

研究主題 授業改善を目指す評価の在り方

－アクション・リサーチの手法を生かした授業実践－

## 1. Background of Study

It has been said that formative assessment deals with evaluating ongoing progress and summative assessment deals with final attainment. In other words, former studies regard the period of assessment as the essential difference in approaches to assessment.

However, Kanatani(2003) proposes that a more important difference is whether modification of teaching is done as the result of assessment. This study is concerned with the improvement of English classes through modification.

Therefore it should be meaningful that his study focuses on the procedure and the phases of assessment. The assessment stage is divided into pre-teaching, while-teaching, post-teaching. This classification was designed to clarify the aim of assessment.

This study was organized to follow an Action Research cycle of lesson planning, practice, observation and reflection. Action Research seemed the most appropriate research model due to its systematic process of searching for future direction by correcting and analyzing classroom data (Wallace, 1998: p.4).

## 2. Action Research

### 2.1 The Definition of Action Research

Action Research refers to a teacher-initiated classroom investigation which seeks to increase the teacher's understanding of classroom teaching and learning, and to bring about change in classroom practice. Action Research typically involves small-scale investigative projects in the teacher's own classroom, and consists of a number of phases which often recur in cycles: Problem Identification, Preliminary Investigation, Hypothesis, Plan Intervention, Outcome, and Reporting. (Richards and Lockart, 1994: p.12)

It is done by systematically collecting data on the teacher's everyday practice and analyzing it in order to formulate some directions about what his/her future practice should be. This process is the essence of Action Research (Wallace, 1998: p.4).

### 2.2 Action Research Procedure

#### ① Problem Identification

First of all, teachers should identify the problems they are being confronted with in the classroom. It is essential to limit the problems to those which can be coped with in the classroom.

#### ② Preliminary Investigation

The actual situation should be investigated by means of questionnaires, vocabulary or achievement tests, and worksheets.

#### ③ Hypothesis

Based on previous research, teachers propose some ways to improve the teaching.

#### ④ Plan Intervention

Teachers plan to carry out some modified teaching practice, based on the hypotheses in ③. Teachers should set realistic goals. The research period should be long enough to judge the effects of the treatment, but short enough to allow reflection and modification of the teaching. We found 2-3 weeks lessons (6-10 hours) ideal.

⑤ Outcome

Teachers should verify the effects of the treatment on the basis of the observation and questionnaires. If the goal has been reached, the teacher goes forward the next step. If not, the teacher should try to find the cause of the failure and revise the hypotheses or the treatment. Then he/she should repeat the same cycle or go forward the next step making up for an incomplete hypothesis or treatment.

