

Original Article

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

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This paper reports on how “Okayama English Village 2014” events were programmed and conducted, focusing particularly on how they were improved in line with the results of the questionnaires written by the participating pupils of the previous Okayama English Village held in 2013. It also discusses how the events were evaluated by the participants and instructors/assisting staff and then proposes how they can be further improved. According to the evaluations, the events in 2014 were successfully conducted, but there are still several points that should be improved for the subsequent years. Among these are:

- to plan the activities giving more consideration to the participants’ English abilities, physical conditions, and backup plans for bad weather;
- to plan the whole event so as to let the pupils speak more English, desirably between themselves.

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

Introduction

Matsuhata et al (2013) reported and discussed the “Okayama English Village” Events in 2013 and concluded that the events achieved good results, but that they should be improved in order to give the participating pupils better opportunities to experience the English language, foreign cultures, nature, and group work. The Okayama City Government and Chugokugakuen University/Chugoku Junior College continued collaboration to conduct ‘The Executive Committee for Okayama English Village Project’ in 2013. The two main objectives of this project have not changed from the preceding years’ and are:

- 1 creating a location for elementary school 5th and 6th grade pupils to experience the English

language, foreign cultures and local nature in a place distant from their homes where English can be predominantly used.

- 2 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 of and attitude toward nature.

Programs and evaluations

The activity timetables for each event are shown in appendices 1 and 2 and the evaluations are shown in appendices 3 and 4. The number of participating pupils was 43 at Nichioji and 47 at Fukutani. The location for the summer event was changed because more pupils could be accommodated at Nichioji than at Inujima. The number of staff (instructors,

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organizers, assistants and a nurse) was 62 at Nichioji and 57 at Fukutani, including those who only partially participated.

Among the Nichioji event participants, responses to the three summative questions were as follows. Statements in square parentheses show the responses of the previous year's evaluation:

1 Have you become more eager to learn English?: All said "Yes" [All but one said "Yes"].

2 Have you learned a lot of English and about international cultures?: All but one said "Yes" [All but one said "Yes"].

3 Would you like to join again next time?: All but three said "Yes" [All but one said "Yes"].

Among the Fukutani event participants, the responses were:

1 Have you become more eager to learn English?: All said "Yes" [All but one said "Yes"].

2 Have you learned a lot of English and about international cultures?: All but one said "Yes" [All said "Yes"].

3 Would you like to join again next time?: All but one said "Yes" [All but one said "Yes"].

These responses show that both events this year were generally very successful, and that they were almost as successful as last year's.

After each event, the instructors and assisting staff had meetings to evaluate the events, especially with respect to whether or not the evaluations of the previous year had helped to make this year's events better. Among their reflections, the staff gave the following suggestions in order to further improve the project for 2015:

- (Nichioji) The largest portion of the schedule was allotted to the 'Skit' activity. Children's responses were not bad, but some of them looked bored because too much time was given to the skit practice. As with last year, for some of them the English was difficult to understand and to memorize. As a result, pupils rarely communicated with each other in English.
- (Nichioji) Because of the bad weather, most outdoor activities were canceled and changed to indoor activities. Some of the pupils had been interested in the outdoor activities like the 'Campfire' and 'Trim' activities. The results of the questionnaire were not good. More

considerable planning for bad weather should have been made. The activity in the gym in the evening, which had originally been scheduled to be a campfire outside, suited the pupils and they enjoyed the games, dance performance, etc.

- (Nichioji) One group of the culture presenters had not completely understood their task and their preparation was insufficient. At the last minute, a discussion was made at the site and they managed the presentation. More communication between organizers and presenters before the event was needed.
- (Nichioji) The skill of the foreign teachers/instructors to manage the activities was quite high. With the help of volunteer university students, the whole event went very well, except that one teacher originally slated to teach became ill and a substitute came instead but this substitute had low skills to manage the group of pupils and a few of them made complaints after the event.
- (Fukutani) The time allotment to the outing was no better than last year's in the sense that the farm owner was too eager to welcome and entertain the pupils so that the farm visit took even more time than before, which still remains a matter to be settled.
- (Fukutani) The first morning break should have been taken earlier. It was more than an hour after the pupils arrived and gathered in the gym. More consideration to the pupils' physical condition was needed.
- (Fukutani) This year's lunch was served the same as last year's. The local community group made the lunch using the products of the Fukutani area. The lunch was good and all the participants looked satisfied with the meal. This year, the pupils were informed that the local community assisted the event and how the people of the area adored the place, products, environment and, eventually, the English Village Event.
- (Fukutani) The cultural experience sessions in the afternoon were very good. They were great opportunities for the pupils to directly experience foreign cultures. Some of the presenters prepared a Powerpoint presentation, maps or posters. The presenters tried their best

to expose the pupils to their cultures and the English language. The presenters contributed a lot to the high quality of the activities.

