

A Study of Evaluation in Teaching Practice for Elementary Schools English Activities

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Key words:

Teachers' Training, Elementary School, Foreign Language Activities, Teaching Practice, Evaluation

1. Introduction

Foreign Language Activities as a required class started in every elementary school in Japan in 2011. All the 5th and 6th grade pupils have a class of Foreign Language Activities once a week. The primary aims of the "Foreign Language Activities" are not to acquire the skills of English but "to form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages while developing an 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" (The Course of Study, 2008). The Course of Study recommends homeroom teachers in elementary schools be the main English teaching instructors, ideally with ALTs (Assistant English teachers), however, this raises the issue of teacher training.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) refers to the necessary abilities in teaching Foreign Language Activities as follows; i) to be able to plan the content and activities which enhance pupils' interests according to their learning level, ii) to be able to let pupils have a positive attitude toward communication, iii) to be able to

familiarize pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages (2008, 17). Homeroom teachers are capable of performing the first two items above because they know each pupil very well and so they can plan lessons to attract pupils' interests. Moreover, homeroom teachers can show their pupils a positive attitude toward using English as a learner's model, which encourages pupils to communicate in English. The last ability means having a basic command of the English language and knowing how to teach English to pupils. Most of the homeroom teachers, however, come short in this area. Therefore, this is something in which Japanese 5th and 6th grade homeroom teachers need to be trained right away.

Training how to teach English to elementary school pupils in universities is also essential and urgent matter to work on. However, MEXT has not notified what subjects must be taught in universities in regard to teaching English to elementary school pupils yet. Kagoshima Immaculate Heart University (KIHU) set up the course of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) in 2004 in order to meet these needs. A nearby elementary school was appointed as a pilot study pioneer school for teaching English as a subject by MEXT in 2001. KIHU teachers and students visited the English classes to act as volunteer support teachers, which lead to the beginning of KIHU course. Even now, Satumasendai City, where the university is located, puts emphasis on English education in elementary schools and so English Activities start in the 1st grade in every elementary school under the name of Structural Reform Special District. As Satumasendai City keeps using English Activities in place of Foreign Language Activities, English Activities is used to refer to Foreign Language Activities in this paper.

2. Purpose

The ultimate goal of the course of TEYL in KIHU is to be able to teach

English to pupils in a real classroom. That is, teaching practice of English Activities is the last and biggest challenge for the students enrolled in the course. Since this is a new trial, methodology in evaluating teaching practice has not yet been fully established.

The purpose of this paper is to find clues for making evaluation criteria for teaching practice in English Activities at an elementary school through i) clarifying what the students learned from their teaching practice by looking into the students' reports submitted after the teaching practice period, ii) analyzing the evaluation of the student teachers' overall performance by the elementary school teachers who observed the classes of the student teachers, and iii) comparing the two sets of data to see if there is any discrepancy between student teachers' learning points and elementary teachers' evaluation.

3. The Certificate Course of Teaching English to Young Learners

KIHU started fostering the ability of teaching English to young learners in its students in 2004. Students who take the 23 credits from among the related 18 subjects ranging from Child Psychology, Introduction to Children's Culture, English Phonetics, Theories in the Second Language Acquisition to the core subjects such as Methods of Teaching English to Children (MTEC), Seminar in Developing English Teaching Materials for Children, Seminar in Teaching English to Children, Teaching Practice, obtain the Certificate in TEYL in the name of the president of the university.