⑥ Reporting

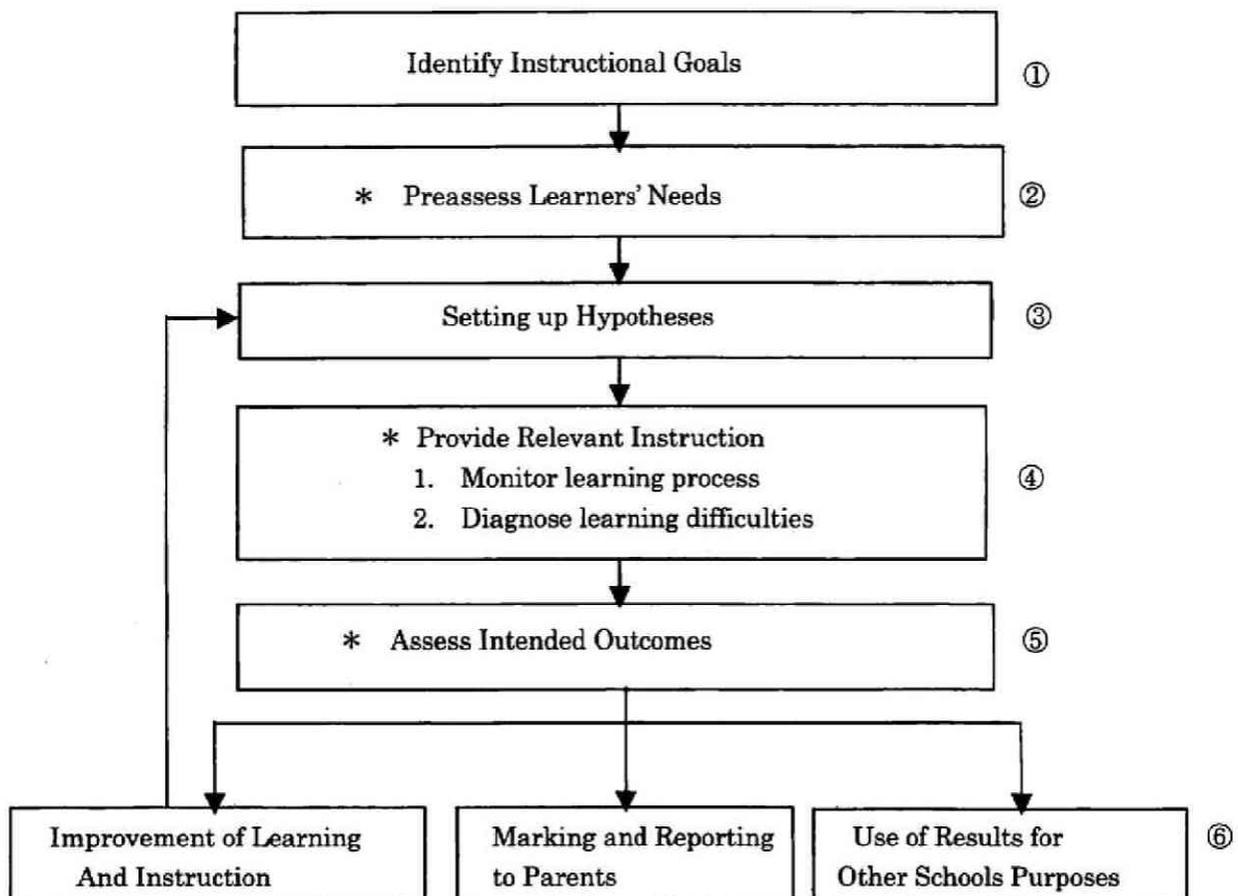
To report the outcomes is one of the most important factors of Action Research. It not only gives teachers incentives to overcome difficulties but also prevents them from falling into self-satisfaction.

### 2.3 Assessment and the Instructional Process

Teachers should assess students before, during and after each lesson and give feedback to them when they use the method of Action Research.

Figure 1, based on Gronlund (2001) shows an example of assessment and the instructional process. Teachers assess students or give feedback to them at the stages marked with an asterisk. The stages of Action Research are labeled ① to ⑥.

Figure 1: (Linna Gronlund 2001: p.11, modified)



### 3. Case Studies that Illustrate Application of Action Research

#### 3.1 Case One

##### ① Problem Identification and ② Preliminary Investigation

One feature of the school where I work was the students' lack of self-confidence in studying. Their failure in school and the awareness that they are lacking in basic knowledge contributed to their low self-esteem. In 2003, I found myself teaching two classes of third year students in English writing class three hours a week. To obtain information about them, I conducted a survey by using a questionnaire. Here is the response I received.

- About 75% of students answered that they don't like English.
- About 85% of students thought English was too difficult for them to understand.
- About 92% of students do not study English at all.

By observing the first 2 or 3 classes, I felt they had no interest in learning English because they did not concentrate on the class. They did not want to spare time for studying. This meant that even when they learned something, they could not retain what they had learned. To obtain data about their English ability, I had them take the STEP test, third grade. I found only 2 students out of 52 could pass the test. Considering the fact that third grade is made for students who have finished junior high school education, almost all students must be bewildered studying English with high school text books.

An open-ended questionnaire was also administered to find out why students do not like English. Their opinions boiled down to the following four categories.

1. It is difficult to read English.
2. It is difficult to remember words.
3. It is difficult to understand grammar.
4. It is not necessary to study English.

On the other hand, 70% of the students said they felt the necessity of English, and 91% of the students wanted to acquire the ability to speak English. This raised the following research question: how could the class be organized to have students attend class with pleasure, improve their basic English ability and overcome their sense of inferiority regarding their English ability?

