

English Activities in Elementary Schools

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1. Introduction

We now live in a world characterized by progress in internationalization, computerization, and great strides in science and technology. It is clear that there is a strong demand for education to adjust in accordance with these characteristics. Under such circumstances, *Elementary Course of Study* was revised in 1998 with the aims to allow individual schools to pursue their own unique education initiatives, working to cultivate students' humanity and social maturity, educate them in fundamentals, and encourage in them a 'zest-for-living.' With these aims in mind, *Period for Integrated Study* has been created for schools to address interdisciplinary, broad subjects such as international understanding, information technology, the environment, social welfare, and health based on the regional or school characteristics. As one of international understanding studies within *Period for Integrated Study*, English activities could be introduced focusing on conversation. Although it is within each school's discretion to introduce English activities, 97% of elementary schools have pursued them in 2007 according to the inquiry¹⁾ made by Monbukagaku-sho (the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology). We see that it is highly expected that English conversation experiences will plant the seeds of awareness of issues related to international understanding.

The question is that English activities differ in quality and quantity between regions and schools. To narrow this gap, under the new *Course of Study*, English activities for fifth and sixth grade students would be independently addressed in *Foreign Language Activities*²⁾, separated from *Period for Integrated Study* from 2011. This means that English activities would be compulsorily carried out in every elementary school in accordance with the common objectives and contents. How do teachers at the chalkface feel about this change? Asahi Press (February 8, 2009) refers the inquiry³⁾ made by a publishing company Obunsha to show that 53% of teachers are worried about this change. According to the above-mentioned inquiry made by Monbukagaku-sho, 90% of English activities are conducted by homeroom teachers (HRTs). It is natural that they would have anxieties about conducting English activities because they do not always have enough knowledge and experience regarding English instruction. In order for them to take on the challenge of conducting English activities with confidence, a variety of training opportunities are important for them to acquire the skills they need. Ideas and examples are also important to be

provided from teachers and schools that have acquired experience in this area. In this paper, we shall observe English activities in elementary schools and show some examples actually conducted in an elementary school and presented in teachers' workshops.

2. English Activities in Elementary Schools

Pursing English activities in elementary schools differ from the English teaching in junior high schools in several points. We observe the purpose, important points for instruction, and instructors in this section.

2.1. What is the Purpose of English Activities?

From the very beginning, English activities have been introduced as one of international understanding studies within *Period for Integrated Study*. Their purpose is to develop an interest in English, not to teach a language. Elementary school students are very interested in new things and are at a stage where they can naturally absorb other cultures. Exposing them to the English language during these years is important for deepening international understanding as well as developing communicative ability.

From 2011, English activities would be introduced in *Foreign Language Activities* for fifth and sixth grade students. Monbukagaku-sho (2008) shows an objective of *Foreign Language Activities* as follows:

To form the foundation of students' communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the 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.

Oshiro & Naoyama (2008) point out that the purpose of *Foreign Language Activities* has three points. The first is to develop students' understanding of languages (in principle English) and cultures through various experiences, particularly through communication experiences. Open-mindedness and understanding other cultures, the development of a respectful attitude toward these cultures and qualities, and the development of the abilities to live together with people from different cultures are necessary for students living in an international society. In addition, understanding their own culture and the establishment of a strong sense of self and sense of being Japanese are important for them to better appreciate the concept of international understanding. The second point is to foster a positive attitude toward communication. Development of the ability to communicate with others for the

purpose of expressing their own thoughts and intentions while respecting the positions of others is one of the important factors in promoting international understanding. The third point is to familiarize students with the sounds and basic expressions of English. In order not to give too much burden to students, teachers should focus on English sounds and basic expressions, and use letters of the alphabet and words as supplementary tools for oral communication.

We see that English activities in *Foreign Language Activities* would be pursued for the purpose of forming the foundation of students' communication abilities, not of teaching a language. Keywords are 'experience' and 'communication.' Teachers should prepare various communication activities in which students could experience the joy of communication, actively listen to and speak in English, learn the importance of verbal communication, and live in this international society.