The Certificate in TEYL course puts an emphasis on fostering the practical ability in teaching pupils in English Activities classes. Therefore, the core subjects are arranged in an effective order from learning theory to putting these into practice. First, MTEC covers not only theory but also actual teaching methods, and includes some special workshops by elementary school teachers. Seminar in Developing English Teaching Materials for

Table 1: Certificate in Teaching English to Young Learners

Field	Required Credit	Course	Credit	Required/Elective	
				R	E
Awareness of Pedagogy	2	Education and Teachers	2	○	
Child Psychology	2	Development of Mind I	2		
		Development and Education	2	○	
Children's Literature	4	Children's Literature from Abroad	2		○
		Children's Picture Books around the World	2		○
Introduction to Children's Culture		2		○	
Child Studies in the World		2		○	
Language Acquisition		Theories in the Second Language Acquisition I	2		○
		English Phonetics	2	English Phonetics	2
Teaching Methods	4	Methods of Teaching English to Children I	2	○	
		Methods of Teaching English to Children II	2	○	
Seminar	4	Seminar in Teaching English to Children	2	○	
		Seminar in Developing English Teaching Materials for Children	2	○	
Teaching Practice	1	Teaching Practice for English Activities	1	○	
English Skills	4	General English, Practice I	2		○
		General English, Practice II	2		○
		Interactive English I	2		○
		Interactive English II	2		○

Children also includes lectures by elementary school teachers in which they introduce their own teaching materials and show how they are used in English Activities class. At the end of the course, the students create their own teaching materials according to the English Activities' teaching plan by the municipal board of education. In the Seminar in Teaching English to Children, every week the students visit nearby elementary schools, and observe, and sometimes participate in the English Activities classes. Finally, in Teaching Practice for English Activities, each student teaches the pupils

in the English Activities class putting all the knowledge and experience they have gained to good account.

4. The Guideline of Teaching Practice for Elementary School English Activities

Teaching Practice for English Activities is open to the junior and senior students in the International Human Faculty at KIHU and is a second semester course which follows on from the Seminar in Teaching English to Children in the first semester. After the students have learned about the actual state of pupils, activity sequencing in class, giving instructions and responding to pupils through the classroom observation, each student experiences the process of teaching practice: planning-teaching-reflecting, for three times in one of the nearby three elementary schools. She plans the lesson based on the annual teaching plan of the school, the pupils' interests and level and the homeroom teachers' requests. Then she teaches a 45 minute class observed by the homeroom teacher, a university teacher and the other students. After the class, she reflects on her teaching watching the video recorded during the class, and then she is assigned to write a report, which details she has learned from her experience.

5. Research Methods

This study is based on the content analysis of eight student teachers' reports submitted after completing their teaching practice at three different elementary schools in Satsumasendai City in the 2009 academic year. The text of collected reports was processed and analyzed by KH Corder, free software for the quantitative text analysis of the Japanese language, in order to determine word appearance frequency and associated words. Based on these results, this study will look into what the student teachers learned

through their teaching practice.

Upon completion of the teaching practice in 2009, the evaluation of the student teachers' overall performance was also collected from the eight elementary school teachers who observed the classes taught by the student teachers. It should be noted here that the said evaluation was executed in the form of a questionnaire and it was not about each student teacher's performance, but rather about the overall performance of the whole group of student teachers' that each respondent observed.

The data collected through the above-mentioned two avenues were compared in order to see whether or not there were any discrepancies between the learning of the student teachers and the elementary school teachers' observation.

6. Results

6-1. Text analysis of the reports on teaching practice

Table 2 shows the 10 most frequently-appearing adjectives and adjectival nouns in the student teachers' reports.

The report contain 24 adjectives and 21 adjectival nouns, which appeared, in total, 129 times. Among them "muzukashii (difficult/hard)", "daiji/taisetsu (important)" and "nai", which means "something does not exist" were the most frequently-appearing words, closely followed by "tanoshii (fun/enjoyable)".

Table 2: Top 10 most frequently-appearing adjectives and adjectival nouns

	Word	Number of Appearance		Word	Number of Appearance
1	Muzukashii (Difficult/Hard)	13	6	Takai (High)	5
1	Daiji/Taisetsu (Important)	13	6	Umai (Skillful)	5
1	Nai (Non-existent)	13	6	Hitsuyou (Necessary)	5
4	Tanoshii (Fun/Enjoyable)	12	9	Sugoi (Very)	4
5	Yoi (Good)	7	10	Tokui (to be good at)	4

Table 3: Top 10 extracted words associated with “Muzukashii (difficult/hard)”

