

小学校英語教科におけるICTを活かした指導法 ICT approach for Elementary English Education

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Abstract

本稿ではICTを活用した、小学校の「外国語活動」や「外国語」としての英語教科の教材作りや指導方法について論じたものである。本研究は 学校での英語科指導法の授業研究の充実化を図るための方策を具体的に提案したものである。小学校においてのICTの事情を把握するために現場の視察を行い、教員とメディアリテラシー能力によってICTの運用が異なることが分かった。また、地域によって新世代のパソコンや無線インターネットの普及によって、普通教室でもより簡単にICTを活かすことが可能な環境が整備されていることも把握した。そこで本稿では、ハード面（パソコンやタブレット）とソフト面（オンラインソース）を活かすことで、英語の4技能を効果的に高めることができる教材作りについて提案している。

Keywords : 外国語活動・外国語、英語指導案、メディアリテラシー、EFL、Project-Based Learning

1 Introduction

In recent years English education has been introduced to elementary schools. Officially since 2011, English has been taught as “Foreign Language Activities” or “Gaikokugo Katsudo”. Since the current system has been associated with poor English levels compared with other Asian nations, the government faced the need to improve the current English curriculum. In 2016 the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) made public the new English system that will be scheduled to take place in 2020, after a two-year (2018-2019) transition period.

English will be taught as a formal subject for the first time, in conjunction with designated textbooks and formal grades. English that was taught as part of “Gaikokugo Katsudo” or “Foreign Language Activities” from 5-6 grades will start from third- and fourth-grades. The importance of autonomous learning methods will be required on the next curriculum as well as ICT education and active learning education. ICT has been used in higher education in recent years showing positive results. The easy access to hardware and software is helping to create better environments in various learning areas and it is not anymore limited to computing classes.

This paper tries to present different ICT based materials that could help, support and hint better ideas for a better development of English activities.

2 The current state of ICT in public schools

At the present time, ICT environments in Japanese public schools seem to be limited. Even when all schools are equipped with pcs and projectors, the equipment don't seem to be used regularly. Most of the items are usually portable and in order to use them, they need to be set up in the classroom before or during class which requires a minimum of 5 minutes (picture 1). The tight schedule of the teachers might be one of the main reasons why they are not frequently used.

The current level of digital literacy between the teaching staff it is said to be another issue. Even though computers and tablets are provided in schools the lack of current support such as training programs and software updates are also a common issue.

The typical set up of a class using CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) are as follows:

1. Projector or TV display
2. Notebook
3. Speaker
4. Internet Connection (WIFI)

In order to get a complete ICT environment, access to the internet is undoubtedly essential. Access to internet not only provides unlimited access to audiovisual materials but also make it possible to communicate to other classrooms in the world.

The researchers have visited several schools and almost none of them used internet in class.

Even if schools are connected, internet access becomes another issue. Recently there has been progress in some areas in Osaka where public schools have access to Wi-Fi. But there seem to be a long way until internet access is available in every classroom.



Picture 1 English class including ICT tools.

With the availability of projector and Smartboard in the Japanese class, teachers are often left without real resources when it comes time to integrate ICT into their English lessons. These tools suggestions are informed by real experiences teaching at 2 elementary schools in the prefecture of Hiroshima between 2008 and 2012.

These 2 schools were equipped with Smartboard which were mostly unused and the school had wired internet connection in all classes.

2. 1 Setting up the audio and visual

While most projectors have integrated speakers, the sound quality might not be ideal for language learning. Students often have trouble with listening activities.

In picture 1 we show a speaker that it is normally used in Eikawa lessons. The sound and volume is ideal for classes not larger than 30 student's class, so it is the minimum required for an elementary classroom.

Display setup

Displays must be configured so letters and pictures are easily legible to students. Sometimes a bad configuration where projections are badly display will affect learning. Like screen size, light and focus.

3 Tools for the improvement of 4 skills

The goal of English educators is to improve the students 4 language skills. Familiarity with simple and free tools can often make a big difference when it comes to student engagement. ICT can often be introduced in the classroom with little to no monetary investment. A good example of this is the free Google for Education suite of software when combined with other free Google tools can create a powerful teaching tool.

3. 1 Google for Education in elementary education

Google for Education which includes the whole G-Suite of tools and Google Classroom (Picture 2) is widely used in schools in America and is increasingly popular in higher education in Japan for the ease of use and the interoperability. Schools are recognizing the importance of teaching children how to use collaborative tools since Google is becoming a reference in the world of business.



Picture 2 Google free applications and interoperability

3. 2 Google Maps

Google Maps and Google Earth: In order to introduce the children to world culture, it is possible to take them on virtual expeditions by using the street view feature of Google Maps. The teacher can both introduce new places and ask the students to suggest a journey.