2.2. What Kind of English Should Teacher Introduce?

We next consider what kind of language items should be introduced into English activities in which students could form the foundation of their communication abilities. Although communication takes place through verbal and written means, the simultaneous introduction of both media would demand too much of students because the English and Japanese languages differ considerably from each other. It is necessary to separate spoken and written English at an elementary school stage. Therefore English activities in elementary schools should focus on spoken English, for example, listening to and speaking in English. Letters of the alphabet and words should be introduced as supplementary tools.

Textbooks are not used in *Foreign Language Activities* although Monbukagakusho prepares teaching materials for the purpose of securing the standard of education. It follows that teachers should select the instructions on the contents and activities. When selecting the instructions, consideration should be given to several points. Firstly, the instructions should be familiar to students' daily lives and school lives so that students could easily become interested in them, understand them, and use them. Secondly, they should be both basic and useful to avoid giving too much burden to students. Thirdly, they should be suited to students' developmental stages and interests to help students easily become interested in them and understand them. Let us observe English activities in which elementary school students like. Mito Educational Research Center (Mito City Board of Education) (2008) shows some English activities in which elementary school students in Mito city like. Table 1 indicates that 'to sing English songs' is chosen as one of the enjoyable activities by 71.1% of the first grade, by 66.6% of the second grade, by 55.1% of the third grade, by 52.1% of the fourth grade, by 32.7% of the fifth grade, and by 21.0% of the sixth grade students. Teachers could conduct English activities effectively when they grasp their

students' interests.

Table 1: English activities in which students like

English Activities	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
To sing English songs	71.1%	66.6%	55.1%	52.1%	32.7%	21.0%
To talk with friends and teachers in English	54.1%	38.9%	35.2%	33.9%	34.2%	32.0%
To play games	93.0%	90.3%	87.4%	89.6%	89.2%	83.3%
To talk with ALT in English	51.2%	33.6%	24.6%	19.7%	15.6%	17.6%
To listen to ALT's English	60.8%	36.1%	28.2%	15.2%	11.4%	11.6%
To listen to stories read in English	60.4%	65.3%	48.5%	40.0%	20.8%	14.3%
To understand other countries and cultures	57.1%	52.1%	50.7%	44.6%	41.6%	18.9%
To practice pronouncing English words	60.2%	37.3%	28.8%	22.9%	17.4%	41.5%

2.3. Who Would Teach the Lessons?

Under the new *Course of Study*, HRTs or teachers in charge of *Foreign Language Activities* would make teaching programs and conduct lessons. Because HRTs do not always have enough knowledge and experience on English instruction, some of them have various anxieties about their conducting English activities. Mito Educational Research Center (2008) shows that HRTs are worried about securing enough time for discussing English activities with ALTs (45.7%), conducting English activities without the help of ALTs (45.7%), conducting English activities which motivate their students (40.2%), spending a lot of time on designing plans and making teaching materials (36.2%), devising good lesson plans and teaching materials (26.4%), connecting with English teaching in junior high schools (25.1%), developing better communication with ALTs (22.3%), reconsidering the present curriculum (19.1%), getting accustomed to team-teaching with ALTs (8.7%), and so on.

In order for them to take on the challenge of conducting English activities with confidence, a variety of training opportunities should be provided for them to acquire the skills in English instruction. In addition, as the *Course of Study* shows, efforts should be made to get more people involved in lessons by seeking cooperation from local people who are proficient in English as well as by inviting ALTs. The inquiry made by Monbukagaku-sho shows that many elementary schools invite many local people to join in English activities. Monbukagaku-sho (2001) points out that English activities conducted by HRTs are not strictly negative. HRTs are an important factor for instruction at an elementary school level: they teach all subjects and understand their students well. Therefore, they could utilize the individuality of their students in organizing activities, develop teaching materials based on fresh concepts which are

not applied in traditional English-teaching classrooms, and relate the English activities to other subject contents to incorporate the knowledge and skills gained in these subjects into the English activities.

3. English Activities in Elementary Schools

After surveying what English activities in elementary schools ought to be, we observe some examples of English activities actually conducted in an elementary school and presented in training seminars for teachers. These examples should be useful for HRTs when conducting *Foreign Language Activities*.

