

# Activities for teaching and learning Kids English

— A second year research project into facilitating a practical foreign language course —

## 教育と学習のための活動Kids English

— 実践的な外国語コースを容易にするための2年次の研究プロジェクト —

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**要旨：**この研究では，こども発達学科のKids Englishプログラムに関連する活動に焦点を当てます。若い学習者が第2言語の学習に興味を持つようにするために，親，教師，教育現場での努力が必要です。さらに，学習の内容は，注目を集めるだけでなく，永続的な印象を残すために魅力的でなければなりません。日本は教育システム全体でより高度なコミュニケーション能力を求め続けていますが，最も重要な段階は学習が楽しいはずの初心者レベルです。基準が満たされるように，Kids Englishのようなカリキュラムは21世紀の特定の固定理念を見つける必要があります。うまくいけば，この2年次の研究は正しい方向に進み，現代の英語の習得目標を達成し，将来の教師を適切な言語指導の方法で訓練することができます。

### 1.0 Introduction

This project has been arranged to indicate the intentions of building a productive Kids English language and education program simultaneously. Through describing the syllabus content the reader will be able to identify current pedagogical practices in facilitating a language course for future teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL). As this study is in its second year the investigation will draw on comparisons from last year's published research. The language exercises and explanations of classroom activities will support the ongoing task of preparing preschool teachers for the needs of the twenty-first century. In the first paper published in the previous year, the study focused on constructivist views on implementing language targets while quantitatively analysing data from those exercises. Again in this paper the notion of building second language communication on previously acquired

knowledge will be address; likewise reflections on the results will be examined through observation and readings. Unlike the previous year, this investigation will concentrate primarily on qualitative research to generate ideas for continuing the development of English teacher training for young learners. In a general sense, the Kids English program has enjoyed the freedom of methods and practice in the first year. Although, ideally the aim is to establish a curriculum that will show results in terms of fostering teaching skill and advancing English language development that future employers can acknowledge.

### 1.1 Background / Overview

Ideally, the Kids English project should meet requirements to justify the course content while overtly indicating exactly what students have learnt through practical games and activities. Thereupon, these skills specialize in language acquisition for

younger learners. Providing an easy to follow step by step approach provides the nucleus for justifying the language gains while instigating techniques in enhance teaching skills. In that respect, rationalizing how students are to be evaluated is imperative to producing qualified teachers who can meet the needs of the teaching profession. Currently in Japan there is not a standard teaching practice for English instructors of younger learners which are considered the standard. Hence, the push to create programs which can overtly recognise and assess standards of practice is clearly required throughout Japan.

The Kids English program has fewer members this year than last with 11 students or Pre-Service English Teachers (PSET) in first year and 7 PSET in the second year. In second semester, one first year student quit and four second year students discontinued. The reasons given were an overcrowded curriculum which caused class timeslots to clash. Students chose to do sports, music or to focus on getting an additional primary school qualification, making their four year undergraduate status a triple degree. This was a significant drop from over 20 members in the first year. Naturally, having students with multiple interests can factor into the amount of time they can spend on mastering skills. For students that also belong to the Marching Band, they have practice sessions almost every weekday and have regular competitions on the weekends. As for the students involved in sports club activities, they also have practice session and commitments. On top of that, many students have part time work in the evenings in employment workplaces such as family restaurants and convenience stores. All of these responsibilities take their attention away from time to develop foundations of English. Also, it leaves them so tired that they are prone to fall asleep during class. Therein, for the program to maintain a level of enthusiasm and momentum, the activities are forced to be active, stimulation and above all rhythmical. Furthermore, Hayes, Mills, Christie, Lingard (2006) express productive pedagogies rely on supportive staff, students and people in the institution to work

together. Consequently, cooperation between all members of the university community is imperative to ensure success.

