

Action Research
Final Report – March 2015

Hazelynn Caceres

Title: Interactions in a Writing Class
Context: Level: 2nd year high school students
Class size: 27 students (4 boys and 23 girls)
Time: 50 minutes, twice a week
Textbook: Atlantis English Expression 1 (Cheers)

Problems:

Curriculum for Writing Course

- A) Selection of familiar topics
- B) Vocabulary Teaching
- C) Steps in Administering Writing

Assessment

- A) Speaking Test
- B) Essay Assessment
- C) Summative Assessment

Goals:

- Students will be able to express their ideas using the vocabulary they have learned, review grammar points, study the process of writing.
- As students develop writing skills, they should be able to continuously develop speaking as well as listening and reading skills.
- To foster a good learning environment to nurture a positive attitude towards English

What I did:

- Increased and selected the number of familiar topics for the entire school year
- Introduced various activities based on the topics
- Integrated writing with a minimum length of 110 words to over 180 words
- Included timed conversation for 3 minutes and 30 seconds
- Organized the writing process based on other research studies
- Introduced conversation strategies
- Used rubric for assessment of speaking test and essay

What Happened?

The tables and graphs in the following sections will show the results of the action research for a year. Please take a look at the summary of the findings on page 9 – 10 .

Table 1 Topics and length requirement for Speaking Test and Fun Essays**1st semester to the 3rd semester, school year 2014-2015**

	1 st semester		2 nd semester		3 rd semester	
Topic	About Me	My Dream Trip	My Summer Vacation	My Treasure	A People I Admire	Doraemon's Tools
Speaking	2 min	2 min and 30 sec	3 min	3 min	3 min and 30 sec	3 min and 30 sec
Essay	90 - 120	100 - 130	110 - 160	120 - 170	130 - 180	140 - 200

Table 2 Conversation Strategies

Topic	Conversation Strategies
1. About Me	Openers, Closers and rejoinders
2. My Dream Trip	Sounds good/bad/nice, Let me see and "What does it mean?"
3. My Summer Vacation	Keyword shadowing and follow-up questions
4. My Treasure	Shadowing (partial and full)
5. A People I Admire	Follow-up sentences and questions
6. Doraemon's Tools	Follow-up sentences and questions, What else...?

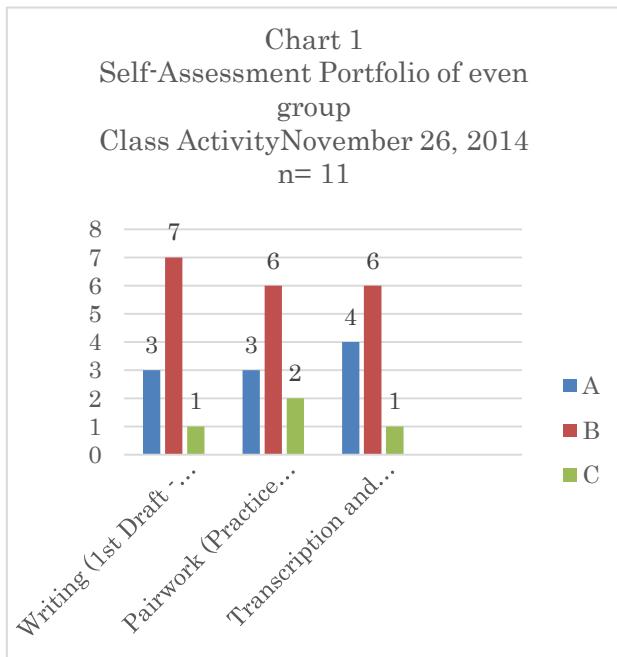
Table 3 Developments of Students' Writings (even group)

Students No.	My Dream Trip 1 st semester			My Treasure 2 nd semester			Doraemon's Tools 3 rd semester		
	1 st draft	2 nd draft	Fun essay	1 st draft	2 nd draft	Fun essay	1 st draft	2 nd draft	Fun essay
2	<i>did not come to school</i>			-	-	43		-	154
4	88	88	88	80	135	173		131	158
6	98	98	98	96	134	176		138	184
8	83	83	83	83	106	175		132	182
10	91	91	91	145	172	182		189	211
12	112	112	112	91	148	193		190	188
14	120	120	120	94	113	206		258	256
16	182	182	182	102	132	200		220	225

18	153	153	153	128	145	198		253	284
20	115	115	115	94	140	175		180	229
22	105	105	105	92	118	185		151	180
24	92	92	92	88	108	149		133	202
26	84	84	84	94	111	182		187	369
Average	110	110	110	106	130	172		180	217