	Word	Number of Appearance in the Whole Text	Number of Co-occurrence	Jaccard
1	Jissai (Actually)	7 (0.219)	5 (0.500)	0.417
2	Bamen (Situation)	4 (0.125)	4 (0.400)	0.400
3	Omou (to think)	22 (0.687)	9 (0.900)	0.391
4	Kangaeru (to think)	15 (0.469)	7 (0.700)	0.389
5	Eigo (English)	16 (0.500)	7 (0.700)	0.368
6	Okonau (to do/ to carry out)	9 (0.281)	5 (0.500)	0.357
7	Jisshu (Teaching Practice)	18 (0.562)	7 (0.700)	0.333
8	Katsudou (Activity)	10 (0.312)	5 (0.500)	0.333
9	Tanoshii (Fun/enjoyable)	11 (0.344)	5 (0.500)	0.313
10	Atama (Head)	3 (0.094)	3 (0.300)	0.300
10	Hairyo (Consideration for others)	3 (0.094)	3 (0.300)	0.300

Table 4: Top 10 extracted words associated with “daiji/taisetsu (important)”

	Word	Number of Appearance in the Whole Text	Number of Co-occurrence	Jaccard
1	Omou (to think)	22 (0.687)	9 (0.900)	0.391
2	Muzukashii (Difficult)	10 (0.312)	5 (0.500)	0.333
3	Koekake (Giving advice/attention)	6 (0.187)	4 (0.400)	0.333
4	Shougakkou (Elementary school)	7 (0.219)	4 (0.400)	0.308
5	Kangaeru (to think)	17 (0.531)	6 (0.600)	0.286
6	Chigau (to differ/vary)	8 (0.250)	4 (0.400)	0.286
7	Jisshu (Teaching Practice)	18 (0.562)	6 (0.600)	0.273
7	Jugyou (Class/lesson)	18 (0.562)	6 (0.600)	0.273
9	Mi (Body/position)	4 (0.125)	3 (0.300)	0.273
9	Tokui (to be good at)	4 (0.125)	3 (0.300)	0.273

Focusing on “muzukashii (difficult/hard)”, “daiji/taisetsu (important)” and “tanoshii (fun/enjoyable)” out of the above-mentioned four words, we looked into words the most closely associated with them. As “nai” is a too general word, it was excluded in this associated- word-search.

Table 3, 4 and 5 show the 10 words most closely associated with “muzukashii (difficult/hard)”, “daiji/taisetsu (important)” and “tanoshii (fun/enjoyable)” respectively.

Table 5: Top 10 extracted words associated with “tanoshii (fun/enjoyable)”

	Word	Number of Appearance in the Whole Text	Number of Co-occurrence	Jaccard
1	Kangaeru (to think)	15 (0.469)	8 (0.727)	0.444
2	Geemu (Game)	9 (0.281)	6 (0.545)	0.429
3	Okonau (to do/ to carry out)	9 (0.281)	6 (0.545)	0.429
4	Eigo (English)	16 (0.500)	7 (0.636)	0.350
5	Oshieru (to teach)	9 (0.281)	5 (0.455)	0.333
6	Kyoomi (Interest)	5 (0.156)	4 (0.364)	0.333
7	Omou (to think)	22 (0.687)	8 (0.727)	0.320
8	Jugyou (Class/lesson)	18 (0.562)	7 (0.636)	0.318
9	Muzukashii (Difficult/hard)	10 (0.312)	5 (0.455)	0.313
10	Katsudou (Activity)	10 (0.312)	5 (0.455)	0.313

It is easy to understand why words such as “omou (to think)”, “kangaeru (to think)”, “eigo (English)”, “okonau (to do/ to carry out)”, “jissu (teaching practice)”, “shougakkou (elementary school)”, “jugyou (class/lesson)” and “oshieru (to teach)” are included in the top 10 list in Tables 3 to 5 when considering the fact that the text analyzed is student teachers’ reports on their teaching practice in English Activities at elementary schools.