3.1. *English Conversation* in Mito City

English activities are introduced differently depending on regions and schools. As an example, let us take Mito city, a prefectural capital, located at the center of Ibaraki Prefecture. This city has organized a flexible curriculum and created a new subject *English Conversation* to study the ideal method of carrying out English activities in which teachers could develop the students' practical English communication skills from 2004. Under this curriculum, HRTs would conduct *English Conversation*, separated from *Period for Integrated Study*, to the students of all grades in accordance with the objective and contents shown by Mito City Board of Education.

The objective of *English Conversation* is to become familiar with English related to students' daily lives and school lives, to improve their listening and speaking abilities, and to form the foundation of their practical communication abilities. To give a detailed account, first and second grade students are expected to 'become familiar with English,' for example, to listen to and mimic English sounds, intonation, and rhythm through songs and games, to greet in English, and to show interest in ALTs' English. Third and fourth grade students are expected to 'become accustomed to English': to become accustomed to listening to and speaking English using basic expressions, to ask and answer English questions, and to enjoy English activities with friends and ALTs. Fifth and sixth grade students are expected to 'use English,' for example, to positively use English through listening to and speaking English expressions used in their daily lives and school lives, to tell about themselves and their schools in easy English, and to voluntarily communicate with foreigners.

HRTs in charge of *English Conversation* have various anxieties about their conducting English activities as shown in 2.3. In order to assist them, twenty-two ALTs are dispatched to



English Activities with ALT & SV

thirty-four elementary schools. In addition, many local people who are proficient in English are invited to join in the lessons. In fact, students from Ibaraki Christian University have played active roles as members of School Volunteers (SVs) in an elementary school in 2007 and 2008.

3.2. English Activities in an Elementary School

In 2004, the present writer has served one year as a SV and joined in *English Conversation* for sixth grade students in an elementary school. We observe some of these English activities on the grounds that they could be a tentative proposal to help us focus our discussion. Table 2 shows the themes and contents of *English Conversation* for sixth grade students. Based on this curriculum, HRTs would organize activities in consideration of their students' characteristics and interests. Table 3 shows English activities with which the SV was concerned. We observe three examples out of seventeen English activities.

Table 2: Theme & Contents of *English Conversation* (2004)

Month	Theme	Contents
4	Let's greet in English!	Hello. / My name is ~. / Nice to meet you. / How are you? / I'm fine (hungry, happy, hot, cold...), thank you. / Thank you. / You're welcome. / Good bye. / See you.
5	Let's play with numbers. Let's greet each other.	How many? / How old are you? / I'm ~.
6-7	Things I like! Days of the week	Do you like (play, speak ...) ~? / Yes, I do. No, I don't. / What ~ do you like? / What day is it?
9	Things around us	Do you have a (long) pencil? / Yes, I do. No, I don't. / I have ~. / I don't have ~.
10	What I can do!	I can ~. / Can you ~? / Yes, I can. No, I can't.
11	Can you do it?	Clap your hands. / Twist your waist. / Wink your eye.
12	What's your favorite food?	What is your favorite food? / My favorite food is ~.
1	Let's introduce our family. What time is it? When is your birthday?	How many people are there in your family? / This is my brother, Ken. / What time is it? / It's three o'clock. / When is your birthday? / My birthday is June 6th.
2-3	Let's go to the restaurant!	May I help you? / I'll take ~. / How much? / ~ dollars. Here you are.

