

Final Action Research Report 2014

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1. Theme of this year's AR:

How can we motivate students to learn English? And how can we assess their interests, willingness, and attitudes toward communication?

2. Teaching context

- 1) Level: 2nd year of junior high school
- 2) Class size: 36(37)×4 classes (AR class is one class out of four classes.)
- 3) Time: 50 mins×4/week
- 4) Text book: New Horizon English Course 2 (Tokyo Shoseki)
- 5) Problems

As it is expected, my second year students are gradually reducing the enthusiasm toward English and their dream of mastering English is being shattered. How can we keep motivating them while the grammar gets more difficult and the amount of vocabulary they have to learn is huge now?

Another problem I'm facing right now is how to assess students' motivation. On the basis of the course of study, students' learning is assessed in the terms of the four categories: 1)willingness, interests, and attitudes toward communication 2) abilities of expression with a foreign language 3) abilities of comprehension of a foreign language 4) knowledge and understanding on a language and culture (National Institute for Educational Research, 2011). The first category, attitudes toward communication is supposed to weight more than 25% of the overall assessment. The category is very important and it affects the overall grade greatly. According to the National Institute for Educational Research (2011),

「関心・意欲・態度」については、表面的な状況のみに着目することにならないよう留意するとともに、教科の特性や学習指導の内容等も踏まえつつ、ある程度長い区切りの中で適切な頻

度で「おおむね満足できる」状況等にあるかどうかを評価するなどの工夫を行うことも重要である。

As for “interests • willingness • attitudes,” remind that teachers should not focus on superficial situations. In a basis of the characteristics of the subject and the content of the teaching, it is important to contrive to assess students’ learning at a consistent frequency in a long span to see if they have achieved “a generally satisfactory” level.

It also suggests that we are not supposed to assess students’ attitude with the submission of workbooks/notebooks and the frequency of raising their hand in class. I am not assessing these, however, I still do not think that I am assessing it in respect of validity and reliability.

3. Goal:

My goal of action research this year is to motivate students to learn English and to assess students’ attitudes toward communication properly in the sense of validity and reliability.

