

Original Article

A Practical Research on Fostering “Global Human Resources” Part I — Through Conducting “Okayama English Village” Events —

Kiichi Matsuhata, Noriaki Ohashi, Takehiko Saiki, Midori Sumida, Junichiro Takeno
and Tomoko Nago

Department of English Communication, Chugoku Junior College, Okayama 701-0197, Japan

This paper reports how “Okayama English Village” events were programmed and conducted. It also discusses how the events were evaluated by the participants and instructors/assisting staff and then proposes how they can be improved. According to the evaluations, the events on the year 2012 were mostly successful, but several points were found that could be improved for the next year. Among these points were:

- to consider more carefully the climatic conditions such as the heat of summer;
- more consideration to be given to the differences in English proficiency levels among pupils and
- measures to help the pupils relax.

Key Words: Elementary School, Foreign Language Activities, English Language Education, Events, Global Human Resources

Introduction

“An Interim Report of The Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development” released on June 22nd 2011 highlights a sense of impending crisis (6):

if things are left as they currently are, Japan could end up having no promising human resources who will be able to serve as the driving force of Japan’s economic growth in a mid-to-longer-term sense. As a result, Japan could miss its opportunity to revive itself in earnest, and in this age of rapidly changing, globalized world economy in which the emerging BRICs and VISTA countries are making their rapid rise, it could start backward trend gradually.

It also says (5):

it is essential for relevant groups including those related to high school and university education, corporations, government administration, as well as parents and guardians to take concrete action so that Japanese society as a whole can work together to create a positive growth spiral that will support today’s young generation.

It points out three factors that today’s Japanese youth need to possess (7):

Factor I : Linguistic and communication skills
Factor II : Self-direction and positiveness, a spirit for challenge, cooperativeness and flexibility, a sense of responsibility and mission

Factor III: Understanding of other cultures and a sense of identity as a Japanese

Sharing a similar sense of crisis, the Okayama City Board of Education and Chugokugakuen University/Chugoku Junior College jointed together to set up “The Executive Committee for Okayama English Village Project” in May of 2012. The executive office was placed in Chugoku Junior College.

Corresponding author:
Noriaki Ohashi
Department of English Communication, Chugoku Junior College, 83, Niwase,
Kitaku, Okayama 701-0197, Japan
Tel & Fax; +81 86 293 1100

The objectives of “Okayama English Village Project”

One objective concerns creating a location for elementary school 5th and 6th grade pupils to experience the English language, foreign cultures and local nature in a distant place from their homes where English is dominantly used. Two events were implemented: one in August on the island of Inujima off the coast of Okayama, and the other in November at Fukutani in the mountainous area in Okayama city.

The other objective is to foster the following qualities in the participating pupils:

- better communication skills, mainly in English;
- an enhanced understanding of foreign cultures;
- improved self-direction, cooperation and other qualities necessary for working in groups and
- an enhanced awareness and attitude toward nature

Programs and evaluations

The activity timetables of each event are shown in appendices 1 and 2 and the evaluations are shown in appendices 3 and 4. The number of participating pupils were 27 at Inujima and 47 at Fukutani. The number of staff (instructors, helpers, managers and a nurse) were: 43 at Inujima and 52 at Fukutani, outnumbering that of the pupils but many of the staff were not involved in the whole activity schedule. The budget was evenly divided between the Educational Board of Okayama City and Chugokugakuen University/Chugoku Junior College.

Among the Inujima event participants, responses to the three summative questions were as follows:

- 1 Have you become more eager to learn English?: All but one said “Yes”. (Two did not respond.)
- 2 Have you learned a lot of English and about international cultures?: All of them said “Yes”. (Two did not respond.)
- 3 Would you like to join again next time?: All of them said “Yes”. (Two did not respond.)

Among the Fukutani event participants, the responses were:

- 1 Have you become more eager to learn English?: 42 said “Yes” and 5 said “No”.
- 2 Have you learned a lot of English and about international cultures?: 44 said “Yes” and 2 said

“No”. (One did not respond.)

- 3 Would you like to join again next time?: 42 said “Yes” and 4 said “No”. (One did not respond.)

These responses show that the events were mostly successful.

