is

To form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages.

(MEXT, 2011)

It should depend on elementary schools, but as for my students from four elementary schools, they have experienced learning greetings in different languages, simple communication, singing, and acting in English in a once a week *gaikokugo katsudo* for two years with their homeroom teachers and *gaikokugo katsudo* assistants. The focus of *gaikokugo katsudo* is on verbal communication, which means writing and reading English are not supposed to be taught. Also their learning is not assessed like in other subjects.

According to the results of the survey conducted at the first class in April, my students generally seemed to like English and be interested in using English. At the same time, they were very concerned about learning reading and writing in junior high. There were also some students who did not like English at that point and they were reluctant about English class in junior high.

### 3. Goal:

My goal of teaching this year is building students' communicative ability through integrating skills. Since they were familiar with verbal activities in elementary school, it was imagined that students would stress reading and writing which they have not learned yet. However, one of the reasons students come to hate English in junior high is to realize the difficulties of reading and writing comparing to fun aspects of listening and speaking. Things will be worse when they are informed of their mistakes in their writing all the time.

I would like to maintain their motivation toward learning English while they start to learn reading and writing. At the same time, I would like to reinforce their listening and speaking abilities by teaching grammar and conversation strategies.

### 4. What I did

1) Introducing small talk to teach conversation strategies

2) Using songs:

Hello goodbye, Sing, Quando quando quando, Tears in heaven, So much in love, Roar,

I was born to love you, Rudolph the red nosed reindeer, Poker face, Can't hurry love,

Can you feel the love tonight, Can't hold us, I just call to say I love you, Story of my life

3) Using focus-on-form activities for grammar teaching

4) Writing about personal information

5) Providing error correction activities

6) Providing "Sticker Chances"

Students can get a sticker when they volunteer to perform in front of the class. They also can get a sticker when they successfully sing a song to the teacher. Students collect stickers and put them on the sticker sheet. When they fill the sheet with 50 stickers, they will get a prize.

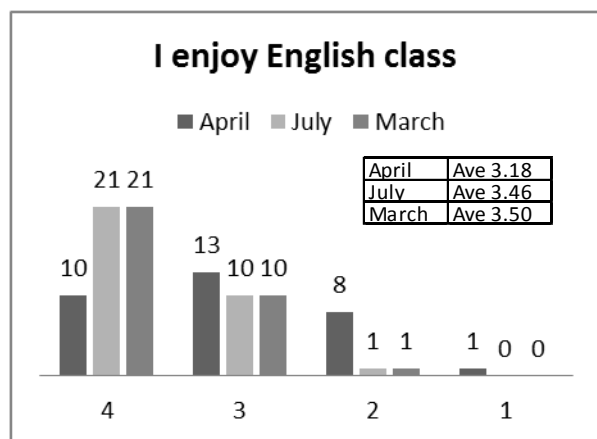
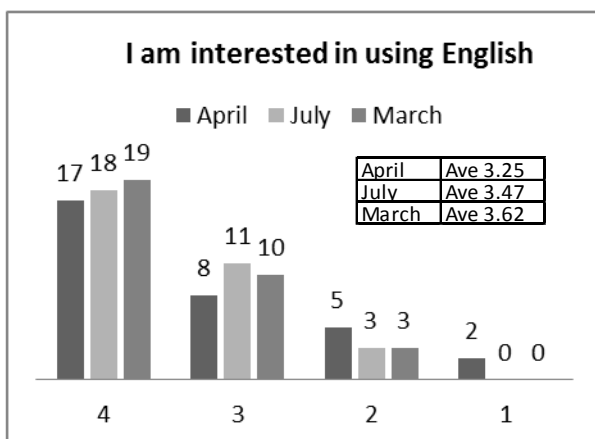
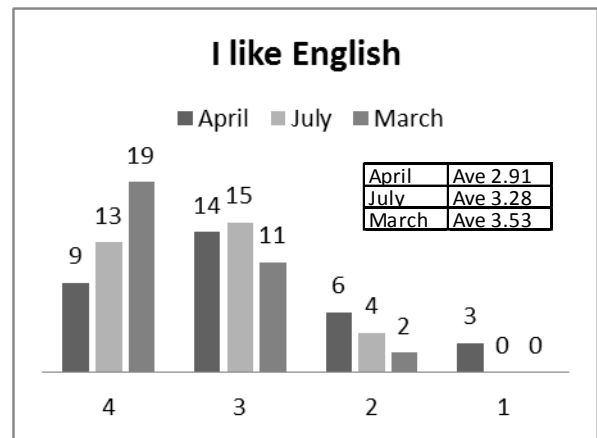
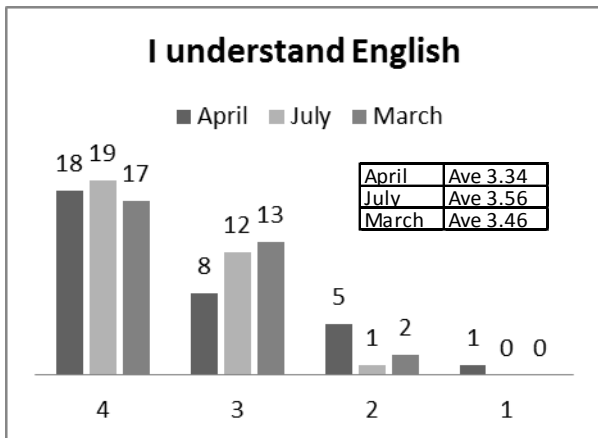
- 7) Conducting speaking tests
- 8) Using Bingo to learn the sound and meaning of new words

