

# Final Action Research Report 2015

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

Building students' communicative ability through integrating four skills

## 2. Teaching context

a) Level: 3<sup>rd</sup> year of junior high school

b) AR target class: 3B (pseudonym) 33 students.

All the three classes that I am teaching are subdued. They can concentrate and follow the instruction well. The reason I especially chose this class for AR is that 1) there is no regular absentees, 2) the average test score is in the middle of three, 3) there is not much of a gap in ability between girls and boys in comparison to my other classes, and 4) there is a gap between high level and low level students, which is the norm in public junior high schools.

c) Time: 50 mins×4/week

d) Text book: New Horizon English Course 3 (Tokyo Shoseki)

e) Problems:

I was transferred to this school last April. The new students I met have taken English classes from more than 5 different teachers in the last two years due to the teachers' sickness, pregnancy, and so on. They even experienced a few times of ad hoc classes by the vice principal who is a former English teacher but doesn't teach anymore.

Despite my concerns about their ability and motivation towards English, their average standard deviation of the achievement test in April was higher than Nagoya's average. Also, their opinions about English and its class were quite positive according to my questionnaire results. I think it is thanks to the last part-time teacher's contribution. She was very warm and nice to the students, and popular among them. I think that her teaching style using activities,

songs, and movies in class and teaching very easy things worked really well to reduce students' anxiety and diffidence.

I was very encouraged by the survey results from students which informed me that they have positive opinions about English and are highly motivated. As I started teaching them, however, I have found several problems. The students have not experienced long projects such as writing essays and making presentations. I recognized that they could write simple English sentences to tell me about themselves at the very first lesson in April. On the other hand, when it comes to longer composition which requires organization and style, many students had a hard time to complete the task since they did not have much experience. They have never done Small Talk in which they talk about themselves using communication strategies. I also noticed that many students did not pay attention to English pronunciation. They often didn't understand English instruction. They didn't understand when they heard English but they would understand when they saw it written. Many students even did not know basic phonics rules so they could not read out unknown words from guessing. I assumed their problems have happened because of lack of consistency in their teaching since they entered junior high school.

### 3. Goal:

To build students' communicative ability, they use four skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking when they learn English in class.

### 4. What I did

- 1) Introducing Small Talk to teach conversation strategies and let students have chats in English.
- 2) Using communicative (focus-on-form) activities for grammar teaching.
- 3) Using songs to let students get familiar with sound and pronunciation.
- 4) Writing about personal experience: Show and Tell speech, School Trip, A Person I admire
- 5) Encouraging pair works to do all classroom activities such as checking meaning, practice pronunciation, and so on.

6) Providing stamp chance

Students get a stamp when they recite part of the textbook, volunteer to perform in class, sing the songs to me, teach other students, and do any good things in English class.

7) Encouraging to talk with ALT using Communication Card (CC)

On the CC, there are more than 15 topics to talk about. Students come to the ALT and talk about one of the topics in a day. They can get a stamp after every conversation.

5. Results (N=33 in April and July, N=32 in March)

[Survey questions Part 1]

1] How much do you understand when you read materials such as the textbook, other students' composition

4: almost everything    3: 70%    2: 50%    1: 30% or less

2] How much do you understand when you listen to English of teachers/partner/listening quiz?

4: almost everything    3: 70%    2: 50%    1: 30% or less

3] How long can you hold a conversation with your partner?