##### ③ Hypotheses (H shows Hypothesis)

To cope with this research question, the following 6 hypotheses were formulated:

- <H 1>More communication with students outside the classroom would build a better relationship and lead the students towards developing a positive attitude towards learning in the classroom.
- <H 2>Starting class with fun activities would lead students towards increasing their positive attitude for learning in the classroom.
- <H 3>Reading aloud and copying words or phrases in sync would help students build vocabulary.
- <H 4>Activities using easy English would give the students a sense of achievement.
- <H 5>Giving homework regularly would increase students' study time.

- <H 6> Giving tasks such as essays and recitation and assessing them among the students would lead students towards studying harder.

#### ④ Plan Intervention and ⑤ Outcome

This section reports the response to these hypotheses including the results of a questionnaire. I asked the students how they evaluated my class by using an unsigned questionnaire so students could express themselves freely. ○ stands for positive opinion and ● stands for negative one.

Regarding<H 1>- I intentionally arranged to spend time with the students during break time and after school. Then I conducted informal interviews with them regarding their English progress and English class to obtain information. This gave me a lot of opportunities to encourage slow learners and to give them advice. In addition, they started coming to me for questions to complete their tasks outside class.

Regarding<H 2>- Each class was begun with a five minute word hint game. This was a pair work activity; one student turns his/her back to the blackboard and another student has to explain a word written on the blackboard in English. Even though they were poor in English, they try to explain the word using English language and by using a lot of gestures. This game is very useful to give them a sense of class unity and to get their attention at the beginning of class.

The questionnaire responses to this topic were as follows.

**Do you think the word hint game is useful for learning English?**

YES 32 · NO 7 · NOT SURE 13

**What is your opinion about the word hint game?**

○It's fun. I want to do it more. It's useful.

○It's difficult. I have to think hard.

●We don't have to do it. It's just killing time.

Regarding<H 3>- Because several ways of reading aloud were used, the students had to recite new words and key sentences at least fifteen times. Some students complained that they had to stand up and sit down many times in class but this body movement also helped them keep their concentration. To encourage them, I explained how reading and copying words in sync activates the brain. After working on a few worksheets, they realized this way was very useful. I'm afraid I didn't go far enough to check how much their vocabulary increased but they accepted it as a way of learning.

The questionnaire responses to this topic were as follows.

**Do you think reading and writing words and sentences in sync is useful for learning English?**

YES 40 · NO 3 · NOT SURE 8 · NO ANSWER 1

**What is your opinion about reading and writing words and sentences in sync?**

○I could remember the word. It is surly helpful.

○We wouldn't study this way at home, so I want to study this way in class more.

●Even though I could remember some words, they were temporary.

●It is tiresome and bothersome and I don't like it.

Regarding<H 4>- When introducing new material, the students dictated key sentences as a listening quiz. For the part they could not dictate, I allowed them to write down the sound in Japanese. With this small change in dictation, they showed some persistence to get the sentence right. I also

introduced find-your-partner games or English card games, which are commonly used in junior high schools. Almost all students worked hard at these games. They led the whole class towards a positive attitude for learning.

The questionnaire responses to this topic were as follows.

**Do you think listening quiz is useful for learning English?**

YES 41 · NO 2 · NOT SURE 9

**What is your opinion about the listening quiz?**

- I am happy when I can dictate without any mistakes.
- I tried to distinguish the subtle sound differences.
- It is useless for me because I can't write English.

Regarding<H 5>- The homework was a worksheet for reading and writing words and phrases in sync. I assessed them as part of an end of term evaluation, the rate of submission was good but they did not consider the time for homework as study time outside class. Actually many of them work on homework during break time and after school. It seems that the word "homework" would elicit an image of studying at home. So I decided not to put much importance on the outcome of the survey.

The questionnaire responses to this topic were as follows.

**Do you think homework is useful for learning English?**

YES 30 · NO 4 · NOT SURE 18

**What is your opinion about homework?**

- It is bothersome but I think it is useful.
- Reading aloud makes me forget the amount of the homework.
- I want you to reduce the amount of homework.
- Even though I do the homework, I think I would forget the words soon.