Table 3: English Activities for 6th Grade Students

Date	Theme	Contents	Vocabulary
6/1	Let's greet in English!	I'm ~. I'm from ~. Nice to meet you.	alphabet, countries
6/15	Let's greet in English!	How are you? I'm fine (super, happy, hungry...)	feeling expression, weather
6/22	Let's introduce myself in English.	I like ~. I don't like ~.	colors
6/29	Let's introduce myself in English.	I play ~. I don't play ~.	sports
7/6	Let's play with numbers.	How old are you?	numbers (1-50)
7/13	Let's play with numbers.	How many?	numbers (51-100)
10/5	Hello, Chris!	Review (Self-introduction) Cross-cultural understanding	Halloween words
10/12	Let's cook!	I use ~. Do you use ~?	food
11/9	What I can do!	I can ~. I can't ~.	musical instruments
11/30	Simon says.	Stand up. Sit down. Turn right. Touch your head.	movement, parts of the body
12/7	Let's write a card to Chris!	Cross-cultural understanding	Christmas words
12/21	What's your favorite?	What's your favorite ~?	subjects, seasons, fruits
1/25	What time is it?	What time is it? It's ~. What time do you ~? I get up at ~.	movement
2/8	What day is today?	What day is today? It's ~.	days of the week
2/15	Let's play 'KARIMONO' Game!	Do you have ~?	things around us
2/22	When is your birthday?	When is your birthday? My birthday is February 22nd.	months
3/1	Thank you, Chris!	Review, I study (play) ~ at ×× junior high school.	subjects, sports

3.2.1. Activity A: Let's Introduce Myself in English!

As shown in 3.1, *English Conversation* for sixth grade students is pursued for the purpose of developing students' abilities to 'use English,' strictly speaking, positively to use English through listening to and speaking English used in their daily lives and school lives, to tell about themselves and their schools in easy English, and voluntarily to communicate with foreigners. The main objective of this lesson is 'to tell about themselves in easy English' such as 'I like' and 'I don't like.' Teachers should notice that it is not sufficient for students only to replace the word which comes after 'like'

with other words. As we observe in 2.1, they need to speak these key sentences to exchange information with their friends and teachers, that is to say, to communicate with their friends and teachers.

Table 4: Teaching Plan for Activity A

Time	Students' Activities	HRT's Activities	SV's Activities
3'	1 Greeting "Good morning."	1 Greeting "How are you today?" "How's the weather today?"	1 Greeting "Good morning, everyone."
7'	2 New Material (1) Listen to a CD carefully. Say the colors which they can listen to: red, blue, green, yellow, orange, purple. Rearrange the color cards based on the order they hear. Practice pronouncing each color words.	2 New Material (1) Play a CD several times. Listen to students' answers and put color cards on the blackboard.	2 New Material (1) "Let's listen to an English song. How many colors can you hear?" Show cards to students.
10'	3 New Material (2) Listen to teachers' dialogue and understand today's key sentences. Tell about themselves using "I like" and "I don't like."	3 New Material (2) "I <u>like</u> blue. Do you like blue?" Help students when they need.	3 New Material (2) "No, I don't. I <u>don't like</u> blue. But I <u>like</u> orange." Show cards to students.
18'	4 Communication Activity Task: Find five friends. Ask classmates about their favorite colors and find five friends. A: "I like green. Do you like green?" B: "Yes. I like green." C: "No. But I like blue." Check the answers.	4 Communication Activity Task: Find five friends. Explain how to do in this activity. Help students when they need. Give stickers to students.	4 Communication Activity Task: Find five friends. (1) Find five friends whose favorite color is the same as yours. (2) Find five friends who like orange. (3) Find five boy (girl) students who like blue. Give stickers to students.
7'	5 Closing Listen to the CD again. Look back on this lesson: good, super, fantastic, and so on. "Good-bye."	5 Closing "How's today's lesson?" "Good-bye, everyone."	5 Closing Play a CD. "That's all for today." "Good-bye, everyone."

The HRT and SV began this lesson with introducing the names of colors. They played an English song 'Colors' (Higuchi & Kinugasa, 2004) after asking "How many colors can you hear in this song?" Students answered the colors which they could hear and the HRT put the color cards corresponding to the answers on the blackboard. It

seemed a little hard for students hear ‘orange’ and ‘purple’ because these pronunciations are rather different from the ones of loanwords used in their native language. However, this activity helped students notice the difference of pronunciations between authentic English words and Japanese loanwords.