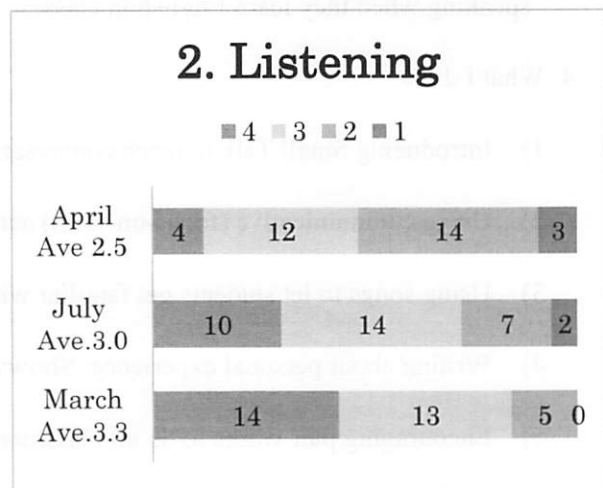
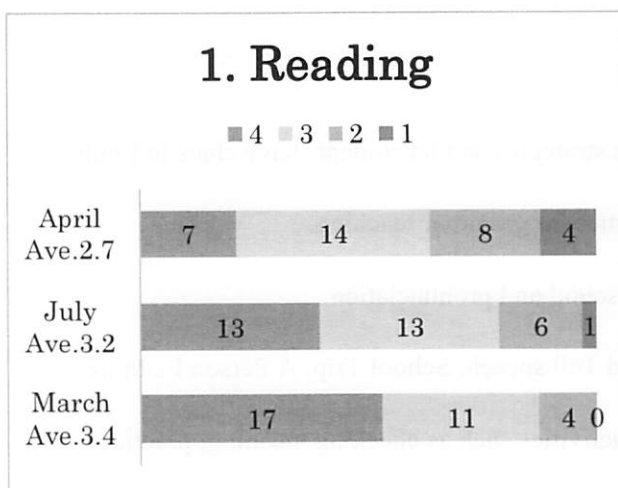
4: 2 mins without halts    3: 1 min    2: 40 secs    1: 20 secs or shorter

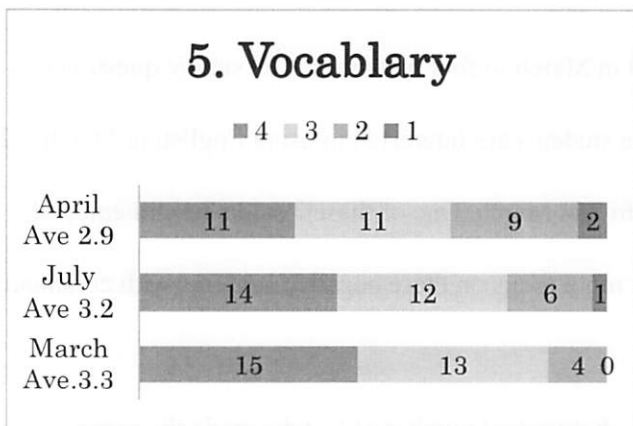
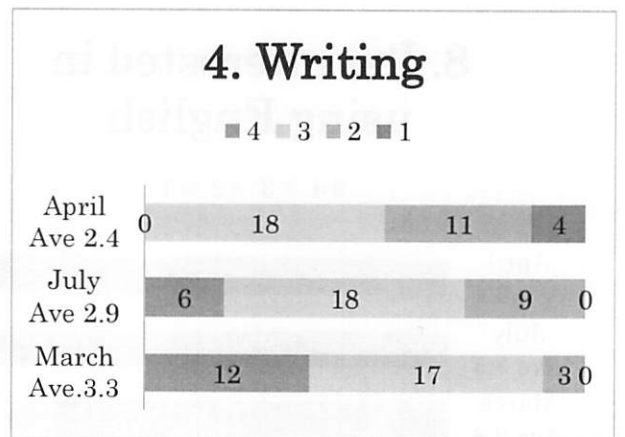
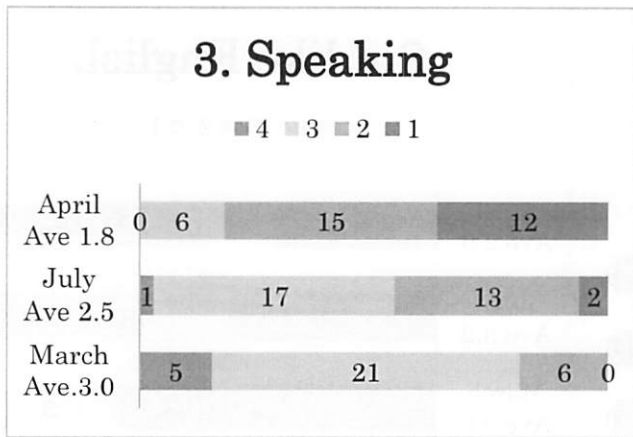
4] How much can you write coherent composition?