After each event, the instructors/assisting staff had meetings to evaluate them from their viewpoints. Among their reflections, there were statements like these in order to improve the project:

- (Inujima) It was necessary to consider more carefully about the summer heat. The “Fish-catching” and “Inujima Quiz” activities should be reconsidered.
- (Inujima) More consideration should be given to the differences in English proficiency levels among pupils.
- (Fukutani) More time was necessary for the outing.
- (Fukutani) In the beginning, pupils looked tense. Some measures should have been taken to help them relax, such as telling the whole group that it was OK if they did not understand everything the speakers said in English.

Conclusion

The introduction of “Foreign Language Activities” into elementary schools in Japan will play an important role in the promotion of human resources for globalization. The situation under which Japan is seeking its way toward sustainable growth requires contribution of various social groups involved in elementary school level education. “Okayama English Village Project” can be one of the contributors.

“Okayama English Village Project” will start its second year in April, 2013. It is strongly desired that the events be continued while the programs are revised and instructions are improved.

References

- An Interim Report of The Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development*
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Date AUG 18-19, 2012 Volunteer staff 5 Okayama Gakugeikan SHS students (both days)
 Fee ¥5,000 5 Chugoku Junior College/University students (18th only)
 Participants 5 and 6 graders at elementary schools
 30 children are divided into 5 groups
 Place Inujima Shizen no IE (Inujima, Okayama city) NI=Native (speaker) Instructor(s)

SAT., AUG 18

hour	activity	place	staff	activity outline	notes
7:00	Staff meet	Hoden Harbor			
7:30	Participants meet	Hoden Harbor			Boat leaves at 8:00
8:00	boat --> walk				From Inujima Harbor, walk to the site
9:00	Reception Immigration	Lobby Lecture room	Sumida, Akamatsu NIs + Hasegawa	Check-in and Brief Orientation	
9:30	Opening Ceremony Self-introduction of staff	Lecture room	MC: Kyou Nago + Chris M. + Neal W. NIs	Opening Address self-introduction with group members, "Hello! Song"	One NI and one SHS student are allotted to each group
10:30	Self-introduction				
	Cooking & Tea Party(1)	Lecture room Canteen	Chris M. + Nago, Kozai, Imai	-Introduction of Gingerbread Man -Song "Who took the cookies from the cookie jar?" -Making gingerbread and cut it into the shape of a man	College/University students function as assistants: helping kids, demonstrating
12:00	Lunch	Lecture room	Ishiyama, Imai		Each participant and staff bring their own lunch
13:00	Cooking & Tea Party(2)	Lecture Room	Chris M. + Nago, Kozai, Imai	-Lecture about tea: its background -Demonstration of tea making -drink tea -Sing and dance to a song	
14:00	Skit performance(1)	Lecture room	Hasegawa, Kyou, Shironouchi + Nis	-NI's demonstrating several skits -Each group choosing one skit for performance -Start practicing	
15:00	Fish Catching & shore observation	Craft room Seashore	Moriwake	-Make fish traps out of empty plastic bottles(2L) -Set the traps in the pools at seashore -Observe sea creatures/ collect seashells	Rain or shine
17:00	Dinner	Canteen	Ishiyama		
18:00	Indoor games: Waku-Waku summer night sky games	Lecture room	Kozai, Nago, Kadoguchi + NIs	Enjoy "Fly swatter game" and card games using picture cards and get interested in star gazing	Introduction of vocabularies concerning night sky: stars, constellations, etc..
19:00	Bath time		Kadoguchi, Hasegawa, Ishiyama		
20:00	Star-gazing	Astronomy room	Staff at Shizen no Ie	Mixture of English and Japanese	If rainy, lecture using displayed pictures
21:00	Bed making and others	Each room			
21:30	Lights Off			22 : 00 Staff meeting	
22:00	All Lights off		Kadoguchi, Hasegawa, Ishiyama		