For the PSET to cognitively learn new concepts and build personal understanding they are required to construct information in a logical order they can internalize by themselves. Piaget (1926, cited in McInerney & McInerney, 2006) initially, coined the idea of schema. In his view learning occurred within the individual rather than transported from one to another. Expanding on this view Driver et al (1994 cited in McInerney & McInerney, 2006) refer the term more broadly as social constructivism which centres on learning from our environmental surrounding. Those messages children receive from their parents, siblings, neighbours, teachers and other people who come into their lives. The Kids English learning curve appears to be at a steady pace for all individuals members. Yet, at this 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year stage, they do not show high enough levels of leadership skills to teach a class by themselves.

Another distraction for first year learners is one of the members had lived in New Zealand for two years. She has near native level in spoken English. Whenever the teacher communicates, all the first year members would ask her for the translation. Often they would speak in Okayama dialect and ask her, "Nanto yuton", which is a very casual way of asking, "What did he say?" inevitably, students were only learning through her translation and not trying to conceptualize the English spoken by the teacher. Fortunately, through this method student did still analyse the language content even if it was not the intention of the teacher to do so.

For second year PSET that take three sessions of Kids English per week in second semester, they were able to have 5 New Zealand exchange students participate in Monday classes. Through this exchange once a week, the PSET could engage in cultural understandings and language discussion. As the Associate Teacher (teacher in charge of the class) is in his mid forties and the New Zealanders

(TAs) are in their late teens early twenties, this was an excellent chance for students to listen to authentic language from peers their own age. The TAs, were all in voluntary nonpaid positions and did not receive credit for participating, yet they were able to make friends with Japanese PSET's outside of their department and away from their small group, this was worth the effort for them to include this subject. One of the issues that faced one of the PSET's was Second Language Learners (SLL) can take a long time to answer in English. In the case of young people, they like to talk in banter with the conversation jumping from person to person in a catch ball like scenario. When the Japanese students took a long time to answer questions the momentum dropped and conversation ceased. Savage (1991) suggests the teacher should find a balance in pacing the class and 75% of students should be able to keep up. The teacher made an issue of this and asked the New Zealanders how they could counterbalance this situation and how should they handle a student's that take a long time to process second language with a response? As a group, they all made comments such as being patient and not rushing them was important. They all tended to be empathetic to the students needs. One of the New Zealanders summarized the TA experienced by sending the teacher a message pointing out, *"I get to meet new people and become friends. I can also learn from them and different aspects of their culture."* It would be favourable to have TAs in all Kids English Classes in the future, yet probably not feasibly possible.

## 2.0 Language tools for learning English

As English is not a set system of language forms, learners are required to activate dynamic patterns of communication. High frequency phrases such as, "one, two, three", or "once upon a time, in a land far away", or "are you ready to Rock'n Roll" are repetitive essentially in music and storytelling. Combining high frequency phrases with low frequency expressions assists in building language forms, so the SLL they can expand their regular usages by adding to these phrases for different

situations (Ellis, 2002a).

One of the main methods for learning English in IPU throughout the curriculum is by listening to music while performing a cloze text. Many of these activities which concentrate on building on high frequency phrases at IPU follow on from the training of a former Dean in the New Zealand campus and respected teacher in the field of language teaching John Fanselow. Expanding on his work in Fanselow (1976) suggests teachers should scrutinize and explores SSL through unconventional teaching methods. His theory recommends the teacher to do the opposite of what they normally would do in class by changing routine. The reason behind this is the classroom is often not the most ideal place to learn language due to the discourse used is often different to what you would hear outside of the class. An example of practice use of English is in figure 1.0. Students would listen to the song two or three times and try to guess the answer. In figure 1.1 students receive the translation giving making the cognitive process more relaxed. Ideally, the learner would benefit from more challenging activities, yet that is where the teacher may build activities a little more difficult and challenging over a period of a few weeks. At the end of a cycle of learning, the student should be able to speak (sing) or write a phrase in both first and second language.