4: more than 10 sentences    3: 5-9 sentences    2: 3-4 sentences    1: 2sentences or less

5] I know meaning, can pronounce, and spell the basic words that I learned in the textbooks so far.

4: agree    3: agree somehow    2: disagree somehow    1: disagree

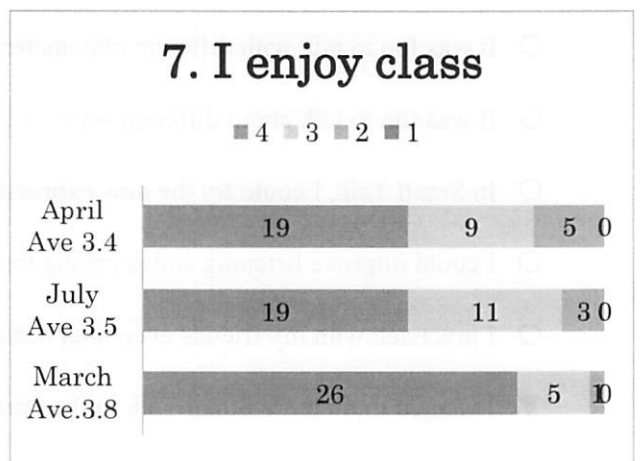
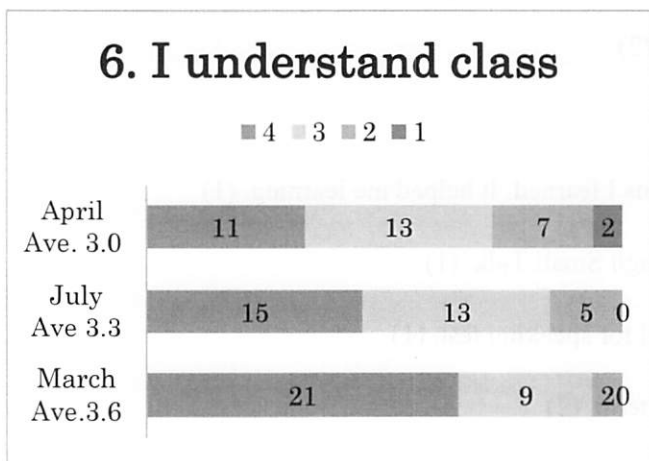




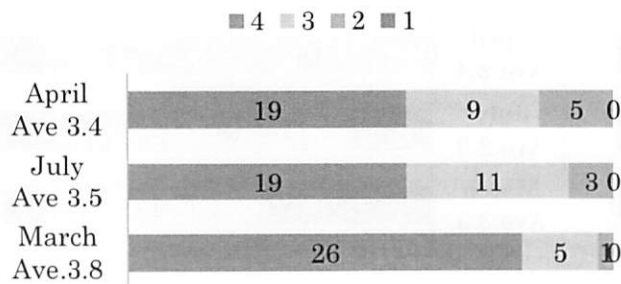
All the five questions produced a better average score in March by 0.4-1.2. Above all the numbers show that students increased their speaking ability (confidence) from average score of 1.8 to 3.0.