4. What I did

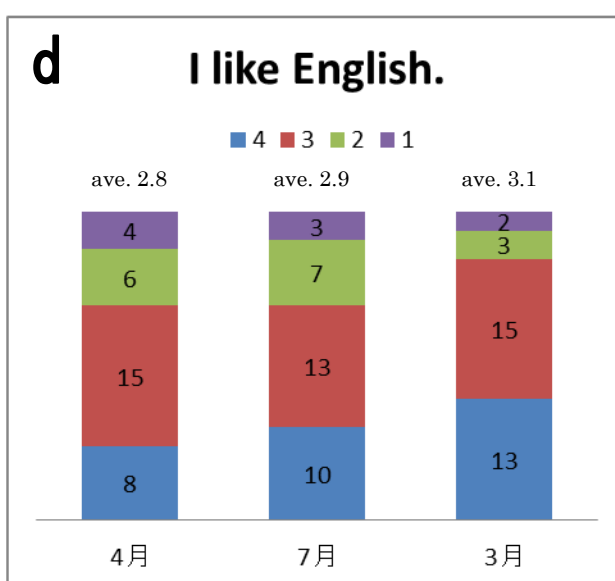
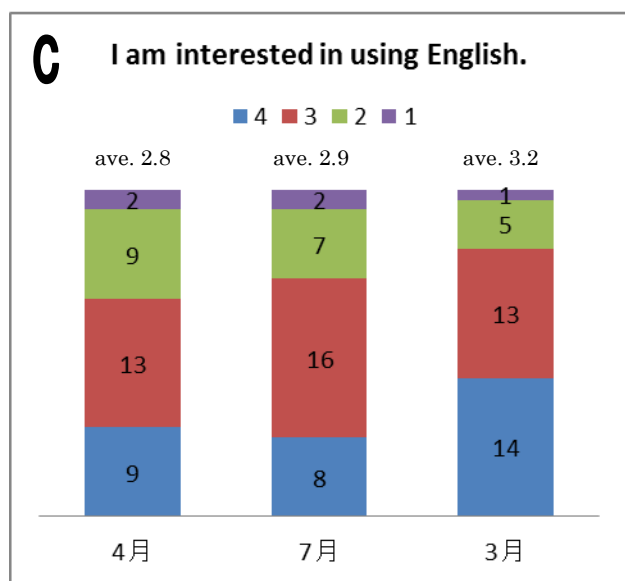
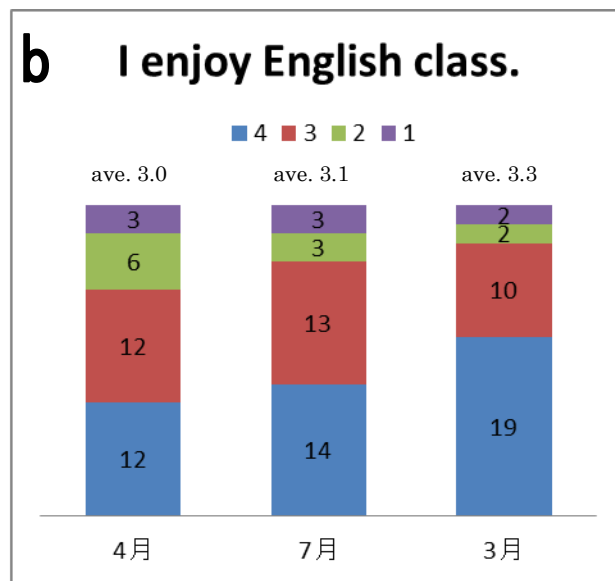
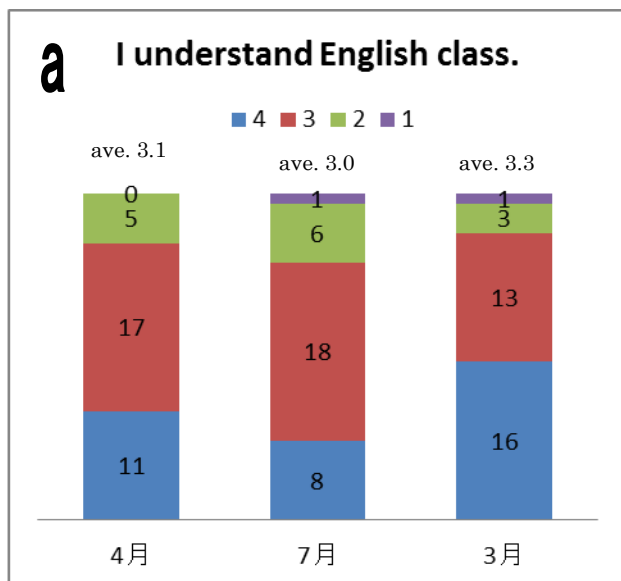
- 1) Introducing small talk to teach conversation strategies
- 2) Using songs: Hey Jude, We Are Never Ever Getting Back, Let It Go, L-O-V-E, Shake It Off, You’ve Got a Friend, Rude, Viva La Vida, Every day, Rather Be, Uptown Funk, and I’m Yours
- 3) Using focus-on-form activities for grammar teaching
- 4) Writing about personal information: Show and Tell
- 5) Providing “Sticker(stamps) Chances”

Students get a sticker when they recite from the textbook, volunteer to perform in class, and sing the songs to me.

As criterion for the attitudes toward communication, I used the number of the stickers students got, the compositions, speeches, speaking test, and Communication Card which the AET provided.

5. Results (n=33)

【Questionnaire】 Agree→4 Disagree→1 (Numbers in the graphs show actual number of Ss)



【Assessment & Questionnaires】

	Report card		Term tests			speaking test[20]	Questionnaire Apr/Jul/Mar			
	Attitudes	Overall	2nd	4th	5th		a	b	c	d
Jennifer	A	5	86	96	94	19	4/3/3	2/3/3	2/2/3	2/2/3
Hanna	B	3	76	78	78	20	2/1/1	1/1/1	1/1/1	1/1/1
Becky	A	4	70	90	78	19	3/3/4	4/4/4	2/2/3	2/2/3
Chris	B	2	29	59	59	16	3/3/4	2/3/4	3/3/3	3/3/4
Benedict	C	2	38	53	55	17	2/2/3	2/4/4	2/3/4	2/4/4
Tom	C	2	36	34	38	13	2/2/3	2/2/2	3/2/2	1/2/2

【Comments】

Jennifer: Thanks to AET's communication card, I learned that I can communicate even though my English is not good. I like English because I like the atmosphere of English class. I did recitation of the textbook just for the grade but eventually it helped my learning and solving problems. It was worth doing it.

Hanna: I am interested in foreign languages but English is too difficult to enjoy. I didn't like small talk and didn't want to do it. I like BINGO and other activities because I can get a stickers.