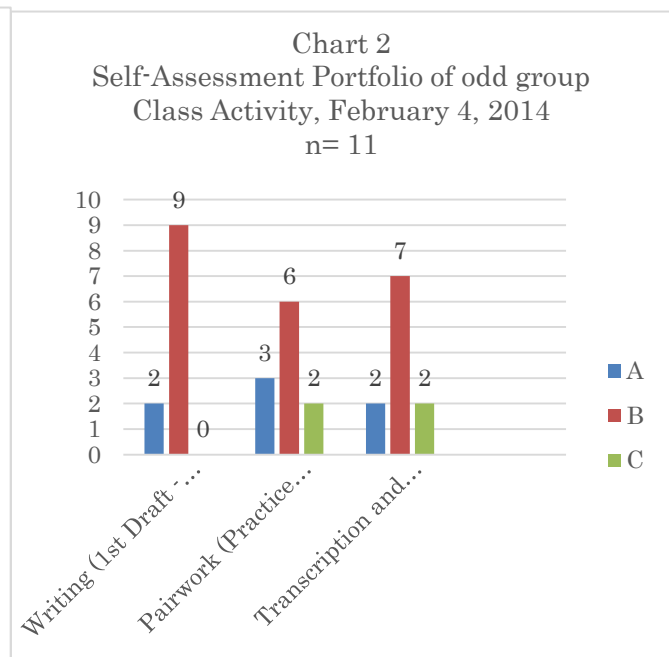
Self-Assessment

In November



Ave. A=2.36, B=2.08, C= 2.27

In February



Ave. A=2.97, B= 2.86, C=3.00

Students' Comments about Class Activities in November

*(no. of students)

A. Writing Drafts

Positive Comments:

I tried to write as much as I could (5)

I tried to look for the words in the dictionary and I was able to write sentences. (2)

Negative Comments:

I can't write nor understand English at all (1)

I was able to write only few words. (2)

B. Pair work

Positive Comments

I tried to maintain the conversation in English and use conversation strategies when I talk with my pair. (6)

I was able to make friends through changing of pairs. (2)

Negative comments

I wasn't able to use meaningful expressions. (1)

I have no confidence. (1)

C. Transcription and Self-Assessment

Positive Comments:

It was hard but it was fun (3)

I was able to do the activity properly. (3)

I was able to realize the progress of my learning. (1)

Negative Comments:

I couldn't spell many words. (1)

D. Conversation Strategies

Positive Comments

I was able to maintain the conversation in 3 minutes using conversation strategies. (9)

I used conversation strategies better than before. (2)

Negative Comments

It was so so. My performance depends on who my pair is. (1)

I really don't understand. I couldn't speak English. I can't answer any question. (1)

E. Writing over 170 words about "My Treasure" and Dictionary Usage

Positive Comments

I wrote using the dictionary. (3)

I was able to write over 170 words. (9)

Negative Comments

I couldn't write English well (1)

F. Accomplishments and Changes in way of learning

Vocabulary

I was able to find unknown words in the dictionary, I keep on learning new words. (2)

Conversation Strategies

I could use conversation strategies appropriately in different situations and it became a habit. (3)

Speaking

I was able to express myself in English better than before and ask different questions (6)

G. Useful Activities

Practice Conversation/Timed-conversation	-To improve accuracy (2)
Writing essay	-For vocabulary learning and learning grammar (6)
	-To express my thoughts (1)
Peer Reading	-For noticing mistakes(3)
Recording and Transcription	-For noticing grammatical errors(3)

H. Learning goals

Speaking

I want to speak more fluently. (5)

I want to initiate a conversation and talk to foreign people. (2)

I want to discover different cultures through communicating in English. (1)

Motivation and Attitude

It was not until I started to speak English that I realized how fun it is. (2)

Students' Comments about Class Activities in February

A. Writing Drafts

Positive Comments

At first I made mistakes but recently it became better. I was able to write according to the topic and I became to like the person I admire. (5)

I made mistakes but I became to learn how to write. (2)

It was really fun to express my ideas in writing. (1)

B. Pair work

Positive Comments

I listened to my pair very well and it made me write more. (1)

We helped each other when we don't know something. I tried to ask something it my pair became silent. (3)

Negative Comments

It wasn't good enough. I felt sorry for my pair for causing her trouble. (1)

C. Transcription and Self-assessment

Positive Comments

I was able to notice grammatical mistakes and the content of the conversation. (2)