**[Survey questions Part 2]**

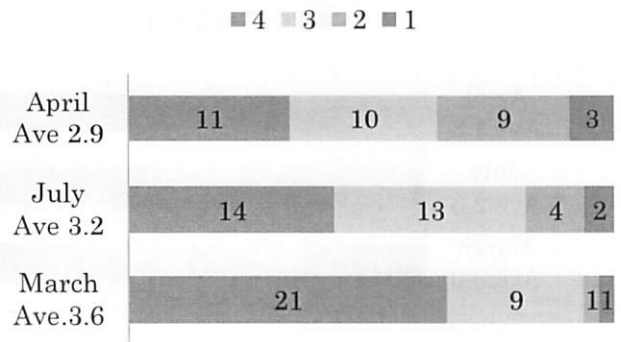
4: agree      3: agree somehow      2: disagree somehow      1: disagree



## 8. I'm interested in using English



## 9. I like English



The average scores show an upward trend in March in four questions. The survey question 6 “I understand English” shows the big difference. More students are interested in using English in March. 12 students didn’t like English in April but it reduced to 2 in March. One of these 2 said s/he still enjoyed English class and interested in using English. I will more focus on these negative students with comments.

### Comments from the survey in March Numbers show actual number of Ss who made the comment.

About Small Talk --- 23 students

- I can talk longer now compared to April. (10)
- Small Talk helped me with improving listening skill. (2)
- We could help with each other in pairs so it was good for learning. (2)
- Small Talk is important for us to get used to using English. (2)
- I can use English better. (2)
- It was fun to talk with different classmates. (2)
- It was fun to talk about different topics. (1)
- In Small Talk, I could try the new expressions I learned. It helped me learning. (1)
- I could improve listening and speaking through Small Talk. (1)
- I practiced with my friends even after school for speaking test. (1)
- ▼ I wanted to do more Small Talk in the third term. (2)
- ▼ I wanted to change partners more often so that I could talk with more people. (1)

**About projects --- 4 students**

- In projects, I could try the expressions I learned so I got used to the usage. (2)
- I was happy to complete the projects. (1)
- I realized the importance of learning grammar. (1)

**About writing --- 3 students**

- I couldn't write a composition at all in April but I can write more now. (1)
- I enjoyed writing on a certain topic. (1)
- ▼ I had a hard time to complete a composition depending on a topic. (1)

**About singing English songs --- 21 students**

- I learned the pronunciation. (2)
- I learned the spoken language. (1)
- I am interested in English more. (1)
- I could learn to sing in English by practicing many times. (1)

**About Communication Card with ALT --- 5 students**

- It was fun to talk in English. (4)
- I talked to her a lot so she knows my name. It made me happy. (1)

**[Comments from the July survey]**

Below are comments I have found during the process. I did not find the same comments in March.

- ▼ I really want to try textbook recitation but it is just too difficult for me. I wish you could allow us to read aloud instead of recitation. (1 relatively slow student)
- ▼ Pair work doesn't work sometimes depending on partners. I think groups of four would be better in case both of the students in a pair have no idea. (1)
- ▼ The pace of the class is too fast. (1)
- ▼ I want to practice pronunciation of new words and reading aloud the textbook more. (1)

## 6. What I learned

- 1) What I basically tried to do this year is to introduce more speaking and writing. As a result, my students increased confidence overall in the four skills, especially in speaking and writing in March. As for writing, they had chances to practice writing on different topics in class throughout the year. In April, they repeated the same things in one essay and compositions had no cohesion. Now they think about organization and style. In the last project of “A person I admire,” each student finished writing fun essays with paragraphs.
- 2) Many students left positive comments on small talk. Alongside this, the ALT gave students chances to talk with her using Communication Cards. Students mentioned that talking with the ALT is different from talking with their classmates. Students had to explain things to the ALT because they don’t share the same cultural background. I strongly felt the necessity of having ALTs in junior high school when I saw students struggling to convey the meaning and being happy when they were understood!
- 3) Some students felt the pace of working through the textbook was too fast in the first term. That’s because I took too much time for scaffolding to teach Small Talk, essay writing, and making presentations. However, now that everything was a routine in every class, they could work efficiently, and I could spend more time on the textbook from the second term.
- 4) I relied on pair work in which students teach each other. So where the pair work was not working, the students were learning less. It’s important to change partners on a case-by-case basis.
- 5) I gradually taught the students phonetic symbols and phonics. I also let them check the definition and pronunciation of new words. Some students had to catch up knowing all the words they were supposed to have already learned in the last two years. It was really tough when the amount of new words were already plenty.