Becky: I tried hard for speeches and speaking tests this year. I like English but have to study hard to understand it well. So I couldn't write "4" to the question "I like English."

Chris: I wrote "4" to the questions because I like songs and my friend helped me with studying. However, I regret that I didn't try hard to get stickers to get a better grade.

Benedict: I tried harder in the third term then I understood English class more. I think people say they study for tests, but I myself think it's the matter of motivation.

Tom: I'm not good at English. I know you tried hard to make English class understandable, but I'm not good. I want to try hard. So I wrote lower numbers in the questionnaire.

6. What I learned

- Classroom atmosphere affects students' motivation somehow. In this class, there was a helping atmosphere all the time even between girls and boys. Their small talks were excellent, they did activities with enthusiasm, and sang songs loudly. They always had very *genki*, nice attitudes. As a result, the number of the students who had positive opinions about English/ English class increased.
- Both Chris and Benedict had each a tutor-like existence in class. They became really good rivals each other and their tutors were also became rivals to improve their pupils. As a result, Chris and Benedict enjoyed the competition and got better grades.

- Recitation of the textbook page is too difficult for lowest students even if I assigned them only some part of a page of the textbook. However, some students believed that it was worth doing and they wanted to recite longer texts. Those students think they should be evaluated more when they recite longer text.
- Lower level students less likely to understand the criteria of the assessment. As a result, they tend to miss the chances to earn the point for assessment. Benedict, who was always active in class and asked many questions, didn't do well enough for the assessment matters. So being different from his impression in class, his attitude grade was low throughout the year.
- Tom is a well-behaved quiet good boy. In spite of knowing what to do for grades, he was dragged by his friends; same type of students who are quiet, not enthusiastic about grade, and lazy. As a result, his grade was C throughout the year.

7. Future issues

How to assess students' motivation is not a simple matter and there is no ultimate right answer . In junior high English education in Japan, we are supposed to assess students' attitudes towards communication in the point of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. National Institute for Educational Research suggests that attitudes can be assessed "if students try to write with help of dictionary" or "if students try to listen carefully with taking notes" (2011). I am not sure that if teachers really can objectively evaluate if they are really "trying" or not.

I believe we should not grade students just from the impressions and grading should base on concrete resource even though it's assessed somehow subjectively. I should mark students' positive attitudes and comments in class and use as a resource.

Reference

National Institute for Educational Research (2011). 評価基準の作成、評価方法灯の工夫改善のための資料（中学校 外国語）. Retrieved from http://www.nier.go.jp/kaihatsu/hyouka/chuu/10_chu_gaikokugo.pdf

Lesson Plan

1. Level: 2nd year of junior high school
2. Class size: 36(37)×4classes
3. Time: 50mins×4/week
4. Text book: New Horizon English Course 2 (Tokyo Shoseki)

Unit 6 "The Story of an Old Clock"

5. Objectives

To learn how to use the expression "There is/are ..."

To learn how to talk about things that exist in a place.

6. Procedure of Unit 6

Day 1 Engage in the activity "What is your room like?"

Day 2 Read Starting Out (p. 58)

Day 3 Read Dialog (p. 59) Engage in small talk their own room. "Is there a TV in your room?"

Day 3 Read Reading for Communication (p. 60) Learn gerunds. "I enjoy ~ing."

Day 4 Read Reading for Communication (p. 61) Learn gerunds. "Singing karaoke is fun."

Day 5 Read Multi Plus 2 "Introducing My Town." Engage in the activity "World Quiz"

7. Activity "What is your room like?" (Day 1) from the teachers' manual (活動編) 東京書籍

1) Goal: Ss engage in an information gap activity. Spot the differences in two pictures.

2) Procedure of the activity

Pre task: Teach the vocabulary in the notes.

Step 1: Have the students make pairs, and give each group a set of sheets A and B.

Step 2: See the demonstration of the JTE and the AET.

ex. A: There is a camera on the bed.

B: Oh, no. There are three books on the bed. We found one difference.

(Oh, yes. There is a camera on the bed.)

Step 3: Do janken and winner starts to talk first and say one sentence. Then switch.

Step 4: Check the correct answer with whole class.

Activity "World Quiz" (Day 5)

Goal: Ss engage in solving quiz and making a quiz about geography.

Ex. I live in a small country. It's next to India. It's famous for Mt. Everest. There are many temples. Where do I live? [A: Nepal]