Moving away from pop music and turning the attention to children's themes, the syllabus of most classes at IPU also included Music and Movement from the, "Let's Sing Together CD". One of the noticeable aspects of children's songs is the harmonies are the same with the lyrics changed. In songs 2.0 and 2.1 as well as 2.2 and 2.3 both tunes are identical. Therefore, the karaoke version of the songs will be played and the teacher can sing the different song's lyrics. In the 2.4 to 2.6 songs, they were classic songs created by Patty and Mildred Hill sisters from Kentucky. The purpose of the songbook maladies was designed for kindergarten students to get connected in learning to communicate.

In the process of investigation short stories, figure 3.0 to 3.6 is a collection of activities from the children's book "The Ginger Bread Man" retold by Sue Arengo in 1998. The amount of children's literature is enormous and the concepts of pre-reading, reading and post-reading activities are

very useful with support from a parent, teacher or elder. Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976) suggest while carrying out activities they call, "scaffolding" the young learner becomes interesting because they can break down the learning content and make it easier for them to understand. They can point out

Figure 1.0 {

- Little Mix cloze question:
- Last night I \_\_\_\_\_ cause I realized the truth, they can't love me like you.
- Answer:
- Last night I lay in bed so blue. Cause I realized the truth, they can't love me like you

Figure 1.1 {

- It seems like gravity keeps pulling us back down  
(重力が俺たちを引き摺り込もうとしてるみたいだ)
- Don't go it's a mighty long fall  
(行くな そっちは奈落の底だ)
- When you know time is up  
(時間切れだと気付いてるなら)

Figure 1.0

2.0	Head Shoulders Knees and Toes
2.1	Red Yellow Blue and Green
2.2	Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
2.3	ABC's
2.4	Good Morning To You
2.5	Good Bye to You
2.6	Happy Birthday To You

Figure 2.0

3.0 Vocabulary Short Vowel Sounds beginning with 'A' woman, man has (z), happy, can, catch. Take all short vowel sounds 'AEIOU' words from the text and practice using them in activities before reading.
3.1 Listen and Repeat to the words. The teacher says the words first students repeat. Do this activity twice with the students saying the word first and teacher echoing next.
3.2 Read until the short vowel letter to enthuces the short vowel sound.
3.3 Change speeds when the students have understood the pronunciation.
3.4 Group Chorus "Run Run, yes you can, but you can't catch me I'm the Gingerbread Man". This phrase the students practice and master, before you start to read the book and is used 4 times during the story.
3.5 Read the story (Graded Reader level 2). This book should take under 5 minutes to read. Naturally, reading children's books requires changing the pitch of your voice and eliciting questions during the story.
3.6 In the case of 'The Ginger Bread Man', the story has a tragic ending. The meaning of this can be used as a topic for discussion and/or reflection.

Figure 3.0



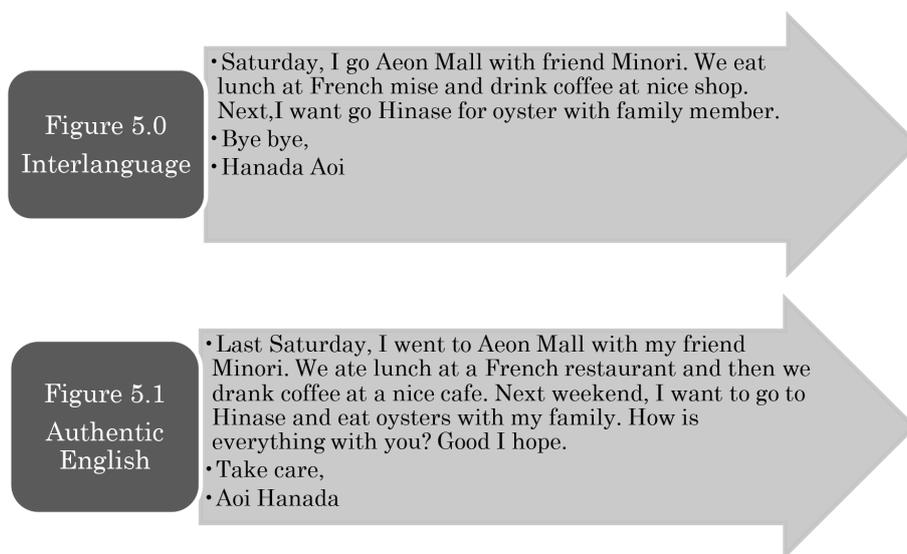


Figure 5.0

for students in the department of child development.