Words such as “jissai (actually)”, “tanoshii (fun/enjoyable)”, “atama (head)”, “hairyo (consideration for others)” in Table 3, “koekake (giving advice/attention)”, a word in third place in Table 4 and “geemu (game)”, “muzukashii (difficult/hard)” and “katsudou (activity)” in Table 5 are further examined in the section 7.

6-2. Evaluation of student teachers’ teaching by elementary school teachers

As mentioned before, the evaluation was executed in the form of a questionnaire, which included the following four parts: A. about student teachers, B. about student teachers’ lesson plans, C. about the student teachers’ teaching and D. about the feedback. The results of part C are

divided and shown in two figures as they are contained eight questions.

In the following graphs the vertical line represents the number of respondents and the horizontal line represents the evaluation scale: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Agree and 4. Strongly agree.

Figure 1 shows the evaluation of the student teachers' attitude in class, preparedness for teaching, attire, speaking speed and volume of voice. All the answers, except one in "good preparation" are concentrated on "agree" or "strongly agree".

Figure 2 shows the evaluation on the student teachers' lesson plans. The entire set of graphs peak at scale 3 "agree". As the respondents' answers

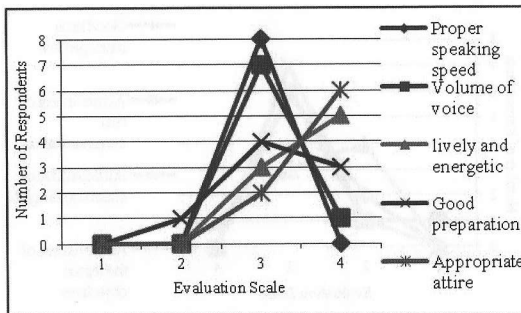


Figure 1: About student teachers

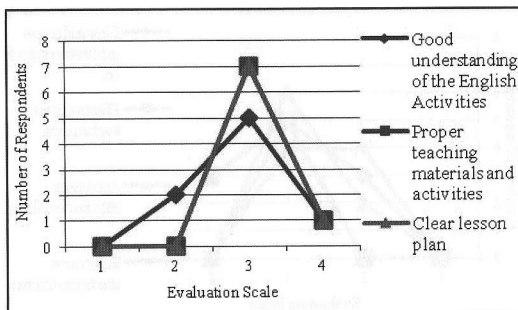


Figure 2: About lesson plans

to the two questions “proper teaching materials and activities” and “clear lesson plan” turned out to be exactly the same, the graph appears to show only two sets of results.

Figure 3 and 4 show the evaluation of the student teachers' class teaching. Compared to the two previous graphs, these display considerable variation in the elementary school teachers' evaluation.

What is of particular note in Figure 3 is that 50 percent of the elementary school teachers chose “disagree” with regard to the evaluation item “responsive attention to children”. The evaluation on “clear and simple explanation and instruction” also displays a relatively high number of

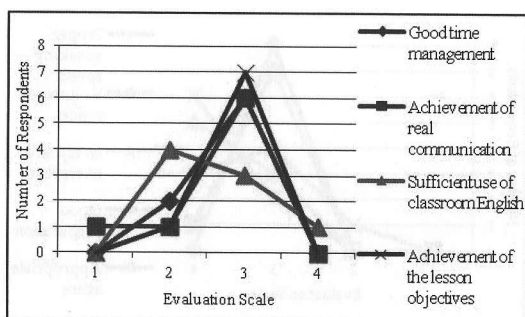


Figure 3: About the teaching (1)

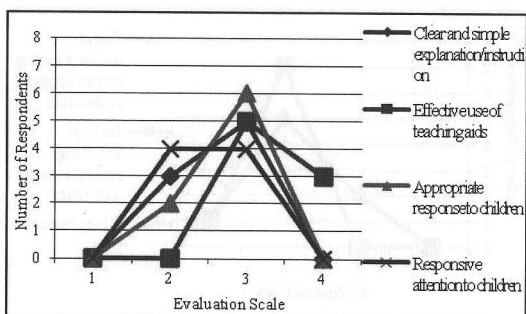


Figure 4: About the teaching (2)