I found that it was too difficult for those students to recite the textbook. I decided to give stamps when they successfully read out the textbook page aloud, not only when they remember it.

Remembering the textbook is worthwhile and lots of students mentioned its benefits, but for some

students, just learning how to read aloud would be beneficial. I encouraged advanced students to help slower students reading aloud. This school had a really good learning community and they helped each other a lot. The students who helped slower ones also got stamps when their pupils successfully read the textbook aloud. Singing English songs also helped students with learning pronunciation.

- 6) Two students who disagree to “I like English” in March are actually making positive comments in the survey. They said, “I understand English more compared to April and July. My friends helped me a lot so that I could get over some.” “I am enjoying talking in English thanks to Small Talk.”
- 7) I could not find comments on communicative activities because I did not ask precisely on grammar teaching and communicative activities. However, according to the term exams results, communicative activities to teach grammar must have helped students’ learning.
- 8) The problems my students had in April came from the inconsistency of teaching in the previous two years. When I started to teach them with a year-long goal, the problems they had was not that difficult to get over. I was glad to hear the students’ general voices telling me that they can read better, listen better, speak more, and write more.

#### 7. The future issues

- 1) Setting a three-year-long goal
- 2) Using ICT while teaching communicatively

\*In Japan’s English education, the word “small talk” often means teacher’s talk in class about life, events and stuff. It is performed by teachers in English often in the beginning of the lesson and it is considered that it helped students building listening skill and getting used to English expressions. Here, in this report, I used the word Small Talk, which means student-student short conversation on decided topics such as weekends, their favorite things, family, and so on.



# Lesson Plan

1. Level: 3<sup>rd</sup> year of junior high school
2. Class size: 34 students
3. Time: 50mins×4/week
4. Text book: New Horizon English Course 3 (Tokyo Shoseki)

## Unit 5 “Electronic Dictionaries –For or Against

### 5. Objectives:

Students will learn the usage of post modifier and indirect question.

### 6. Lesson procedure

- Day 1 Starting Out (p. 54) Activity “あなたは物知り博士”
- Day 2 Communicative activity “What is going on in this classroom!” -**Appendix A**
- Day 3 Dialog (p. 55)
- Day 4 Reading for Communication (p. 56)
- Day 5 Reading for Communication (p. 57)
- Day 6 Review (p. 58) and Listening Plus (p. 59)
- Day 7 Debate activity
- Day 8 Newsletter (Active English) and error correction quiz –**Appendix B**

