

What is an Ideal English Learning Material for Junior High School Students?

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to know what students think about their English textbooks. We are also interested in a textbook that they want to use. In order to know the actual situations of textbooks and the ideal learning materials, questionnaires were sent to about one thousand junior and senior high school students and fifty junior high school English teachers in Japan.

The result shows that the students want to use textbooks that have topics about their hometown. However, there are not enough textbooks which include many attractive topics for students. In order to develop ideal English learning materials, the results of our study and some implications will be presented at the 17th PAAL Conference.

Keywords

English education, English learning materials, junior high school, local topics

Introduction

At the 16th PAAL Conference, we reported that there are some gaps between the present situation of English education in Japan and the purposes shown in the Course of Study, which says communication activities are important. Also, students want to take classes where communication activities are carried out for using English, and students think they can improve their communication abilities through communication activities. We think that teaching materials play very important roles in conducting many communication activities in classes and motivating students. Therefore, based on the results of the survey, we decided to make an ideal learning material for junior high school students.

Research

Our surveys about actual situations of English textbooks and ideal learning materials were done. About one thousand questionnaires were sent to junior and senior high school students and junior high school English teachers in Japan. This questionnaire consists of fourteen items.

Analysis

The figure 1 shows that the reasons why many junior high school students and high school students are satisfied with their English textbooks. According to the results, they are satisfied with a lot of pictures, illustrations and the contents of their textbooks.

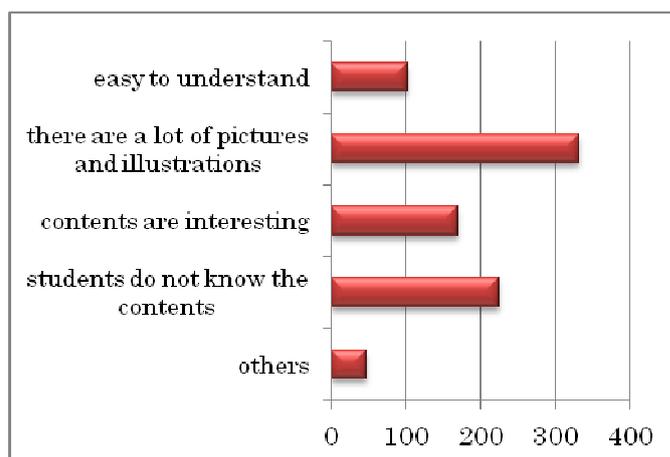


Figure 1: The reasons of satisfaction with their English textbooks (multiple answers)

The figure 2 shows that the reasons why they are not satisfied with their English textbooks. Among students who said they are not satisfied with their textbooks, about half of them are not satisfied with the contents of their textbooks.

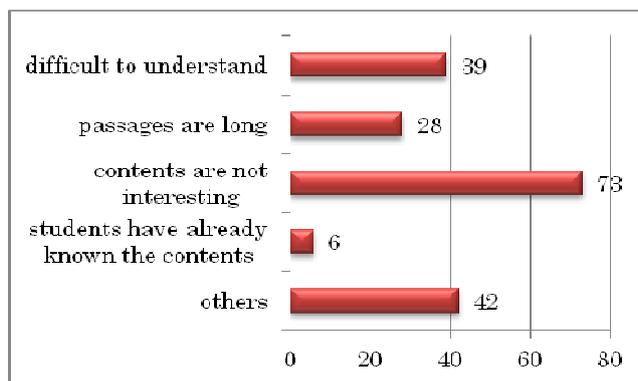


Figure2: The reasons of dissatisfaction with their English textbooks (multiple answers)

Then, we researched what contents students want to read (Figure 3). It shows students want to read various kinds of topics. It means a lot of topics should be prepared in textbooks.

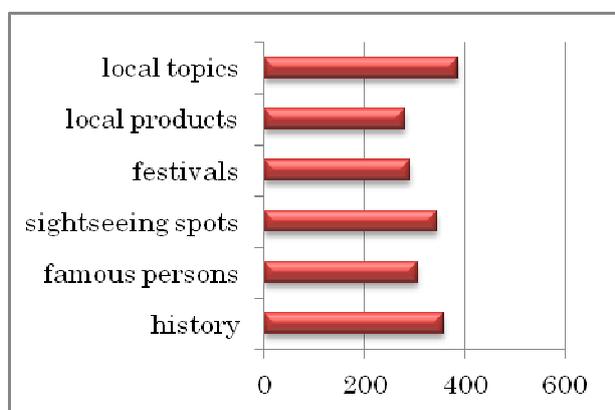


Figure3: The topics students want to read (multiple answers)

Only fourteen percent of the students have read topics about their hometown. On the other hand, eighty one percent of them want to read topics about their hometown. The more the students are dissatisfied with the textbooks, the more they want to use their own local topics (Figure 4). Therefore, we conclude that they can enjoy studying English if they use the textbooks with the topics about their hometown.

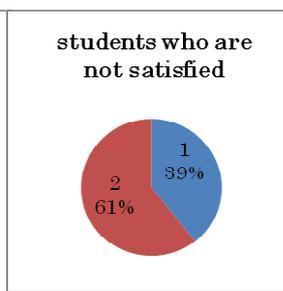
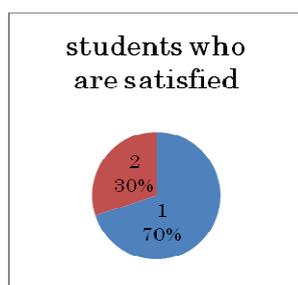


Figure4: Which textbook students want to use?
 1: The present textbooks
 2: The textbooks written about their local topics

Implications

The contents of English learning materials are quite important. As a result of our study, many students have not read the learning materials which focus on their hometown. Learning English with the topics about their hometown, students can learn English easier with interest. If students have opportunities to know about their hometown more, it would be more interesting and they want to know more about their hometown. Having new information through English study will trigger to improve their English skills. According to Ano Seminar (2011), students' communication activities, such as debate, discussion or speech are important to improve their communication abilities. Communication activities should be included in learning materials. We suggest that one of the ideal learning materials should focus on their hometown with some related English activities. The detailed suggestions will be presented and one part of the materials that we made will be shown at the 17th PAAL Conference.

Reference

Ano Seminar(2011).The Gap between the Course of Study and the Present Situation at Senior High School English Education in Japan, The 16th Conference of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics