

Final Report

1. Title: Integrated Writing Skills

2. Context:

Information about the class

205 Class (20boys and 23 girls) & 208 Class (19 boys and 24 girls)

Subject

Writing (two lessons a week, 50 minutes for each lesson)

Textbook

Aqua English grammar structure and expression handbook

(アクア英語構文・表現 7 8 (桐原書店))

WORLD TREK ENGLISH WRITING (Kirihara shoten)

Level of the students

high level students (in English) in high school

Problems

Students are afraid of making mistakes.

Students are not sure if the editing by their peers is correct or not.

There are a few students who have little motivation, especially at the interview stage.

We have little freedom to use materials, as we need to use the set textbook.

Textbooks are not always interesting.

Sometimes students are not using their imagination and just copy the example sentences.

Some students do not write as much as others and do not develop their points.

Students are afraid to constructively criticize their friends' work for fear of appearing negative.

3. Goal – Integrated English writing skills; not just the writing, but the whole process, including planning and evaluation. Planning includes brainstorming, reading a model composition, and interviewing peers. Evaluation includes peer-editing and redrafting the composition. Another important (but indirect) goal of the lessons was the improvement of the students' English communication skills.

4. What we did (things we tried since September) – *Jessica(AET) & I

We carefully selected topics from the textbook that would interest the majority of the students, and were not fixed so that everyone would be able to write easily.

Topics we selected: Rules at home / People in your class / the store you use most often / my hometown / the place you visit / the person you admire

We prepared a model dialogue for the interview to give students ideas and encourage them to speak English in class.

The information gained from the interview was used to make a written composition.

We had peer-editing, where students commented on each others' work. First they read the work silently, then they asked the author questions about the piece. Students then underlined any expressions they thought were impressive or interesting and marked "☆", anything they did not understand was marked with "?", and anything they wanted to learn more about was marked with "more".

We encouraged students to peer-edit at least twice, so they could read different opinions about their work. This was a good way for students to express their opinions in English.

We set criteria for teacher assessment so that students could see which area they needed to improve. The criteria were: Length (max. 5 marks), Content (max. 10 marks), and Grammar (max. 5 marks). We thought content was more important than grammar because we wanted the students to express themselves in English and improve their written confidence. If grammar were more important, students would be afraid of writing more adventurous sentences. We also wrote positive comments on their work.

Students presented their work to the class and we demonstrated good presentation skills (using eye contact, a clear voice, and slow pace).

5. Results – What happened?

With the writing techniques they learned, students are now able to plan, write, and evaluate longer compositions with several paragraphs. They are more confident using English in class and feel more comfortable to peer-edit others' work. From this they have learned the way in

which English speakers express their opinions.

6. What we learned:

1) What did we learn?

Through integrated writing skills, we can improve the overall English ability of the students, not just their written English.

We can learn more about our students through reading their written work.

2) What did we learn from our students?

If the teaching plan is carefully organized, students enjoy the lessons more and learn more effectively.

More than half of the students are favorable to the peer-editing method. However, some of them think peer-editing is not useful because they are not sure if the editing by their peers is correct or not.

Nobody will be at a loss by applying this lesson plan. Even students who thought they had nothing to write were able to write a long composition at the end.

3) How did our views about English language teaching change?

This lesson demonstrated how we can use set materials more effectively and gain more from our English lessons.

Although the students' grammar may not be perfect, all of them are able to make themselves understood when using English. Unfortunately this is not recognized in the usual forms of assessment in Japanese schools. Both students and teachers in Japan are afraid of accepting this fact!

7. Future issues

Although we must use the set textbook, we have learned how to use the material more effectively, and plan more integrated writing lessons in the future.

We plan to use more everyday English in the classroom.

Although we have demonstrated how effective the integrated writing method is, some students would prefer lessons that prepare them directly for the entrance examinations. We need to show them that this method is a 'short-cut' to exam success.