Conclusion

"Okayama English Village Project" starts its fourth year in April, 2015. In 2015, it will add new projects to give pupils more English-oriented experiences. One is an additional activity which includes a wider range of culture-related tasks in English, and the other is in a relaxed setting for pupils to use English and communicate and exchange their ideas about familiar topics. This is expected to give participants opportunities to speak to each other in English. The original project will be reduced

from one overnight event plus one single-day event to two one-day events. The 2015 English village events will still accommodate 60 pupils for each one-day event, which means they can give opportunities to more pupils. As the groups become bigger, more problems are expected to emerge. More considerate and elaborate planning will therefore be required.

References

- Matsuhata, K., Ohashi, N., Saiki, T., Sumida, M., Takeno, J., and Nago, T.: A Practical Research on Fostering "Global Human Resources" Part II — Through Conducting "Okayama English Village" Events —, *Chugokugakuen Journal* (2014) 13, pp. 1-8.

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Date AUG 16–17, 2014
 Fee ¥5,000
 Participants 5th and 6th graders at elementary schools
 50 children are divided into 10 groups
 Place Okayama City Shonen Shizen no IE (Nichioji, Okayama city)
 (Hereafter referred to as "Nichioji Center")

Volunteer staff Okayama Gakugeikan SHS students
 Chugoku Junior College/University students
 IPU students

NI=Native (speaker) Instructor(s)

SATURDAY, AUGUST 16th

Hour	Activity	Place	Staff	Activity outline	Notes
8:20	Staff meet	Nichioji Center			Pickup from airport available
8:50	Participants meet	Nichioji Center			
9:20	Reception Immigration	Don Don Hall		Check-in and brief orientation	
9:40	Opening ceremony, Self-introductions of staff, Self-introduction activity, songs	Don Don Hall		Opening address Self-introduction with group members, sing (a) song(s)	Participants are divided into ten groups. One NI and one SHS student are allotted to each group
10:00	Skit practice (1) -Introduction -Practice	Don Don Hall			College/University students function as assistants: helping kids, demonstrating
12:00	Lunch				Each participant and staff bring their own lunch
13:00	Outdoor activities	Outdoor field		-Micro fieldwork -Exploration of the sky	If rainy, change to backup indoor plan
15:00	Skit practice (2) -Practice -Making costumes/props	Don Don Hall Saku Saku Hall Kami Kami Hall			
17:00	Dinner	Canteen			
18:30	Campfire	Campfire site		-Games -Star-watching	If rainy, change to backup indoor games plan
20:30	Bathtime, bed-making				
21:30	Lights out			22:00 Staff meeting	
22:00	All lights out				

Fig. 1-Day 1 Nichioji English and Cultural Experience Event 2014

SUNDAY, AUGUST 17th

Hour	Activity	Place	Staff	Activity outline	Notes
6:30	Rise			Rise, ablutions	
7:00	Breakfast Cleaning	Canteen each room		Health check Children clean their own room	
8:00	Hiking	Outdoor hiking course			
9:30	Skit practice (3)	Don Don Hall			During this period, presenters of "International Culture Exchange" start to arrive. Welcome them and do some briefing before lunch (lunch is provided)
12:00	Lunch	Canteen			
13:00	Skit performance	Don Don Hall		-Short rehearsal -Performance (total 50 mins) -Prize-giving	
14:30	International culture exchange	Gym meeting room		-Five countries' presenters introduce their countries, cultures etc. at their 'booth' -Children visit each 'booth' and greet and communicate with the presenters in English	-Presenters give stamps into, or sign each child's 'passport' Japasese staff are to be allotted to each booth as helpers
16:20	Summary of event	Don Don Hall		-Write comments, impressions etc. -Questionnaires	
17:00	-Cleaning -Closing ceremony -Immigration -Photo	Don Don Hall		-All participants clean the area	
17:20	Participants leave				
17:30	End of event				

Fig. 1-Day 2 Nichioji English and Cultural Experience Event 2014

Date NOV 29th (Sat) 2014
 Fee ¥1,800

Volunteer staff Students of Chugoku Junior College, IPU, ILS
 and Notre Dame Seishin Univ.