Negative Comments

I was able to transcribe but it wasn't great. I will do my best next time. (2)

I need more time to transcribe, I can't write everything. (3)

D. Conversation Strategies

Positive Comments

I was able to remember many English sentences. I was able to use them. I also learned many conversation strategies and I want to use them. (6)

I enjoyed the conversation. I used conversation strategies unconsciously.(1)

Negative Comments

It was difficult to maintain a conversation. At times, I keep on talking but there were silence as well. I use the same conversation strategies again and again (2)

E. Writing over 180 words about "A People I Admire" and Dictionary Usage

Positive Comments

I could write more than 180 words. (11)

Without using the dictionary, I couldn't write the required length. (2)

Negative Comments

I could write more but the content was not good and it was boring. (2)

F. Accomplishments and Changes in way of learning

Conversation Strategies

I learned to use conversation strategies. I was able to speak better than last year. (7)

Vocabulary

I learned a lot of English words by looking at the dictionary. (2)

Grammar and Accuracy

I learned how to use grammatical points I learned in English II.

Language Skills

Listening, reading, speaking and writing skills improved. (2)

I can write longer essays and they were better than before. (2)

I can speak better than last year. (2)

G. Useful Activities

Practice Conversation	I was able to talk to foreign people. (2)
	I was able to use the things I learned in writing essays and speaking tests.(1)
Writing essay	I learned how to write essays and express myself.(2)
	I learned new words. (1)
Peer Reading	I learned to understand pair's essay and ask questions.(1)

H. Learning goals

Speaking

I want to speak more fluently. (2)

I want to speak with foreign people and make myself understood by foreigners. (2)

Writing and Dictionary usage.

I want to write more English sentences using the dictionary. (2)

Accuracy

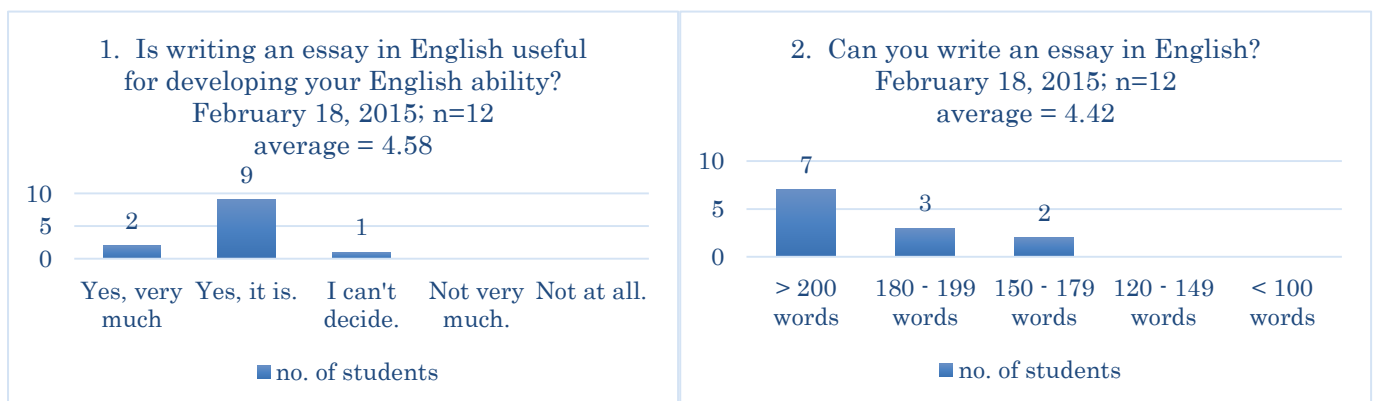
I want to speak and write accurately. (5)

Other Comments

I like interesting topics such as "A People I Admire". It was really interesting. I would like to write even more. (1)

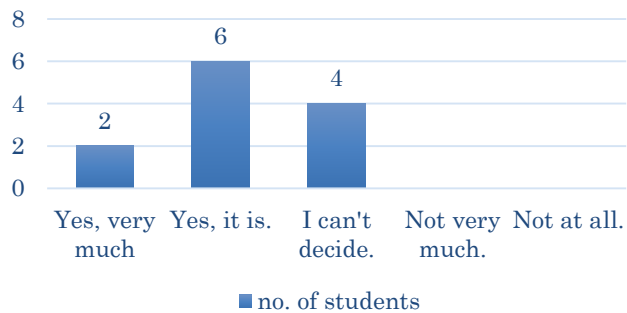
Speed Writing is very helpful to prepare me for tests which requires us to write essays.(1)