5. Results

【Survey results】1-7 (32 valid answers)

The numbers in the graphs show actual number of students. The students answered the questionnaire in April reflecting on their experiences in elementary school.

[4: I agree. 3: I mostly agree. 2: I don't agree very much. 1: I disagree.] n=32



【Test results】  
n=132 students

Test	Month	Average score(%)
1 <sup>st</sup> term Mid-term	May	90.14
Final	July	83.55
2 <sup>nd</sup> term Mid-term	October	80.67
Final	November	68.93
Speaking test 3	December	79.73
3 <sup>rd</sup> term Mid-term	January	69.23
Final	February	70.68

【Students' comments from 1-7】

April

- Concerning about writing –6 students

“I guess that things will be a lot more difficult in junior high, but I will try hard to learn writing words and sentences.” (girl)

“I often make spelling mistakes so I want to practice writing more.” (girl)

“I want to write and speak fluently.” (girl)

“I think it would be cool if I can write fluently.” (girl)

“I want to learn how to write.” (girl)

“I am not good at English and I can't write. I want to learn writing.” (boy)

- Opinions about English class –5 students

“The teacher was just saying whatever in English and it was not fun for us.” (girl)

“I didn't understand what English teacher was saying.” (girl)

“The English teacher we had in the sixth grade was not fun. I hope English in junior high will be fun.” (2 boys)

“To be honest, our English teacher in the sixth grade was a bit strange and the classes were not fun.” (boy)

July

- I want to learn English more. –8 students
- I enjoy small talk. / I can do small talk now. –6 students
- I want to try more sticker chances. –5 students
- I want to learn more songs. –4 students
- I like English more than before. –2 students
- English is getting difficult more and more. I am worried about it. – 1 student

March Write about useful /favorite/ impressive activities

- Small talk was useful. – 10 students

“It will be useful in the future.”(2 boys, 2 girls)

“It’s meaningless if we just do it without paying attentions, but we had the speaking test afterward. So I thought I had to do it hard and try to learn it.” (girl)

“It was good to learn about my classmates.” (girl)

“It was useful to learn the conversation strategies.” (3 boys)

- Sticker chance motivated participation in class. (8 students)

“Sticker chance was good, but I couldn’t try as many times as before in the third term because the text got harder and I was not confident.” (girl)

- Bingo was useful to learn words. (12 students)

- I liked English songs. (13 students)

- Error correction activity was useful to learn rules of English. (10 students)

[Comment of M.F (girl) in March]

It’s so wonderful that I can speak and write English! It’s so fun! I want to be able to deal with any situation without problem. I could be myself and enjoyed small talks thinking about the real situations. I tried really hard to earn 50 stickers to go to Hawaii.