Participants 5th and 6th graders in elementary school
 50 children are divided into ten groups
 Place Former Fukutani Elementary School (Kawahara, Okayama city)

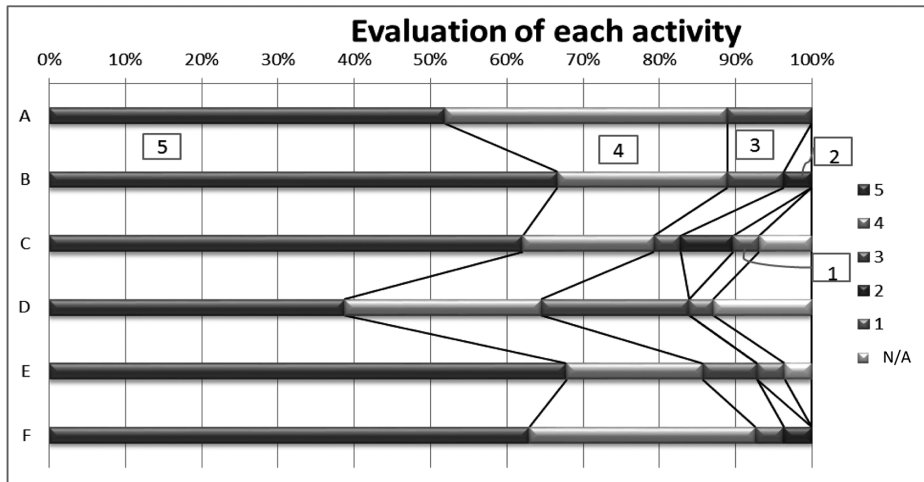
NI=Native (speaker) Instructor(s)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29th

Hour	Activity	Place	Staff	Activity outline	Notes
8:30	Staff meet	Fukutani ES			
9:00	Participants meet	Fukutani ES			
9:10	Reception Immigration	Gym		Check-in and brief orientation	
9:30	Opening ceremony Self-introduction of staff Self-introduction activity,	Gym	MC:	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	Gym	NI +	-Introduction of Thanksgiving Day -Enjoy games -Enjoy bingo using the vocabulary for people and things in the kids' daily lives, (Under planning)	College students function as assistants: helping kids, demonstrating
12:00	Lunch	Gym & other places			Lunch provided
12:45	Outing & craft	Fukumitsu Farm & Gym	Okayama City ESD staff		
14:30	International culture exchange	Rooms in the school building		-Five or more presenters introduce their countries (five countries), cultures etc. 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		-Write comments, impressions etc. -Questionnaire	
16:30	-Cleaning -Closing ceremony -Emigration -Photo	Gym	MC:	-All participants clean the area	
	End of event				

Fig. 2 Fukutani English and Cultural Experience Event 2014

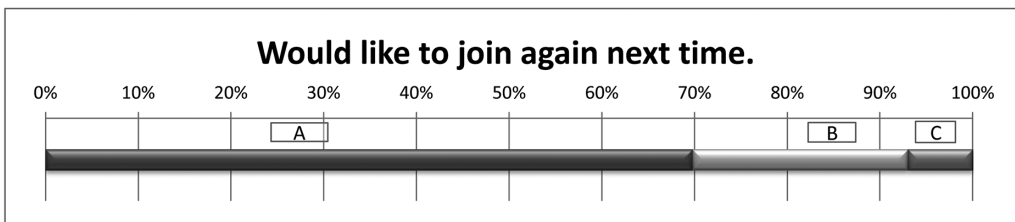
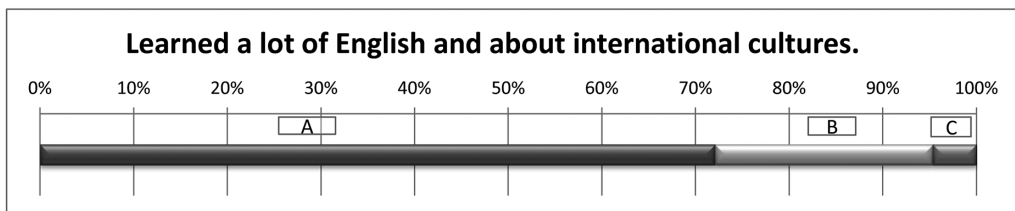
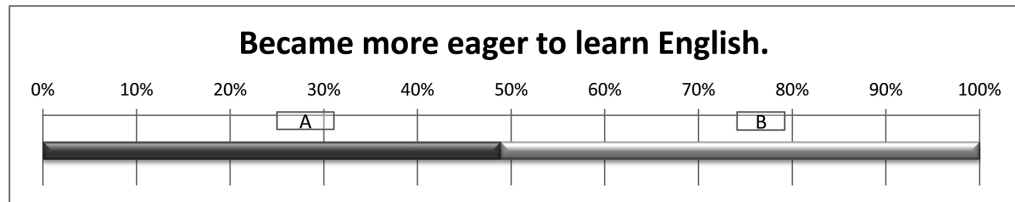
n=43



A	Self-introduction & songs
B	Skit practice
C	Outdoor activities (Bingo, 'Camouflage')
D	Indoor games & group performances
E	Making kaleidoscopes and badges
F	Culture exchange

5=I became very interested in English.
 4=I became 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.