Teachers next introduced key sentences in dialogue. They intended their students to understand the key sentences from the dialogue, not from the teacher’s explanation, because they wanted their students to learn by their own initiative. After understanding key sentences, students began the main activity of this lesson. Teachers prepared a task-based communicative activity for their students. The lesson is said to be ‘task-based’ when the organizing principle involved is not the presentation and practice of the language to be learned but the specification of activities designed to engage learners in language-using work, usually without regard to the precise linguistic features such activities are likely to involve. Teachers had their students communicate with friends in English to accomplish a task. Students were assigned a task in which they would gather information from their friends about their favorite colors and find five friends who meet three conditions. Take the second condition for example, students should communicate with their friends about their favorite colors and find five friends who like orange. The important point is that the students’ utterance would be the information which they need in order to accomplish the task. In addition, we should not overlook that teachers considered the characteristics of their students. It is well known that six-grade Japanese students tend to hesitate to talk with classmates of the opposite sex. In consideration of this characteristic, teachers prepared the third condition (Find five boy/girl students who like blue) to put their students into a situation in which boys had to talk with girls and girls had to talk with boys.

3.2.2. Activity B: Let’s Cook!

The main objective of this lesson is to positively listen to and speak English used in their daily lives and school lives. Because the HRT of this class is responsible for teaching all subjects and understanding his students well, he could utilize the characteristics of his students in organizing activities. He selected ‘cooking’ for this lesson. Food, clothing, and shelter seem to be appropriate topics for sixth grade students. They would be also interested in sports, music, games, and TV programs.

Table 5: Teaching Plan for Activity B

Time	Students' Activities	HRT's Activities	SV's Activities
2'	1 Greeting "Good morning."	1 Greeting "How are you today?" "How's the weather today?"	1 Greeting "Good morning, class."
15'	2 New Material (1) Learn new words: tomato, potato, cucumber, carrot, lettuce, sausage, meat, ham, cheese, bread, bun, soft roll, rice, flour, curry and rice, hamburger, pizza, sandwich, hot dog.	2 New Material (1) Introduce new words about food. Show picture cards to students.	2 New Material (1) Introduce new words about food. Show model pronunciations of new words. Ask students what they use to cook five dishes: curry and rice, hamburger, pizza, sandwich, hot dog.
5'	3 New Material (2) Listen to teachers' dialogue and understand today's key sentences.	3 New Material (2) "I use a red pen." "No. I <u>don't use</u> a blue pen. Here you are."	3 New Material (2) "What do you use?" "Do you use a blue pen?" "Thank you."
20'	4 Guess Game: What am I cooking now? (Pair work) Ask the partner what he/she uses and guess what he/she plans to cook. A: "Do you use a <i>sausage</i> ?" B: "Yes. I use a <i>sausage</i> ." A: "Do you use <i>cheese</i> ?" B: "Yes. I use <i>cheese</i> ." A: "Do you use <i>flour</i> ?" B: "No. I use a <i>soft roll</i> ." A: "Is it a <i>hot dog</i> ?" B: "Right."	4 Guess Game: What am I cooking now? Explain how to do in this activity. Help students when they need. Give stickers.	4 Guess Game: What am I cooking now? Help students when they need. Give stickers.
3'	5 Closing Look back on this lesson. "Good-bye."	5 Closing "How's today's lesson?" "Good-bye, everyone."	5 Closing "That's all for today." "Good-bye, everyone."

At the beginning of the lesson, the HRT and SV introduced some words of food: tomato, potato, carrot, lettuce, cucumber, sausage, meat, ham, bread, bun, flour, soft roll, rice, hamburger, curry and rice, sandwich, pizza, and hot dog. Picture cards could help students understand these words. 'Potato' and 'tomato' sound strange for students because these pronunciations are different from the ones they have used so far. Teachers need to have students notice the difference of pronunciations between English words and Japanese loanwords.

Teachers next introduced the key sentences 'I use' and 'I don't use' in dialogues on the grounds that they intended their students to learn by their own initiative as well as in Activity A. After understanding the key sentences, students began the main

activity of this lesson. The main activity is a game in which students would ask their partners which ingredients they use and guess what the partners plan to cook. We notice that students communicated with their partners in English and used the information to accomplish the task in this activity. We also notice that teachers considered the characteristics of their students. As observed in 2.2, many elementary school students like to play games in English activities. In consideration of this characteristic, teachers prepared a game activity to have their students take pleasure in using English.