Fig. 1-Day 1 Inujima English and Cultural Experience Event 2012

SUN., AUG 19

hour	activity	place	staff	activity outline	notes
6:30	Rise		Hasegawa. Ishiyama, Kozai	Rise, Abutions	
7:00	Breakfast Cleaning	Canteen Each room	Ishiyama	Health Check Children clean their own room	
8:00	Skit performance(2)	Lecture room	Hasegawa, Shironouchi + Nis	Practice skit performance	
8:30					
9:45	Fish Catching Inujima Art Project Seirenscho (copper refinery) museum	seashore> harbor>m useum (Walk)	Moriwake, Kadoguchi Hasegawa, Kyou, Ohashi	Rain or shine, - Check traps, observe and release creatures at seashore -Move to Harbor by 9:45 -Seirenscho museum guided tour in 2 groups (1hour)	Plastic bottles are to be carried back by staff During this period, presenters of "International Culture Exchange" start to arrive. Welcome them and do some briefing before lunch (lunch is offered)
12:00	Lunch	Canteen	Ishiyama		
13:00	Skit performance(3)	Lecture Room	Hasegawa, Kyou, Shironouchi Board of Judges	-10 min rehearsal -Performance (total 30 mins) -Prize giving	
14:00	International culture exchange	Canteen & other places	Fukuhara	-Six (or seven) presenters introduce their country, culture and others at their 'booth' -Children visit each 'booth' and greet and communicate with the presenters in English	-Presenters give stamps or signature onto each child's 'passport' Japasese Staff are to be allotted to each booth as helpers
15:30	Make a picture postcard + summary	Lecture room	Nago + Kozai	-Make a picture postcard addressed to a family member -Write comments, impression etc. -Questionnaires	-Children choose English word(s) to express their feeling and write it on the card -The cards are posted by the staff at Inujima PO
16:00	-Cleaning -Closing Ceremony -Emigration - Photo -Move to harbor	Lecture room & other places	MC: Kyou	-All participants clean the area	-Never be late in leaving Shizen no Ie for the boat
16:40	From Inujima to Hoden			Hand the children to families at Hoden Harbor	17 : 15 boat leaves Inujima
17:30	End of event				

Fig. 1-Day 2 Inujima English and Cultural Experience Event 2012

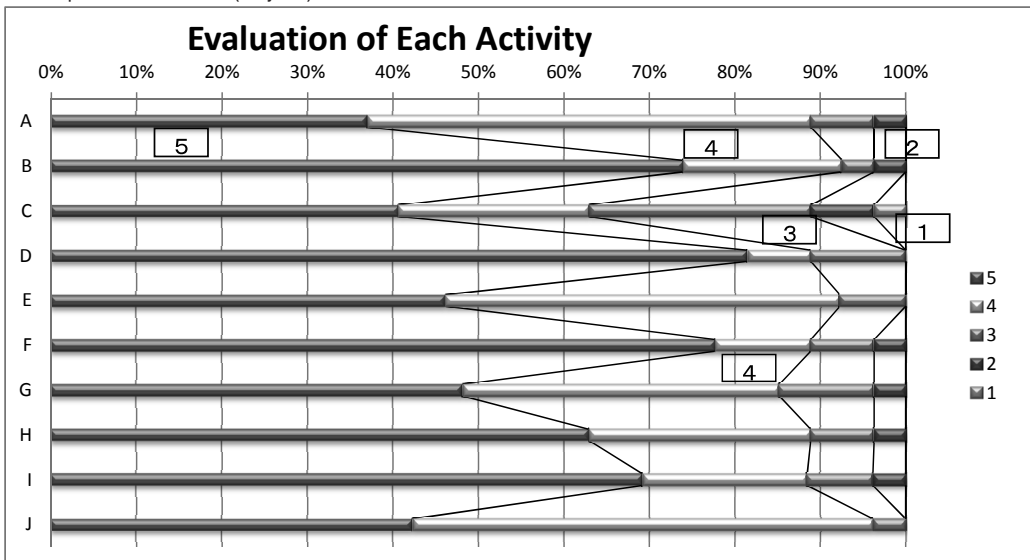
Date NOV 23rd (holiday) Volunteer staff Chugoku Univ. / Junior College students
 Fee ¥1,500 Notre Dame Seishin Univ. & IPU students
 Participants 5th and 6th graders in elementary school
 50 children are divided into 10 groups NI=Native (speaker) Instructor(s)
 Place (former) Fukutani Elementary School (Kawahara, Okayama city)