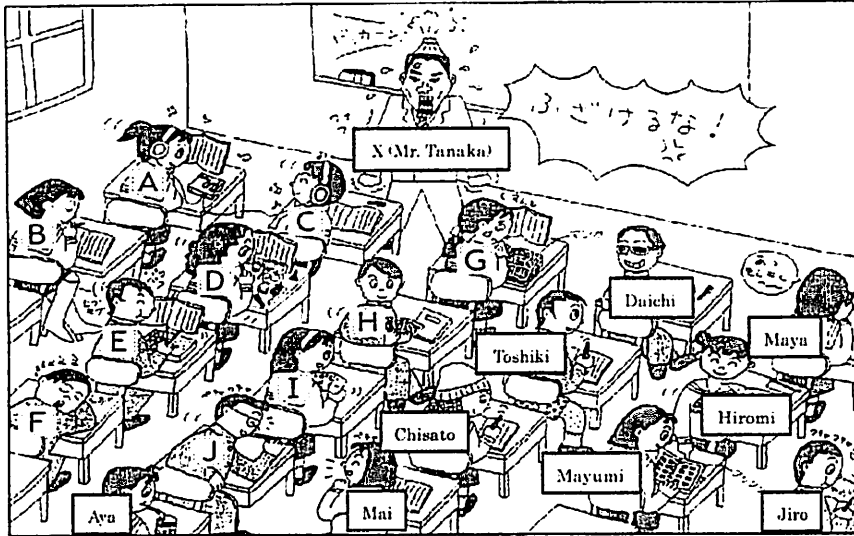
### 7. Day 7 Debate activity

Goal: To make a persuasive argument on an assigned topic

Procedure:

- 1) Students make a group of 6 (6 groups in one class)
- 2) Each group draws lottery to decide a topic and for or against. Topics are:
  - a. Junior high school students have to wear school uniforms.
  - b. Junior high school students can bring smart phones to school.
  - c. People should leave parents’ house after graduating from high school.
- 3) Each group has sticky notes. Group members write each argument on a sticky note. They can write as many arguments as they can.
- 4) Each group sticks notes on the board divided into 6 sections.
- 5) Each group read out the arguments on the board. JTE and ALT decide a winner of each topic.
- 6) Ss read newsletter and solve the common error correction quiz.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: 3 ( ) ( )



Find out the names of the people in the picture above by asking your classmates. Write their names on the table below.

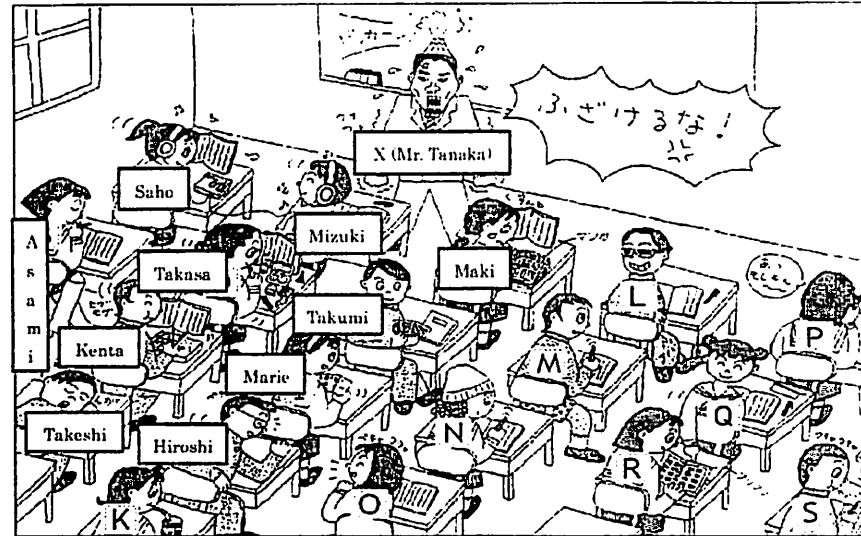
例 X A: Who is the man yelling in front of the class?  
B: That's Mr. Tanaka.

Letter	Name
A	
B	
C	
D	
E	
F	
G	
H	
I	
J	

**Toolbox**

- yell 叫ぶ
- eat 食べる
- talk (to friend) 友達と話す
- drink 飲む
- talk 話す
- write a letter 手紙を書く
- read (a comic) 漫画を読む
- wear (a hat) ぼうしをかぶる
- wear (sunglasses) サングラスをかぶる
- wear (pants) パンツをはく
- chew (gum) カムを噛む
- play (cards) カードで遊ぶ
- talk (on the phone) 電話で話す
- look at (print club) 印刷部を見る
- listen to (music) 音楽を聴く
- put on (makeup) 化粧をする
- sleep 寝る
- laugh 笑う
- study 勉強する

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: 3 ( ) ( )



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例 X A: Who is the man yelling in front of the class?  
B: That's Mr. Tanaka.