How Students Feel about English Class (February 18, 2015)



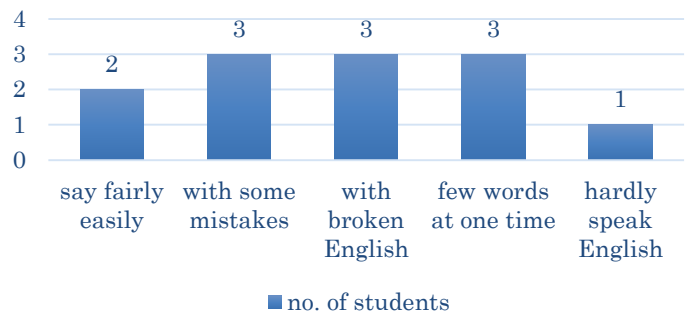
3. Is speaking in English useful for developing your English ability?

February 18, 2015; n=12
average = 3.83



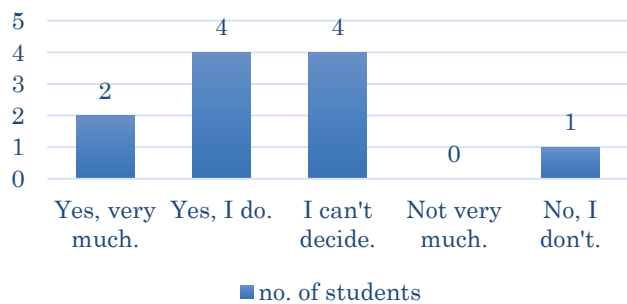
4. How do you feel about speaking in English?

February 18, 2015; n=12
average = 3.16



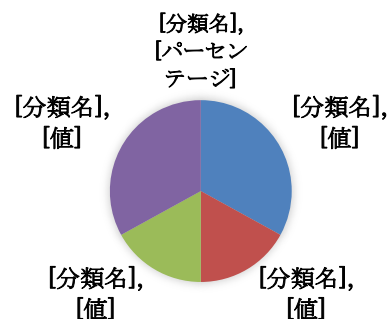
5. Do you want to be able to use English?

February 18, 2015; n=12
average = 3.33



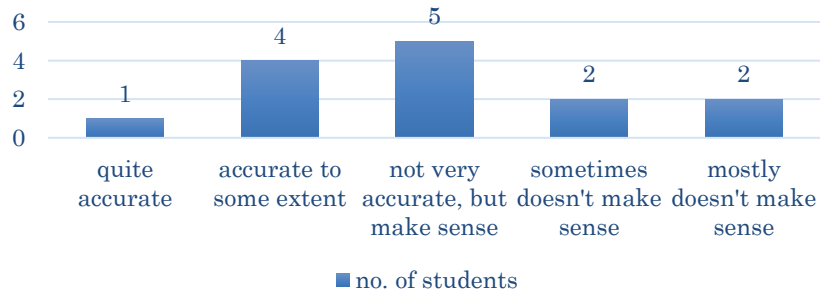
6. WHAT AREA DO YOU WANT TO BE MOST GOOD AT?

FEBRUARY 18, 2015; N=12



7. What do you think of your writings?

February 18, 2015; n=12
average = 3.33



Summary of the Results

Speaking Skills

- Most of the students' speaking skills improved towards the end of the year. They were able to maintain a conversation of 3 minutes and 30 seconds.
- The conversation strategies introduced over a year (See Conversation Strategies, table 2 on page 2), helped students to speak given a required time. (See Students' comments about Conversation Strategies on pp. 5 and 6)

Writing Skills

- Almost all students were able to write more than 180 words. The average number of words they wrote in every topic

increased. (See Developments of Students' Writing, table 3, pp. 2-3)

- As they write longer they made more mistakes and noticed them. For that reason, they aim to write more accurate and improve their writing. (See Students' Comments, Learning Goals on p. 7)

Vocabulary Learning

- As a result of writing essays, students realized the importance of using dictionary to enhance vocabulary knowledge. (See Students' comments, Dictionary Usage on p. 5-6)

Classroom Activities

- Most of the students enjoyed different activities in class. As they talk and write about the topic, teachers included various activities as input.
- According to some students, they were able to speak with foreign people because of the activities in class like writing essays and speaking tests.
- Speed writing helped students to prepare for tests which requires them to write essays. (See Students' Comments, Others on p. 7)

Assessment

- Using rubrics helped teachers and students to understand clearly the important points in speaking test and essay.
- Formative assessments such as information gap activities, writing drafts, and other activities in class helped teachers to monitor students' progress.
- Innovations for summative assessment improved most of the students' performance during the test. Test items were based on the tasks done in class. A rubric for essay writing during the test was also included.