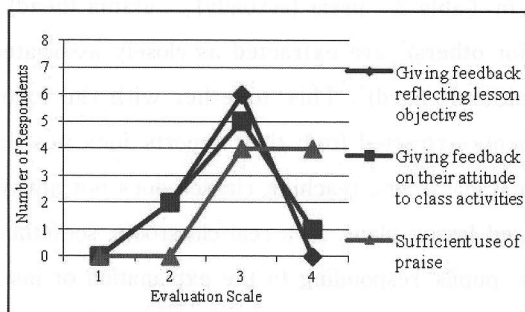


Figure 5: About the feedback

“disagree”.

The graph of “sufficient use of classroom English”, as seen in Figure 4, peaks at evaluation scale 2 “disagree”.

Figure 5 shows the evaluation on the feedback the student teachers gave the pupils in class. Most of the answers fall on “agree” and “strongly agree” with two “disagrees” each in “giving feedback reflecting lesson objectives” and “giving feedback on their attitude toward class activities”.

7. Discussion

7-1. Text analysis of the reports on teaching practice

“Muzukashii (difficult/hard)” and “taisetsu/daiji (important)” being the top two frequently-appearing words in the categories of adjectives and adjectival nouns itself is not surprising. Since this is the first teaching practice for the student teachers, they must have faced a lot of challenges, through which they were forced to think what was important in teaching English Activities to elementary school pupils. With regard to “tanoshii (fun/enjoyable)”, the fact that it is on the top five list of frequently-appearing adjectives and adjectival nouns itself indicates how conscious the student teachers were of creating enjoyable lessons for their pupils.

As shown in Table 3, “jissai (actually)”, “atama (head)” and “hairyo (consideration for others)” are extracted as closely associated words with “muzukashii (difficult/hard)”. This, together with the following student teachers’ comments extracted from their reports, indicates that they found out that in a real classroom, teaching classes does not always follow their carefully prepared lesson plans. In a real classroom, something unexpected always happens: pupils’ responding to the explanation or instruction in the least expected ways, student teacher’ finding themselves not being able to manage their teaching as well as they planned and so on. It is very difficult for inexperienced teachers to deal with the unexpected.

“Tanoshii (fun/enjoyable)” is included in the top ten closely associated words with “muzukashii (difficult/hard)”. This may seem contradictory, but as the student teachers’ comments show, they found it hard to come up with fun activities when they were planning a lesson, or to think of activities that would make pupils understand the contents of what they were being taught, which would eventually help the pupils enjoy the final task, in this case, a skit.

Student teachers’ comments

- What I found difficult was translating what was in my head into action.
- It was hard to think of classroom activities that all the pupils could enjoy.
- I was supposed to do a better job of teaching. The reason why I could not is because the pupils did not response to my explanation/instruction the way I had imagined.
- It was difficult to pay attention to every pupil and give help, if necessary, to pupils whose English was weak.
- I realized the difficulties in teaching pupils after the actual teaching practice. I knew it was important to watch each pupil during the

lesson but I couldn't constantly do so because giving the instructions according to the teaching plan occupied my mind.

What the student teachers have found important with regard to teaching English Activities at elementary schools varies, but "koekake (giving advice/attention)" stands out among the words associated with "taisetsu/daiji (important)". This is something that they can learn only through teaching in a real classroom. Through their teaching practice, they learned it was important to be always watchful of the pupils' responses and if necessary, to act accordingly.

Student teachers' comments

- It is important to be observant and pay attention to each pupil in order to realize a pupil-centered class. I will keep this in mind and will learn to give advice to them according to their individual needs.
- I learned that it was important to give advice such as "why don't you do it with motion?" in order to expand skit activities.
- I learned that it was important for a teacher to reach out to pupils as I could see my "koekake" enriched the content of the skits they were working on.

Table 5 displays that "geemu (game)" and "katsudo (activity)" are two of the most closely associated words with "tanoshii (fun/enjoyable)". This suggests that the student teachers value "fun activities" and this is also evident in their comments below.