Letter	Name
K	
L	
M	
N	
O	
P	
Q	
R	
S	

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- sleep 寝る
- laugh 笑う
- study 勉強する

Appendix A

Reference: David Martin. (n.d.). *Talk a lot*. Saitama: EFL Press.  
Revised for the handout by ALT, Jamie Halli

## Active English



Inokoishi Junior High School

November, 2015

## 賛成か反対か？

- 1) 中学校の制服
- 2) 中学校でのスマホ
- 3) 高校卒業後に親元を離れる

以上の3つの点について、賛成か反対か、またその理由を述べてもらいました。

Junior high school students have to wear school uniforms.

For - 74      Against - 17

**For**

- Wearing uniform is easy. [1 NJ]
- I don't have stylish clothes. [1 NM]
- I don't have to choose clothes every day. [1 MU]
- I think** choosing clothes is a waste of time. [1 YO]
- I don't like choosing clothes. It's easy to put on school uniforms. [2 AM]
- We can give uniforms to younger brothers and younger sisters.
- If** we go out from school, people will see that we are junior high school students. They may help us when we need.
- I don't want my classmates to see my own clothes.

**Against**

- When it's winter, school uniform doesn't keep us warm enough. [1 ST]
- It is fun for me to choose clothes. [1 HK]
- In winter, I want to wear pants. Wearing skirts is cold.
- Young people have to be creative. Just wearing school uniforms is not creative!
- School uniform is too expensive. I can buy my clothes at Uniqlo. They are cheap.
- Wearing school uniforms is too cold in winter, and too hot in summer.

## 自分の考えを述べる

## 便利な表現

- ①自分の考えを述べる時に、**I think** で始めると、表現が軟らかくなります。「～だ！」と言い切るより、「～と思うよ」って言った方がやわらかなのは、日本語も同じですね。
- ②**If** と言って、「もし～なら…だ」と条件をあげた上で、意見を述べる方法もありますね。

Junior high school students can bring smart phones to school.

For - 16      Against - 73

**For**

- We can call our families when we are in trouble. [3 HY]
- We can use them if we don't know the words' meanings. Smart phones can search them. When we get lost, we can search maps. Smart Phones are useful. [3 RI]

**Against**

- Students will use smart phones for games and other things. And they don't communicate with their classmates. [3 TM]
- In my opinion, the school is a place to study. So smart phones are not necessary at school. [3 EI]
- Smart phones cost a lot of money. They are dangerous too. [3 YN]
- We go to school to learn many things. We don't need them at school. [2 AH]
- I don't have a smart phone. [1 RH]





## People should leave parents' house after graduating from high school.

For - 45      Against - 42

### ***For***

- It is important for us to learn how to live. [2 AU]
- I want to live by myself soon. **I think** people should live without parents soon. [2 HT]
- If** we live by ourselves, we can learn many things for the future.
- We should be able to do things around us by ourselves.
- I think** we should know about society.

I don't want to leave my  
parents' house soon  
after graduating from  
high school because I  
don't know how to cook.

(^\_^); [匿名希望]

### ***Against***

- We need a lot of money to live a good life. Young people after graduating can't earn enough money.
- When we go to college, we must study hard. So we don't want to do housework.
- If** people leave home after graduating from high schools, their parents will lose much money. But people should leave home after graduating from college.
- I want to meet my parents every day.

## よくある間違いコーナー

- ① School uniforms wear cool.
- ② I take time to choose clothes.
- ③ I am a waste of time to choose clothes every day.

英語は

### 主語＋動詞

主語が何かをいつも

考えよう！

## 英語にしてみよう！ Let's try!

- ① 親の家を出ることで、いろいろなことを学べると思う。
- ② 大学卒業後に家を出ても、遅すぎではないと思う。