Regarding<H 6>- The students in this school are not used to getting their ideas organized or presenting them in front of people. So I made it a rule that they had to come to me at least once to accomplish their tasks. The rule helped me give advice to the students and encourage them to challenge the tasks. In addition, I learned each student's strong or weak points. For the essay task, some students had English teachers translate almost all the sentences but they seemed to enjoy doing it. I conducted a performance test twice in the first semester, and videoed them. The first test was a group performance with three students. I had the students assess the performance by watching the video which they seemed to enjoy. The second test was a self-introduction. For some students, it seemed that it was quite stressful because they had to perform alone. I also had them assess their performance but that time I added self-assessment too. These performance tests changed how the students spent their break time because they tried to remember each line at school. Some students brought small things from home for their presentation. What I was surprised by was that those who were very poor at English remembered all their lines and performed very well.

The questionnaire responses to this topic were as follows.

**What is your opinion about the essay task?**

- I haven't had any experience writing an essay in English; it gave me a chance to study.
- I used the dictionary voluntarily.

● I couldn't write well. It was very difficult.

● I didn't want to do it.

Do you think the presentation is useful for learning English?

YES 24 · NO 6 · NOT SURE 22

What is your opinion about the presentation?

○ It was fun and I'm glad to listen to my friends' English.

○ To remember the script is hard but it is very useful for studying English.

● It is embarrassing. I don't want to do it.

● After the presentation finished, I forgot all the script.

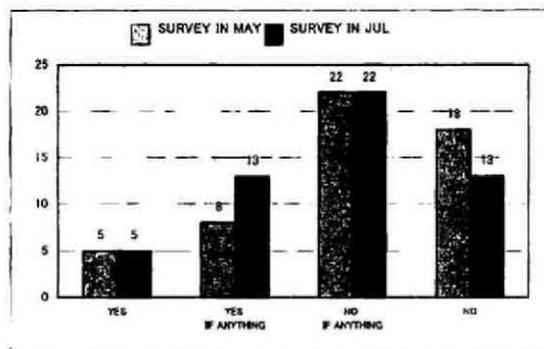
With the outcome of these hypotheses, it is obvious that the students did not reject learning. And they even tried hard to study what they can handle. Through the intervention of these hypotheses their attitude towards English class is improving little by little. Regarding the outcome of hypothesis 4, I do not worry so much as the students worked well to submit their homework and to complete the tasks. However, regarding the improvement of their English ability, this was not satisfactory. For the second semester, I combined hypothesis 2 and 3 then formulated hypothesis 7 to have students build basic English ability, because good vocabulary is the key factor to improve their English.

Regarding (H 7) Starting each class with rapid reading with basic English after reading aloud and copying of words and key sentences of the material gives the students a sense of achievement and help to build vocabulary.

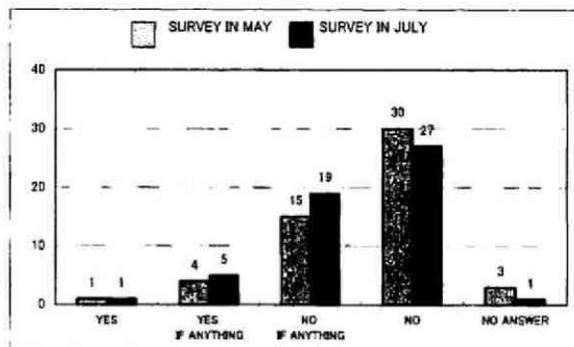
## ⑥ Reporting

The comparison between the questionnaire conducted in May and in July is shown in these charts.

(1) Do you like English?



(2) Are you good at English?



The outcome was as follows:

Do you think your English class is useful for learning English?

YES 34 · NO 0 · NOT SURE 18

What is your opinion about your English class?

○ The teacher's way of teaching was different from other teachers and I thought it was very enjoyable and easy to understand.

○ We had a lot of games and we had to present ourselves in front of everyone. That made the atmosphere tense but the games were fun.

○ I don't like English but your class was fun so I looked forward to it.

● I didn't like to speak in front of my classmates.

● Sometimes it was fun, sometimes it was not. I want to have more enjoyable classes.

During the first semester the students' attitudes towards learning improved. There was not such a negative atmosphere to learning English now compared with the classes in April. One reason for that is the material they learned was quite basic and they could get a sense of achievement. There were several demanding tasks too, but they coped with them quite well. Action Research gave me the chance to develop practical activities and strategies for self-reflection. This research isn't finished yet. I will continue Action Research program in the second semester.