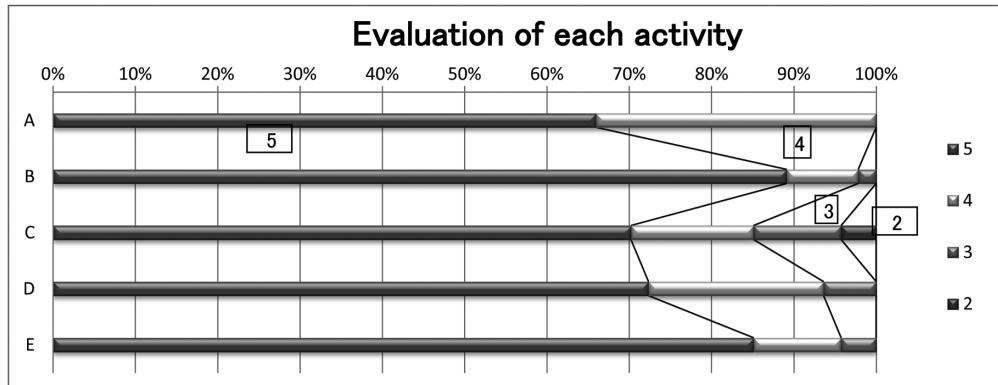
Overall evaluations



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

Fig. 3 Participants' evaluations (Nichioji)

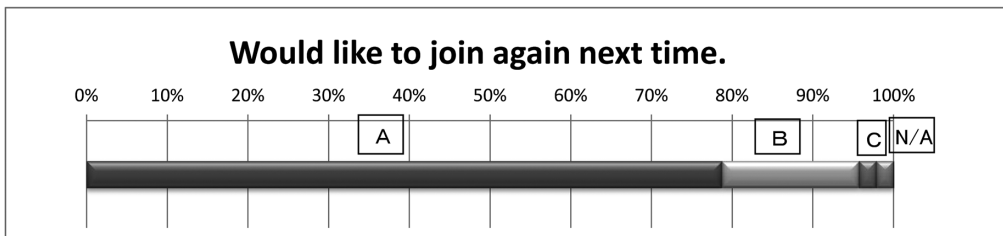
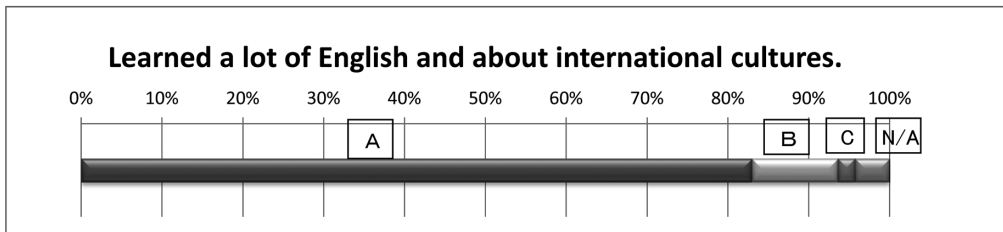
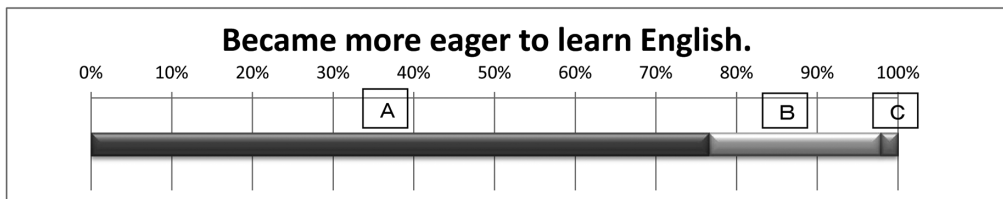
n=46



A	Self-introduction & songs
B	Thanksgiving Day activities
C	Outing
D	Card-making
E	Culture exchange

5=I became very interested in English.
 4=I became 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 evaluations



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

Fig. 4 Participants' evaluations (Fukutani)