3.2.3. Activity C: Thank You, Chris!

The main objectives of this lesson are to voluntarily communicate with foreigners and to tell about themselves in easy English. To attain the objectives of this lesson, an ALT would play a vital role. Firstly, as a native speaker of English, the ALT would be a source of authentic English: he could teach pronunciation and natural English from a variety of situations in daily life and in school life. Secondly, as a person who has experienced the culture of another country, he would share the customs, ways of thinking, and concepts of other countries with students and stimulate their interest in other countries and languages.

Generally speaking, when a HRT team-teaches with an ALT, the ALT often engages in English instruction, providing model sentences and correcting pronunciation, while the HRT mainly takes responsibility for maintaining the lesson flow and controlling the class atmosphere. When the ALT speaks to, encourages, and praises each student, he/she could help students develop a greater interest in English. Although the HRT does not always have a strong English ability, he/she should have confidence in the fact that he/she understands their students better than the ALT can, encourage the students, and let the students enjoy the activities by assigning and grouping the students into appropriate groups. In addition, the HRT should learn together with the students, interact confidently with the ALT, and have students feel the “fun” of using English. The students would also feel comfortable when the HRT participates in activities with them. In cases where the HRT is not confident about pairing with the ALT to team-teach, another teacher like a Japanese Teacher of English (JTE) or SV could be added to act as a facilitator between the HRT and ALT. Let us show a teaching plan for the latter type of team-teaching.

Table 6: Teaching Plan for Activity C

Time	Students' Activities	ALT's Activities	HRT & SV's Activities
3'	1 Greeting "Good morning."	1 Greeting "How are you today?" "How's the weather today?"	1 Greeting "Good morning."
15'	2 Review (1) (Group work) Answer the questions about the ALT and play a bingo game.	2 Review (1) "Do you remember me?" Let's play Bingo!" 1. What's my family name? 2. Where am I from? 3. Where do I live now? 4. What's my hobby? 5. What's my wife's name? 6. How many children do I have? 7. What pet do I have? 8. Which sport do I like? 9. How many years have I lived in Japan?	2 Review (1) Explain how to do in this activity. Help students when they need. Give stickers.
15'	3 Review (2) Tell what they would like to do when they become junior high school students. "I play <i>soccer</i> in ×× junior high school." "I study <i>English</i> hard in ×× junior high school." Answer the questions.	3 Review (2) "You will be junior high school students soon. Could you tell me about your plans?" Ask a question to each student.	3 Review (2) Help students when they need.
10'	4 Commendation Ceremony Receive a testimonial from ALT. Give a letter of thanks to ALT.	4 Commendation Ceremony Give a testimonial to each student for a good job in English activities. Receive a letter of thanks from students.	4 Commendation Ceremony
2'	5 Closing Look back on this lesson. "Good-bye."	5 Closing "How's today's lesson?" "Good-bye, everyone."	5 Closing "That's all for today." "Good-bye, everyone."

Because this lesson was the last occasion in which students could meet and talk with the ALT, the HRT intended their students to review what they had learned during the year, to voluntarily communicate with the ALT, and to express their gratitude to the ALT in this lesson. Firstly, students answered the questions about the ALT, for example, his country, hobbies, family, and so on. Students worked in groups and cooperated with friends to find the answers. Teachers walked around the students' desks to observe the students and gave some hints as the need arose. Because this activity was a game activity, students could take pleasure in using

English and in communicating with the ALT.

In the second activity, students were asked to tell about themselves in English. They were sixth grade students and with their graduation ceremony near at hand. They should have more or less hopes for their new school lives. In consideration of this situation, the HRT assigned their students a task of announcing what they would do or what they would like to do when they become junior high school students, for example, “I study English very hard” and “I play baseball.” After the announcement, the ALT asked a question to each student. For example, to a student who would play soccer, the ALT asked “Who is your favorite soccer player?” “Do you like Shunsuke Nakamura?” and so on. Telling their plans after graduation in English helps the students mentally prepare to become junior high school students.