### 3.2 Case Two -The First Stage-

#### ① Problem Identification ② Preliminary Investigation

March: I was allotted to teach the third year students in English classes for two hours a week. Before the teaching started, I had some information about the students I was going to teach from the teachers who had taught them before. These are the features of the students that I was told.

1. Most of the students think that the most important activity in English classes is to be able to translate a text into Japanese. Their concentration is the highest when they are writing down the Japanese translation.
2. Few of them have the habit of doing homework or preparation for the class because of low motivation and the belief that English is too difficult to understand and to translate into Japanese.

#### ③ Hypotheses (H shows Hypothesis.)

April: Based upon the information I had before, the first hypotheses were made as follows.

- ⟨H1⟩ Using chunks will make the students accustomed to the way of reading left to right without translation into Japanese.
- ⟨H2⟩ Emphasizing the grasp of the outline, main points, and contents of the discourse without translating into Japanese, the students might get accustomed to the reading without translation and might be able to read English faster little by little and with a little more confidence and eagerness.
- ⟨H3⟩ Using the handouts which have some example sentences and some aids for reading the texts, the students might stir their readiness for reading texts and lead to the better attitude toward studying English in and out of the classroom.

#### ④ Plan Intervention ⑤ Outcome

From April to June: Based on these hypotheses some modified lessons were taught. After the lessons, surveys to the student were done in order to formulate the first hypotheses and assess whether the proposed ways of teaching were viable.

Survey results were as follows:

- I gradually got used to the reading without translation.
- The handouts are easy to work on.
- There are so many words in the texts or the example sentences whose meanings I don't understand that I tend to consult the dictionaries or use the translation without guessing the meanings or the outlines.
- I like to speak more fluently and more naturally according to the context but I don't understand the techniques of speaking very much.

## Case Two -The Second Stage-

### ① Problem Identification ② Preliminary Investigation

July: From the survey it appeared that the students had some difficulties in doing the activities because of their vocabulary. Therefore, to check the students' vocabulary level, some vocabulary level tests were done. The results of the tests showed that the vocabulary levels of the students turned out to be not so high. (About 30% of the students didn't understand the five hundred most frequent words fully.) That fact seemed to have a serious influence on the willingness to grasp the outline, main points, and contents of the discourse without translating into Japanese.

### ③ Hypotheses

Based upon the above observations, one more hypothesis was added to the first three.

(H4) Using the basic vocabulary might make the student activities easier to tackle, build the students' vocabulary, and improve attitudes toward studying English.

From the (H4), two points were considered in planning the September lessons.

1. The vocabulary used in the handouts or oral Q&A activity should be limited to the basic words.
2. To get the students used to the words they came across in the textbooks and establish their vocabulary, materials for rapid reading should be adopted.

### ④ Plan Intervention

In September lessons the plan is to have students read the rapid reading material.

(1000word level, about70~100words/time) at the beginning of each lesson.(See Example )

Example: (Michael Jackson, A Twist of Fate—Reading with English Dictionary, 2000: p.8)

It grew late. The moon was shining beautifully. Then Juliet came out on the balcony. She was thinking of Romeo. Not knowing Romeo was in the garden, she talked to herself, "O Romeo, Romeo! Why are you Romeo? Leave your family and change your name. If you cannot do this, tell me that you love me. And I will leave my family." Juliet loves me, too! Romeo's heart was filled with happiness. "Please call me your love, not Romeo," he called to Juliet.

September: After some lessons, a survey to the students was made to know how effective the experimental lessons were in encouraging the students to study English and what problems were left to solve.

### ⑤ Outcome

October: The questionnaire and the results are as follows: (From Q1 to Q5 were surveyed twice at the end of July and at the end of September; 5 is the maximum and 1 is the minimum.)