FRI., NOV 23

hour	activity	place	staff	activity outline	notes
8:30	Staff meet	Fukutani ES			
9:00	Participants meet	Fukutani ES			
9:10	Reception	Gym	Sumida, Tomada, Ohno, Yoshida	Check-in and Brief Orientation	
9:30	Immigration		NIs		
	Opening Ceremony Self-introduction of staff Self-introduction Activity,	Gym	MC: Ohashi Two NIs (Neal & Chris)+ Nago, Fukuhara	Opening Address self-introduction by staff self-introduction with group members, Song "The More We Get Together"	One NI and one student are allotted to each group
10:00	Thanksgiving Day Activities + Bingo	Gym	Two NIs (Neal W. & Chris M.)+ Nago, Fukuhara	-Introduction of Thanksgiving Day -Practice conversations at Thanksgiving dinner -Play "Dinner Race" using the conversations practiced -Enjoy Bingo game using the vocab concerning the people and the things in the daily lives of the kids,	College students function as assistants: helping kids, demonstrating
12:00	Lunch	Gym & other places			Each participant and staff brings their own lunch
12:45	Outing & craft	Fukumitsu Farm +Gym	Taguchi, Ohashi Okayama City ESD staff		
14:00	English Conversation Lesson	Gym	Nago, Fukuhara		
14:30	International culture exchange	Rooms in the school building	Sumida, Tomada (reception of the foreigners)	-11 presenters introduce their country (10 countries), culture and others at their 'booth' -Children visit each 'booth' and greet and communicate with the presenters in English	-Presenters give stamps or signature onto each child's 'passport'
16:00	Summary Questionnaire	Gym	Ohashi	-Write comments, impression etc -Questionnaire	
16:30	-Cleaning -Closing Ceremony -Emigration -Photo	Gym	MC: Ohashi	-All participants clean the area	
	End of event				

Fig. 2 Fukutani English and Cultural Experience Event 2012

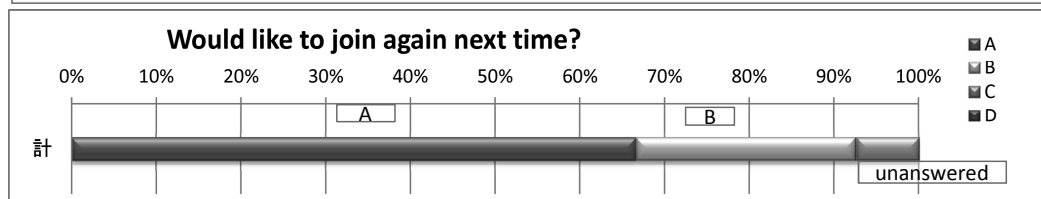
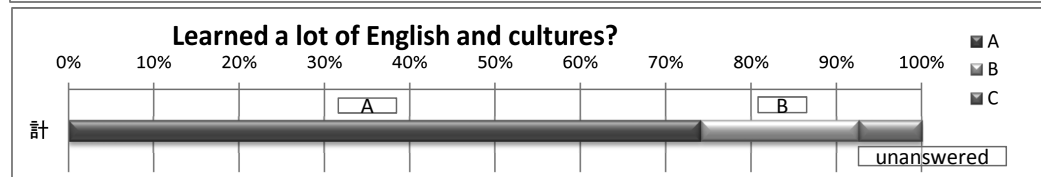
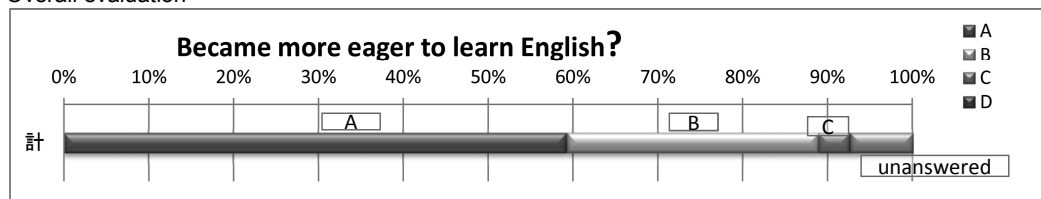
Participants' evaluation (Inujima)



A	Self-introduction & songs
B	Cooking & tea party
C	Fish catching
D	Skit performance
E	Indoor games
F	Star-gazing
G	Inujima Quiz
H	Museum
I	Culture exchange
J	Picture postcard

5=I got very much interested in English.
 4=I got interested in English.
 3=I am not sure.
 2=I didn't get very interested in English.
 1=I didn't get interested in English at all.