Students' Motivation and Attitude

- As for Writing, 75% of the students said writing is useful and 58% of the students were able to write more than 200 words. Five students think that their writings was not accurate but make sense, another five said quite accurate and accurate to some extent.
- As for Speaking, almost 67% of the students said that speaking is useful in developing their English ability. Students' feeling about speaking in English vary. Only two students out of 12 confidently said that they can easily speak in English. But most of them said they can speak in English with some mistakes or broken English. (See chart no. 4, p. 8) Still and all only six students decided to use English, four students were undecided and one student didn't like to use English at all.
- When asked what area they want to be good at, 33% for reading, 33% for speaking, 17% for writing, 17% for listening and 0% for school tests.

What I Learned

- Preparing for the content of the course is vital. First I have to set the main goal then divide it into sub goals. After determining the goals I have to create a plan, provide steps (scaffold) to guide students to the goal, be creative and thoughtful in providing input as well as output.
- Topic-based approach is effective for 2nd year students since they have already learned grammatical rules from junior high and when they were 1st year students. Students were motivated to write because the topics were familiar and interesting.
- Formative assessments are very useful for teachers. Ideas on how to modify an activity sprang out by carefully analyzing and reflecting about classroom activities and short quizzes in the classroom.
- Rubric was very useful for teachers and students as well. Evaluating became easier using this. It motivated students

do their best knowing how they will be graded.

- Students should learn how to manage their own vocabulary learning.
- Teachers' collaboration is very essential to implement innovations in teaching and assessment. Teachers had different beliefs but they allowed to test their beliefs and welcomed new ideas. In the end, we all felt satisfied and enjoyed teaching.

Future Issues

- I would like to improve accuracy in writing and speaking by trying out different activities in addition to what we did in writing class.
- I would like to organize the items I have to include in participation points. As much as I can I would like all efforts done by students included in it.
- I want to teach students learning strategies.

Lesson Plan

Goal and Objectives:

- Students will be able to talk about their treasures for 3 minutes 30 seconds
- At the end of the lesson students write their fun essays in 180 words or more about the people they admire

Day One

- Brainstorming in class
- Vocabulary List (1-10) and Target Sentence (1-3) (pronunciation practice)
- Match and Talk (input activity)/ Homework: Mind Map

Day Two

- Collect Mind Map/ Small Talk /Information Gap/ Three questions
- Homework: 1st Draft

Day Three

- Small Talk /Target Sentence Test (1-3) /Target Sentence Test 4-6
- Review: Relative Pronoun/ homework: Vocabulary List 11-20

Today's Lesson: Day Three

Goals and Objectives:

- Students should include follow up sentences in their answers during the two-minute conversation.
- Target sentence test will be carried out through peer testing/quizzing
- Students will study about relative pronoun (who, which, whose)

Lesson Procedure:

1.) Small Talk:

1. In pairs, Ss talked about the people they admire in two minutes.
2. Before doing so, I reminded them to make their answers longer by adding follow-up sentences. They should also ask follow-up questions.

2.) Target Sentence Test:

1. Ss put their desks together face to face with one target sentence handout and their mechanical pencils on their desks.
2. One pair was chosen to play janken, each representing the boys the girls. The loser was the first one

to take the test.

3. One student read the Japanese sentences and the other student who was the winner of janken wrote the English sentences.
4. Students wrote all three sentences in two minutes. After which, the other student took the test using the same procedure.

3.) Relative Pronoun:

Before using the handout, I asked three volunteers in front. I asked one student to face the blackboard and guess who touched her back.

T: Who touched your back?

S1: Sae?

T: Oh, that's right. Sae is the student who touched your back!

Good job.

To introduce whose, I asked them to do it again.

T: Who touched your back?

S1: Hinako? Sae? Ummm.

T: The student whose hair is short touched your back.

S1: Oh! Sae!

T: Sae whose hair is short touched your back!

To introduce which, I asked her to guess which of the pencils on the desk and in the box is Hinako's.

T: Which is Hinako's pencil?

S1: the pencil in the box

T: The pencil which is in the box is Hinako's. You're right!

