

Is the National Core Curriculum for Teaching English in Pre-service Training Effective? : A Validation of Elementary School Teacher Courses

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INTRODUCTION, RELEVANT RESEARCH, AND PURPOSE

Introduction

- English education in Japanese elementary schools has been introduced since 2002.
- The last Course of Study issued in 2008 included a compulsory period of "Foreign Language Activities" for 5th and 6th graders, and was put into effect in 2011.
- The Course of Study for elementary schools was revised in 2017, and will be put into effect in 2020.
- "Foreign Language Activities" in the 3rd and 4th grades will form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through sounds and basic expressions in foreign languages.
- "Foreign Language" in the 5th and 6th grades will foster basic communication abilities through language activities that use the four skills.
- A methodology and a content course were set up for the national core curriculum as part of the undergraduate elementary school teacher's certification program in 2019.

Purposes of This Project (JSPS KAKENHI project)

- to examine the core curriculum
- to propose a concrete and comprehensive model program for the pre-service teacher training course based on the core curriculum

Purposes of This Research

- to examine the establishment of items in the core curriculum for the methodology course
- to provide data on the effectiveness of the core curriculum for elementary school teachers

Relevant Studies on the Core Curriculum

- Sakai and Uchino (2018) conducted a questionnaire survey to university students who attended the course on teaching English to elementary school pupils.
 - Self-assessment by the students was generally low at the beginning of the course.
- Iida et al. (2019) investigated the core curriculum from the teacher trainers' perspective.
 - Six issues, such as insufficient time to cover the curriculum and heavy workload, were found to be obstacles to implement the core curriculum.

METHODS

Participants

4 universities in Japan (3 national, 1 private)
255 undergraduate students

Procedures

A pretest-treatment-posttest design
Tests were administered online using Google Forms
Data were collected in the class with (written) consent from the participants.

Pretest (online)

October 2019

- Test items (see Results)

A total of 35 items based on 4 categories (A, B, C, D) regarding the core curriculum (see Results)

The test consisted of 35 multiple-choice questions, each with 4 choices including the answer "I don't know".

One point was given for each correct answer. Pilot-tested in September 2019

Taking a methodology course
based on the core curriculum
(90 min x 15 weeks)

Posttest (online)

January/ February 2019

Item Categories	A	B	C	D
Cronbach (α)	.445	.656	.636	.715

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Core Curriculum for Teaching English in Pre-service Training & Test Items	#	Pretest Ave (SD)	Posttest Ave (SD)	Effect Size d	p
Category A: Knowledge and understanding of elementary school foreign language education		2.29 (1.58)	3.09 (1.59)	.51	medium .000
The Course of Study (government curriculum guideline)	1	.29 (.453)	.23 (.420)	-.13	trivial .096
	2	.47 (.500)	.60 (.491)	.27	small .002
Main teaching materials	3	.23 (.423)	.49 (.501)	.61	medium .000
	4	.15 (.353)	.11 (.318)	-.09	trivial .229
Coordination among elementary, junior high, and senior high schools and the role of elementary schools	5	.09 (.287)	.18 (.385)	.32	small .001
	6	.36 (.481)	.58 (.494)	.47	small .000
How to cope with diversity among pupils and schools	7	.41 (.493)	.47 (.500)	.13	trivial .120
	8	.29 (.457)	.42 (.494)	.28	small .001
Category B: Knowledge about children's second language acquisition and its applications to teaching		3.96 (2.31)	5.67 (2.26)	.74	medium .000
The process of language acquisition through language use	1	.52 (.501)	.63 (.484)	.22	small .005
	2	.35 (.476)	.45 (.499)	.23	small .004
The process of inferring meaning from aural input	3	.27 (.445)	.38 (.487)	.26	small .004
	4	.60 (.491)	.79 (.407)	.39	small .000
Providing aural input based on pupil's developmental stage	5	.34 (.475)	.59 (.493)	.52	medium .000
	6	.27 (.447)	.45 (.499)	.40	small .000
Communicating well with others depending on the purpose, context, and situation	7	.04 (.185)	.05 (.228)	.11	trivial .276
The process of language learning: from input to output and from sounds to letters	8	.56 (.498)	.82 (.389)	.52	medium .000
	9	.27 (.445)	.59 (.493)	.71	medium .000
Understanding the importance of enhancing awareness of interesting aspects and the richness of languages, in connection with other subjects such as Japanese	10	.40 (.491)	.48 (.501)	.16	trivial .056
	11	.35 (.479)	.43 (.496)	.16	trivial .072
Category C: Teaching techniques		3.01 (1.64)	4.31 (1.47)	.80	large .000
Effective ways of talking to pupils in English	1	.73 (.447)	.81 (.392)	.19	trivial .011
	2	.71 (.453)	.84 (.372)	.27	small .000
How to interact with pupils and elicit utterances from them	3	.49 (.501)	.72 (.449)	.46	small .000
	4	.43 (.496)	.76 (.425)	.68	medium .000
How to introduce written language and conduct reading and writing activities	5	.37 (.483)	.54 (.499)	.36	small .000
	6	.29 (.453)	.63 (.483)	.76	medium .000
Category D: Lesson planning		5.17 (2.33)	7.08 (2.11)	.82	large .000
Selecting and studying teaching materials	1	.87 (.341)	.96 (.204)	.27	small .000
	2	.75 (.434)	.89 (.318)	.32	small .000
Setting learning goals and making lesson plans (including annual class plans, unit plans, and one-hour lesson plans)	3	.61 (.488)	.82 (.382)	.43	small .000
	4	.47 (.500)	.55 (.498)	.17	trivial .035
Designing and conducting team-taught lessons with an assistant language teacher such as a native speaker of English or a Japanese English teacher	5	.48 (.501)	.84 (.368)	.72	medium .000
	6	.52 (.501)	.75 (.434)	.46	small .000
Utilizing ICT in teaching	7	.40 (.492)	.73 (.443)	.67	medium .000
	8	.27 (.447)	.40 (.490)	.27	small .002
Assessment of learning (including conducting performance tests and utilizing achievement goals)	9	.26 (.441)	.48 (.501)	.50	small .000
	10	.53 (.500)	.66 (.474)	.26	small .001

- Scores of categories C and D more likely increased than those of categories A and B.

← C & D were more directly related to practical issues. The students had difficulty understanding some of the items in A & B.

Effect size threshold

$|.20| \leq \text{small} < |.50|$ $|.50| < \text{medium} < |.80|$ $|.80| \leq \text{large}$

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