Q1.Did you prepare for the class?

|           | 5 | 4  | 3  | 2  | 1 | average |
|-----------|---|----|----|----|---|---------|
| July      | 1 | 8  | 12 | 17 | 1 | 2.7     |
| September | 2 | 11 | 13 | 6  | 2 | 3.1     |

Q2.Did you try to do the reading activities in class?

|           | 5 | 4  | 3  | 2 | 1 | average |
|-----------|---|----|----|---|---|---------|
| July      | 8 | 14 | 16 | 1 | 0 | 3.7     |
| September | 7 | 12 | 13 | 2 | 0 | 3.7     |

Q3.After the class, to what extent did you understand the content?

|           | 5 | 4  | 3  | 2 | 1 | average |
|-----------|---|----|----|---|---|---------|
| July      | 1 | 7  | 23 | 8 | 0 | 3.0     |
| September | 0 | 16 | 11 | 7 | 0 | 3.3     |

Q4.To what extent did you accomplish your handouts?

|           | 5  | 4  | 3 | 2 | 1 | average |
|-----------|----|----|---|---|---|---------|
| July      | 19 | 15 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4.3     |
| September | 17 | 9  | 5 | 3 | 0 | 4.2     |

Q5. To what extent did you try to do the speaking activities?

|           | 5 | 4 | 3   | 2   | 1 | average |
|-----------|---|---|-----|-----|---|---------|
| July      | 2 | 4 | 2 2 | 1 1 | 0 | 2. 9    |
| September | 4 | 7 | 1 8 | 5   | 0 | 3. 3    |

(From Q6 to Q10 were surveyed at the end of September.)

Q6. Do you think chunks are useful in understanding English?

YES 1 7 NO 3 NOT SURE 1 4

Q7. Do you think you are getting accustomed to the reading with chunks without using Japanese handouts?

YES 1 9 NO 2 NOT SURE 1 3

Q8. Do you think the handouts whose vocabulary was limited to the basic words became easier to tackle?

YES 1 7 NO 2 NOT SURE 1 5

Q9. Do you enjoy the rapid reading activity?

YES 2 3 NO 3 NOT SURE 8

Q10. Do you feel it easier to read English sentences which are not divided into chunks but are using basic vocabulary as you do the rapid reading activity?

YES 1 5 NO 2 NOT SURE 1 7

## ⑥ Reporting

⟨H1⟩ : It seems likely that using chunks will make the students accustomed to the way of reading left to right without translation into Japanese because in Q6 and Q7, less than 10 % of the students says "no".

⟨H2⟩ : The figures in Q2 and Q3 don't show a significant change in the students' attitude toward reading without translation and grasping the outlines. But a certain student whose vocabulary level is not so high says, "It's still difficult for me to read and grasp the outline but I vaguely understand what it is for." And they seemed to become accustomed to rapid reading and to feel it was easier to read some amount of materials little by little judging from the manners of having the mid-term examination.

⟨H3⟩ : The figures of Q1, Q2, Q4, and Q5 suggest that using the handouts including some aids for reading could make their attitude toward studying English in and out of the classroom better gradually. These are the results between only the six lessons in September. So if this kind of lessons is continued, we hope these figures will get better.

⟨H4⟩ : It could be judged that using the basic vocabulary is effective in making students' attitude better from the figures of Q1, Q8, Q9, and Q10. Students don't seem to be completely convinced of the effectiveness of using the basic words considering from the percentages of the answer "not sure" in Q8 and Q10. But we could look forward to the change in the future because it was found that they enjoyed the rapid reading activity according to the figures of Q9. Students might realize their importance of using the basic words when they are given the word test of the rapid reading material or the vocabulary level test afterward.

To consolidate the results reported above, the experimental approach could be judged as an effective way to lead the students to study English positively. Whereas the students began with a negative attitude to English, they now enjoy the activities in classes more than at the beginning of the year, especially the rapid reading activity. Through these case studies, I felt the importance of allowing learners to give feedback to the teachers. Students seemed to appreciate their opinions being considered through the questionnaires and from doing the activities which are more appropriate to their English level and their interests in English. I feel that both the students and myself will be encouraged by this project to learn (or in my case teach) English and will be able to improve the English lessons even more together. I hope to continue this method for the even greater improvement.

## 4. Conclusion

It has been suggested that Action Research is useful for improving students' motivation to study English and your teaching. It is to be hoped that if the project were longer, not only students' motivation to study English but also their ability to communicate in English would be improved. As all teachers know, each class is different as well as each school is. So there is no "one size fits all" method to teach. To cope with this diversity, you should reflect on your teaching and as Wallace puts it, "it is done by systematically collecting data on our everyday practice and analyzing it in order to come to some decisions about what your future practice should be." (Wallace, 1998, p4)

Action Research is one of the best means of our professional development. Why don't you try Action Research to improve your teaching?

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