After the short activity, I gave out the handout for relative pronoun. There were five parts in the handout: 1. Matching the sentences and the pictures, 2, Do you know? 3. Grammar Presentation, 4. Match the sentences and the clauses and 5 combining the sentences and the clauses using relative pronoun.

1. Ss read the sentences and wrote the alphabet which matched the information inside the parenthesis.
2. Ss read the questions and wrote their answers in the "Your Answer" column. After answering, they interviewed their pairs using the script provided. They wrote the answer of their pair in the "Your Pair" column.
3. For grammar presentation, they read the sentences and I made them notice the words inside the boxes and the words before them. I asked them to guess the grammar rules based on the sentences they read. After writing the rules and checking with their pairs, we checked them as a class.
4. Ss matched the sentences at the right to their corresponding clauses on the left
5. Finally, Ss used relative pronoun and wrote the complete sentences.

4.) Homework

1. Students will fill in Vocabulary List 11-20 by deciding what words they want to learn and include in their fun essays. It will be checked the next class.

Class: ___ No: ___ Name: _____

A B C D

A

Information Gap Questions				
	Anne	Beat Takeshi	Mao Asada	Keisuke Honda
1. When is his/her birthday? <i>His/Her birthday is ...</i>		January 18	September 25	
2. How old is he/she? <i>He/She is ...</i>	28			28
3. What does he/she do? <i>He/She is a/an ...</i>		actor and TV personality	skater	
4. What kind of person is he/she? <i>He/She is...</i>	fashionable			aggressive
5. What are his/her hobbies? <i>He/She likes ...</i>		singing and painting	taking care of her dogs	

Class: ___ No: ___ Name: _____

A B C D

B

Information Gap Questions				
	Anne	Beat Takeshi	Mao Asada	Keisuke Honda
1. When is his/her birthday? <i>His/Her birthday is ...</i>	April 14			June 13
2. How old is he/she? <i>He/She is ...</i>		67	24	
3. What does he/she do? <i>He/She is a/an ...</i>	singer and actress			soccer player
4. What kind of person is he/she? <i>He/She is...</i>		funny	talented	
5. What are his/her hobbies? <i>He/She likes ...</i>	listening to music			playing soccer with his son

Relative Pronoun Using Focus-on-Form









Front

LET'S TALK ABOUT THINGS AND PEOPLE AROUND YOU

Let's interview ♪ Please ask your partner about No.1-9

1. Please match the sentences with the pictures below.

(1) He is a pitcher who is the most powerful in Japan. ()
 (2) He is a politician who is a leader in Japan. ()
 (3) She is a skater who won the gold medal at the NHK Trophy last week. ()
 (4) This is an animal which lives in the North Pole. ()
 (5) This is a mountain which was listed in World Heritage Site this year. ()
 (6) This is a yuru-kyara which is the most popular in Japan. ()
 (7) This is a thing which is used on rainy days. ()
 (8) He is an actor whose father is Koizumi Junichiroh. ()

A  B  C  D 
 E  F  G  H 

2. Do you know??

	Your Answer	Your Pair
1. Do you know the person who runs the fastest in our class?		
2. Do you know an animal which lives in Africa?		
3. Do you know the person who can draw nice pictures in our class?		
4. Do you know the cartoonist who is the most famous in Japan?		
5. Do you know a nice gift which is given on Christmas Day?		
6. Do you know the girl whose skirt is the shortest?		
7. Do you know the Japanese food which is popular in the world?		
8. Do you know the person whose father is a cook or a teacher.		


3. ★ Grammar Presentation: Read the following sentences.

- A lion is an animal which lives in Africa.
- Fujiko A Fujio is a cartoonist who is the most famous in Japan.
- A Play Station 4 is a nice gift which is given on Christmas Day.
- Mar-ken is a pitcher who is the most powerful in Japan.
- Mari Sekine is a newscaster whose father is a comedian.

★ which は()を [] する。
 who は()を [] する。
 Whose ()を [] する。

Class: ___ No: ___ Name: _____
 A B C D

Back

4. Let's do matching 

Nagoya castle is a historical building ← → has two golden fish on the roof.

① A giraffe is an animal	works for Doho High School.
② He is a famous teacher	is the most handsome guy in Japan.
③ "iPhone 6" is a new model	can be eaten only in Nagoya.
④ Haruna Ai is a person	father is Ken Watanabe.
⑤ Misokatsu is a food	is used by many people around the world.
⑥ Anne is an actress	neck is very long.

5. Please combine two phrases by using who/which/whose.

Nagoya castle is a historical building which has two golden fish on the roof.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____