3. 3 Google Expedition

Expedition is a new VR education platform where teacher can take students on virtual tours using a VR headset. The immersive technology dramatically increase the exposure of students to foreign country and culture. Google Expedition offers the student to visit museum and famous places around the world without leaving the classroom.

3. 4 Google Images

English teachers often face a situation where it's easier to translate in Japanese a new word or concept. Google Images is an effective way to illustrate almost any expressions.

3. 5 YouTube

Like Google Images, YouTube can be used to illustrate any concept or idea. Students are familiar with YouTube, but very few are viewing content in English. It is undeniable that YouTube has become a great tool for any language learner.

3. 6 Google Slides and Google Docs

Google Slides is an equivalent to PowerPoint and is perfectly integrated with all the other Google Tools making it very easy to create a presentation for the students. Google Docs are a perfect replacement for Microsoft Word and offer the students to work on the same document from different devices. It is also a great way for teachers to provide feedback to the students.

3. 7 Google Classroom

Google for Education and Google Classroom are available for free for any educational institution. Google Classroom more specifically is a LMS (Learning Management System) which combines all the tools from the G-Suite. With Google Classroom, the teacher can easily communicate with all students, give assignment, collect the assignment, provide feedback and grade them.

3. 8 How to search on the internet?

Learning how to use a search engine is an essential computer literacy skill which can be used in English class or any learning experience. Search is a skill which can help language learner with answering grammar questions and understand usage. Teaching how to search is possibly the most important skill that a student can learn in this day of age. Most of the internet search engines offer filtered search options that are suited for

children. For example “kiddle.co” and “safesearchkids.com” are specific pages that work as a safe search engine. These pages are mostly used in classrooms and at family computers.

4 English teaching resources

There are plenty of digital materials created for language learning. These materials include audiovisual contents and can be found on both CDs and software. In recent years online materials have gain a lot of popularity thanks the propagation of computers as well as tablets and smartphones. There is also a large variety of free sources that provide different kinds of materials. These materials can be downloaded or can be printed as exercise sheets. The reason why it is easy to find free materials on the internet is because there is a lot of content sharing. There are plenty of internet educative pages for English learning that also work as sharing platforms. These means that teachers from all over the world can shared their own materials on these sites for free (Picture 3). On the other hand, English resources in Japanese sites are limited and very often they don't provide free content.



Picture 3 EFL resources on the internet (Google search)

Paid resources

4. 1 Reading support example

Alphabet and phonics with Starfall

<http://www.starfall.com/>

The Starfall website while not completely free is a great resource to introduce students to the basic concept of phonics. The interactive ABC combines phonics with lively pictures, some games and the chance for the students to get introduced to the concept of lower and upper cases letters.

Fridge magnet

http://www.abcya.com/alphabet_number_magnets.htm

Magnet fridges are useful for students to learn to compose or unscramble short English words. The teacher can post the letter T+A+C, show a picture of cat and ask the students to form the word cat by dragging the letters on the screen. This activity works especially well with a Smartboard where the students can use the touch screen functions.

4. 2 Listening support example

YouTube and podcast are two ways to increase the listening activities. Songs, short clips are readily available at all skill levels. Students can also access this information at home.

Following is a list of popular channels in YouTube for English education.

1 Speak English with MisterDuncan

<https://www.youtube.com/user/duncaninchina>

British Council Learning English Kids

<https://www.youtube.com/user/BritishCouncilLEKids>

Learning English with Jennifer

<https://www.youtube.com/user/JenniferESL>

Real English

<https://www.youtube.com/user/realenglish1/about>

4. 3 Speaking support example**Let's play music**

www.letsplaykidsmusic.com

Elearnin

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPzMl_7v9qkg1vJ656NhqOkkjWml5VUQ4

5 Conclusion

Digital literacy education in public schools is progressing slowly in Japan and this includes not only students but also the teaching staff. The ICT environment in public schools differ roughly between areas. In some areas the ICT environment and training programs are helping the school to follow up with digital textbooks and other materials provided by MEXT. Programing education will follow in 2020 which means that all schools will have to clear the minimum requirements for ICT education. This will mean that digital literacy will be applied for different educative tasks.

This paper tries to show the possibilities of ICT education in English classrooms. Most of the tools included in this paper can be not only applied in English curriculums but also into other school subjects such as science and math.

We are looking in the future to work with these tools and see their effectiveness in the new English classes for elementary schools. Even though we promote the usage of ICT educative tools for classes we also believe that a proper balance in the usage of it it's necessary.

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