[Comment of Y.K (boy) in March]

I have enjoyed every activity and learned English. It was all beneficial. I sang songs, I did Bingo, and I got stickers. By doing so, I learned English and it was very good. Your class was really interesting, and it was fun for me to use English. I am going to study English hard from now too so that I will be able to English more and more.

## 6. What I see in the results

Many students seemed to increase interests and motivation toward English toward the end of school year. More students enjoy English class (72%→97%→97%) and I like English (72%→88%→94%). According to their comments in April, some students were concerned about learning writing in junior high. In July, however, those students did not mention worries about writing and some even

confidence by saying “I could learn to write” and none of the students left comments showing anxious about writing in March.

In the comments in March, I saw that the students understood the intention of each activity and appreciate the benefit. Most of the students didn’t reduce the motivation and kept trying hard thanks to sticker chance, Bingo, and songs. At the same time, many students think that not only these fun aspects, but also error correction activity are useful for learning. However, few students mention focus on form activities!

#### 7. What I learned

- I believe that small talk worked well because of speaking tests. Like one of the students stating, they practice conversation strategies with clear goals when they knew that they were going to be tested. It is always important to show the intention and goal of activities.
- I could not find many comments about focus on form activities, however, I can see that they worked well enough when I see their term test results. The combination of focus on form activities and error correction activities could arouse students’ sense about sentence form and grammar rules.
- Students never get bored of Bingo. I would like to continue Bingo to reinforce vocabulary.
- Students’ concentration span is very short. So it is nice to have several small activities in one lesson and make it routine. This way, I could reduce the lengthy explanation about activities and make classroom English familiar.
- I have still a doubt about using stickers to motivate students even though I found out many students actually tried hard to get stickers. Is it genuine motivation to learn English or just collectors’ appetite which has nothing to do with English?

#### 8. Future issues

I realized the textbook applying the new course of study includes much larger vocabulary with more complex sentences comparing to the previous textbook. Students surely have to study both in class and at home to catch up. Their motivation has to be maintained not only by fun activities in class

such as Bingo, but also the actual feeling of "I can understand." And vocabulary learning must be done besides grammar learning. Extensive reading can be one possible solution for this and I need to work on the system to make it functional.

## Lesson Plan

1. Level: 1st year of junior high school
2. Class size: 33×4classes
3. Time: 50mins×4/week
4. Text book: New Horizon English Course 1 (Tokyo Shoseki) Unit 10 "From San Francisco"
5. Objectives

To teach the students the basic pattern: "I can -" "I cannot -" "Can you-"

To enable the students to do simple self-introduction using the sentences: "I can-" "I cannot -"

To enable the students to hold a dialog using the sentences: "Can you...?-Yes, can./No, I can't."

### 6. Procedure of Unit 10

Day 1 Engage in the activity "Can you ~?"

Day 2 Read Part 1 (pp. 94-95)

Day 3 Read Part 2 (pp. 96-97) Engage in role playing

Day 4 Read Part 3 (pp. 98-99) Engage in role playing

Day 5 Engaging in error correction. Work on the workbook.

### 7. Activity "Can you ~? " (Day 1)

1) Goal: Ss learn the basic sentences using "can."

2) Procedure of the activity Ss...

Pre task: listen to T talking about herself

Step 1: check the meaning and usage of "I can-" "I cannot-" "Can you-"

Step 2: check the meaning and pronunciation on the worksheet.

Step 3: walk around the classroom and find a partner. Ask the partner "Can you -?"

If the partner says "Yes, I can," they can get a sign from him/her. The students who can finish all the questions can get a prize.

Step 4: write about themselves using "can" "cannot"

Post task: T collects the handout and makes an error correction activity out of students' common mistakes.