### 3.0 Comparisons from the initiation of Kids English to this sophomore year and results

In the first year PSETs worked from the Firsthand Student textbook and in this year they changed to Step Into English 2 textbook Graham-Marr and McCandie (2013). Overall, the dialogues from the text were at a level between 200-350 points in TOEIC for both books. What did make a difference was the curriculum included another IPU teacher to teach TOEIC and TOEIC Bridge preparation courses. This meant the PSET was able to build on their foundation of English skills from two teachers. The TOEIC teacher is native Japanese, so the PSETs could also benefit from the ability to explain in clear first language. In a general sense, the activities were all routine Present-Practice-Production method in both years with minor alterations. At this stage, it would appear the two years have seen progress in marginal terms, yet the standard of English has not exhibited any noticeable change. As a teachers view, explanations have shortened and expectations have become lower in terms of student commitment to stay on task. Realistically, expecting students to focus on teacher centred curriculum as it is now would be unrealistic. Therefore, the writers teaching style is in the process of change (development). Undeniably,

this approach to teaching will have an effect on the program in the future.

### 4.0 Future Direction for Research into Kids English at IPU

For current 2<sup>nd</sup> year students moving into 3<sup>rd</sup> year, they will have the opportunity to study abroad at the New Zealand Campus for a semester. Whereas, the 1<sup>st</sup> year students are in the process of participating in a Cambridge Knowledge of English Test (KET). With this qualification they will be able to use it when they search for employment after graduating. The Cambridge system also has a Teachers Knowledge Test (TKT) which could be beneficial and could influence the IPU curriculum content in the future. In 2018, IPU will provide students with a degree in early childhood studies, for the members of Kids English they will also receive a Soshi Gakuen (IPU parent company) certification of English studies. Whether to continue with a Cambridge system or create a system focussing on phonics and routines for younger learners will need to be decided over the next year. Whichever direction the course takes, the prospective results for the program will need to show clear goals for students to aim to achieve.

## 5.0 Conclusion

In this current age as education moves from twentieth century to twenty first century techniques and practices, the Kids English program has moved in a positive direction from its first year. In the progress of growing one year older, the games and activities have reflected the needs of its PSET which can be transferable into English language development. Introducing new activities that can be evaluated and graded by an official measuring system will help to give purpose to the curriculum content. Also, having clear language targets will provide direction for all of the members from both learning and teaching backgrounds. Hopefully, this program can inspire future English teachers to develop their own skills while they in turn help others.

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<i>1996: I was born in Osaka, Japan.</i>
<i>1997: I moved to Echime with my family.</i>
<i>1998: My little brother was born</i>
<i>1999: I was in hospital for three months, because I was sick.</i>
<i>2000: I started kindergarten and made a lot of new friends.</i>
<i>2001: My family moved to a new house located nearby.</i>
<i>2002: I spent a lot of time with my grandfather and grandmother.</i>
<i>2003: I began elementary school and I started playing basketball.</i>
<i>2004: I went to Korea with my family for a holiday.</i>
<i>2005: My grandmother died.</i>
<i>2006: I won a big game of basketball for my school.</i>
<i>2007: I leant how to swim every day during summer holidays.</i>
<i>2008: I played with my brother every day.</i>
<i>2009: I went for a trip to Kyoto, Nara and Osaka then started junior high school.</i>
<i>2010: I made a lot of new friends.</i>
<i>2011: I started to play the piano.</i>
<i>2012: I started high school.</i>
<i>2013: I changed high schools.</i>
<i>2014: I stopped playing basketball and focussed on music.</i>
<i>2015: I began IPU.</i>
<i>2016: Here I am.</i>

Figure 6.0

- Constructing learning* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp.2-34). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Person Education.
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