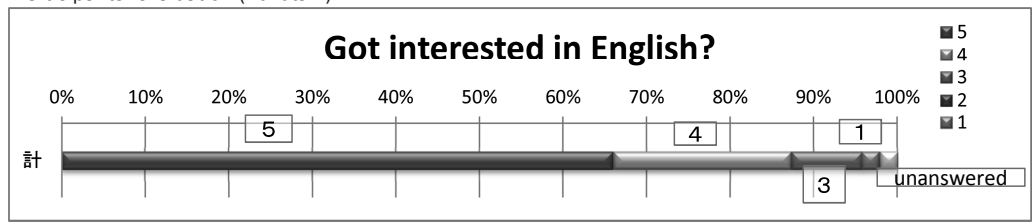
Overall evaluation



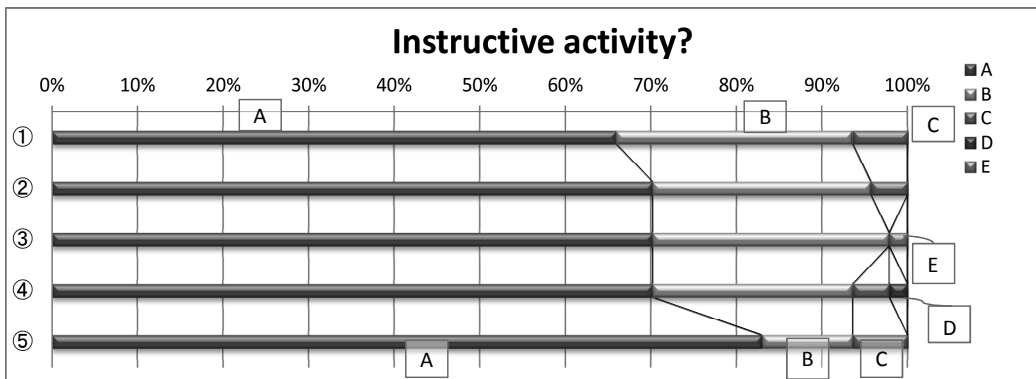
A=Yes, very much so. B=Yes. C=Rather not. D=Not at all.

Fig. 3 Evaluation

Participants' evaluation (Fukutani)



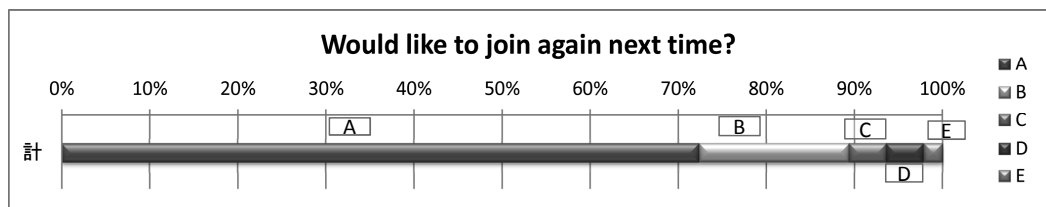
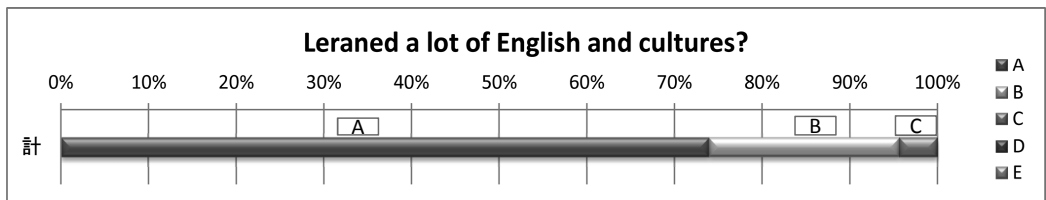
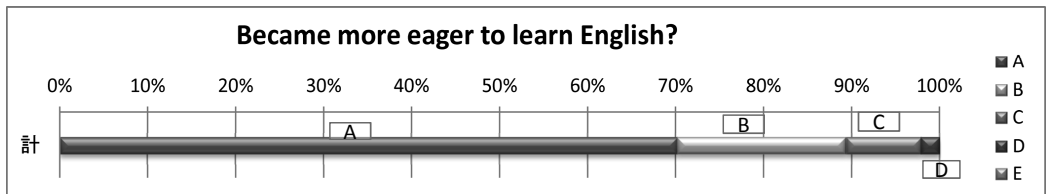
5=Yes, very much so. 4=Yes. 3=I'm not sure. 2=Rather not. 1=Not at all.



①	あいさつ・自己紹介など
②	感謝祭とゲーム
③	散策
④	英会話レッスン
⑤	国際交流活動

A=Yes, very much so.
 B=Yes.
 C=I'm not sure.
 D=Rather not.
 E=Not at all.

Overall evaluation



A=Yes, very much so. B=Yes. C=Rather not. D=Not at all.

Fig. 4 Evaluation