The last activity is the one in which students expressed their gratitude to the ALT by giving him a letter of thanks. The ALT also gave a letter of thanks and praise to each student for his or her good work in English activities. His handmade letters made the students warm and happy. But, on the other hand, they were heartbroken to think that after this parting they would never see him again. Through this activity, students would learn that expressing their own thoughts and intentions while respecting the positions of others should be one of the important factors in promoting international understanding.

3.3. English Activities Presented in Training Seminars

In order for elementary school teachers to take on the challenge of conducting English activities with confidence, a variety of training opportunities are important for them to acquire the necessary skills in English instruction. In fact, many teachers have studied the ideal method of carrying out English activities in various teachers' workshops sponsored by educational institutions such as Boards of Education, elementary schools, universities, and so on. Let us observe some examples of English activities in which the present writer has presented in some seminars.

3.3.1. Activity D: Chants

In order to make their lessons effective and enjoyable, teachers need to set the mood for the lesson and warm up the students for the class. Songs and chants used at the beginning could smooth transitions to activities that follow. Let us take chants for example. Activities in which students speak English to a rhythm are effective for setting the mood for the lesson and familiarizing students with the sounds and rhythms of English. Using the medium of a chant, students could acquire even relatively long expressions quickly while having fun. When they chant with actions, the activities would be more effective in terms of the method of Total Physical Response developed by Asher (1977). The present writer has introduced two chants

shown below and been informed that the chant B was popular with students.

Chant A: I'm happy!

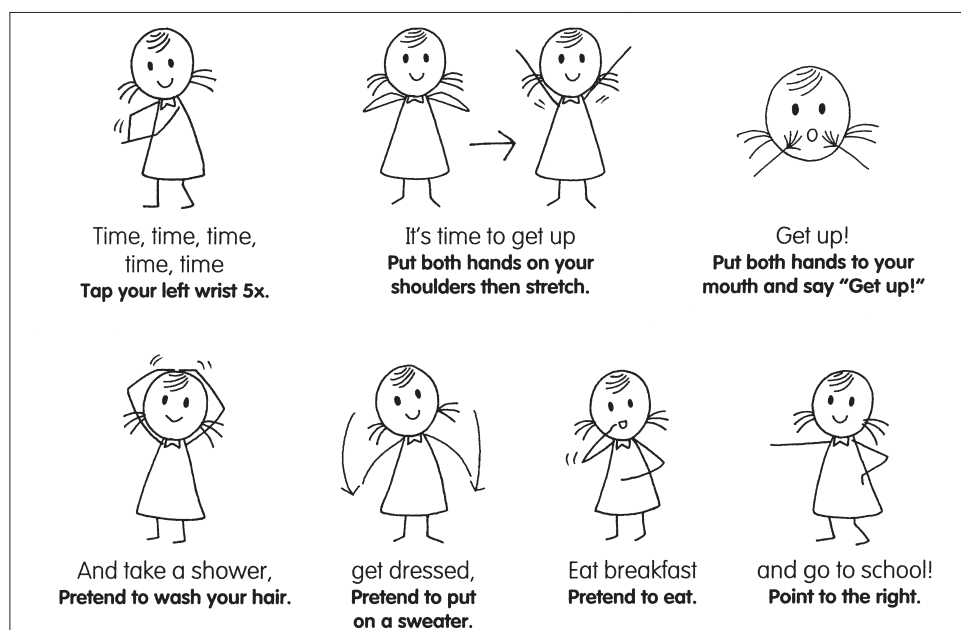
I'm happy (fine, good, fantastic...)
Hey! Hey!
I'm happy.
Are you happy? Yes, I am.
Are you happy? Yes, I am.
I'm happy.
Hey! Hey!
I'm happy.

Chant B: It's time to get up! (with actions)

Time, time, time, time, time
It's time to get up.
Get up!
Time, time, time, time, time
It's time to get up.
It's time to get up
And take a shower, get dressed,
Eat breakfast and go to school!

Graham, M. & Procter, S. (2003)

Actions for "It's time to get up!"



Graham, M. & Procter, S. (2003) p.39

3.3.2. Activity E: Let's Make a Story!

Students enjoy listening to books that feature animals, colors, food, and other familiar topics or aspects of culture visible in daily life events, and that use English expressions in a rhythmical and repetitive fashion. They could quickly learn expressions and terms, and begin to repeat after the teacher. Although it should be remembered, not be part of a process of learning to read, but rather familiarization with the sounds and rhythm of English. The present writer has watched an *English Conversation* class in which third grade students recited the story of *Brown Bear*,

Brown Bear, What Do You See? Monbukagaku-sho (2001) shows several picture books and topics which students enjoy: *Today Is Monday* (days of the week, food, animals) / *The Mitton* (animals) / *I like Me* (daily conversation) / *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (days of the week, food, animals) / *My Name is Alice* (animals, places, alphabet) / *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* (colors, animals). We could add *The Giving Tree* and *Who Will Guide My Sleigh Tonight?* as good picture books for the elementary school students.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar was introduced in a seminar. In this story, students could learn days of the week, food, and animals. After listening to this book, students could enjoy remaking the story. As an example, let us take a passage “On Thursday he ate through four strawberries, but he was still hungry.” A student remakes the sentence by replacing ‘strawberries’ with another word such as ‘carrots.’ Finally seven students make a group and tell the whole story illustrated with their picture cards in front of the classmates. Through this activity, students could enrich their vocabulary and develop their speaking ability.



Let's Make a Story !

4. Conclusion

We have observed five examples of English activities in this paper. They could furnish teachers with information when they conduct English activities at elementary schools. At the end of this paper, we show three points to be considered when selecting language items and materials used in English activities at an elementary school level. Firstly, the activities should focus upon spoken language. Simultaneously introducing English sounds, letters, and grammar would demand too much of students. It might cause them to dislike English. It is important for teachers to have their students become accustomed to the sounds of English by listening to and speaking English. Secondly, teachers should observe what their students do and say in their daily lives and school lives to understand their interests. The language items unrelated to students' daily lives would not motivate students to participate in the activities. In addition, teachers should consider their students' developmental stages. When teachers have third grade and sixth grade students learn the same expressions in the same ways, the learning would be either too difficult or too boring for the students. Thirdly, teachers should select expressions which are basic and useful. Basic expressions would often be used in a variety of situations. It is important to select a

few expressions which are often used.

It is hard for HRTs to conduct English activities when they do not have enough knowledge and experience in English instruction. However, we could expect them to obtain dazzling results because they could understand their students very well, utilize the individuality of their students in organizing activities, develop teaching materials based on fresh concepts, and relate the English activities to other subject contents to incorporate the knowledge and skills gained in these subjects into the English activities.

Notes

- 1 : Monbukagaku-sho investigates the achievements of English activities in public elementary schools all over Japan in 2007. 21,220 out of 21,864 elementary schools fill out the questionnaire about the number of lesson hours, instruction formats, activities, teaching materials and tools, and so on.
- 2 : The *Course of Study* shows that in principle English should be selected for foreign language activities.
- 3 : Obunsha investigates the achievements of English activities in elementary schools and boards of education all over Japan in 2008. 505 elementary schools and 173 boards of education out of 5,000 fill out the questionnaire.

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小学校における英語活動

相 原 和 恵

グローバル化が進む21世紀を生きる人間にとって、外国語能力は欠かせない資質のひとつであろう。現在、世界の国際補助言語として果たす英語の役割は大きく、それに伴って多くの国々が学校教育に英語教育を導入している。現在日本の小学校においては、各学校の判断によって「総合的な学習の時間」の中で英語活動が導入されているが、2011年完全実施の新学期指導要領においては、すべての第5学年及び第6学年が「外国語活動」において英語活動を体験することになる。その指導計画の作成や授業の実施は学級担任教師または外国語活動担当教師が行うが、英語指導に関する知識や経験が十分でないこともあり不安を感じる教師は少なくない。本論では、指導例を紹介することを目的として、相原が水戸市の公立小学校や教師対象の研修会で行った英語活動を示した。