Student teachers' comments

- I learned that it was important to introduce fun activities such as games in class.

- I should have paid more attention to pupils whose English was weak so that they would be able to enjoy class activities more.
- I realized that it was important to make lessons enjoyable for every pupil and therefore I should keep this in mind when making lesson plans.

7-2. Evaluation by elementary school teachers and student teachers' learning

As seen in Section 6, except for a few evaluation items, most of the evaluation by the elementary school teachers falls on "agree" or "strongly agree". However, there are not, in student teachers' reports, many comments referring to the evaluation items which received high evaluation such as their voice volume, effective use of teaching materials and such. This is because high evaluation means, whatever that is, they did well and therefore they did not feel any hardship in executing them. It is likely that it did not even occur to the student teachers to include this in their reports.

"Koekake (giving advice/attention)", one of the few evaluation items which received lower evaluation, appears in the top ten list of closely associated words with "taisetsu/daiji (important)". In addition, though they are not on the list, "jidou eno taiou (responses to children)", "kodomo hitori hitori o miru (pay attention to each child)" and other similar phrases often appear in their reports. This is something student teachers cannot learn in a university classroom, but only through teaching pupils in a real classroom and therefore it stayed with the student teachers as an important part of their learning.

Contrary to "koekake (giving advice/attention)", other evaluation items that received lower evaluation, such as "sufficient use of classroom English" and "clear and simple explanation and instruction", are scarcely seen in their

reports. These discrepancies in evaluation between the student teachers and the elementary school teachers reveal a gap in awareness of the two evaluation items.

8. Conclusion and Further Study

This study reveals what the student teachers have learned through their teaching practice in English Activities at an elementary school. They place importance on giving fun activities, being able to pay attention to each pupil and give advice according to his/her individual needs.

Most of the evaluation by the elementary school teachers is favorable to the student teachers with some exceptions. Comments that referred to what the student teachers could do well in class were, however, scarcely found in the student teachers' reports. Given this, it will be necessary to give guidance to student teachers that being aware of what they can do well is as important as paying attention to what they need to improve.

The evaluation on "responsive attention to children" by the student teachers is in accordance with that of by the elementary school teachers. There are, however, discrepancies in evaluation on items such as "sufficient use of classroom English" and "clear and simple explanation and instruction" between the student teachers and the elementary school teachers. In order to better prepare student teachers for their teaching practice, it will be essential to fill the gap between the two.

These findings will enable course instructors at universities to give better guidance to student teachers. These also help to make evaluation criteria for the course of teaching practice for English Activities.

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論文要旨

小学校外国語活動における教育実習の 評価に関する一考察

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平成23年度に小学校における外国語活動が必修となったが、学習指導要領では、学級担任が中心になって指導することになっている。したがって、外国語活動の指導に関する研修は、現職の小学校教員だけではなく、大学で小学校教員を目指す学生にとっても大きな課題である。

本学では、そうした学生のために、「こども英語教育能力認定証」課程を設け、児童英語教授法、発達心理、こども文化、英語音声学、英語力、教材開発及び実習などのこども英語教育に関する科目を18科目23単位以上修得すると大学の認定証を発行している。しかし、大学におけるこども英語教育に関する科目の履修において、実習の評価をどう行うか明確な基準や指針は示されていない。

本研究においては、実習の評価の在り方を確立することを目的に、まず、児童英語教育実習に参加した学生の実習レポートから、実習生が何を学んだと感じているかを明らかにする。次に、実習期間終了後に実習を行ったクラスの学級担任を対象に行った評価アンケートの結果を分析し、小学校教員の評価の視点を探る。最後に、実習レポートから見える実習生の学びと小学校教員の評価を照らし合わせ、両者間で一致する点及び異なる点を明らかにし、実習に臨む学生への指導の一助とするとともに、よりよい実習評価の在り方を探る起点とする。

キーワード：教師養成、小学校、外国語活動、実習、評価