

## Examining the Effect of Online English Lessons on Nursery School Children

**Authors :** Hidehiro Endo, Taizo Shigemichi

**Abstract :** Introduction & Objectives: In 2008, the revised course of study for elementary schools was published by MEXT, and from the beginning of the academic year of 2011-2012, foreign language activities (English lessons) became mandatory for 5th and 6th graders in Japanese elementary schools. Foreign language activities are currently offered once a week for approximately 50 minutes by elementary school teachers, assistant language teachers who are native speakers of English, volunteers, among others, with the purpose of helping children become accustomed to functional English. However, the new policy has disclosed a myriad of issues in conducting foreign language activities since the majority of the current elementary school teachers has neither English teaching experience nor English proficiency. Nevertheless, converting foreign language activities into English, as a subject in Japanese elementary schools (for 5th and 6th graders) from 2020 is what MEXT currently envisages with the purpose of reforming English education in Japan. According to their new proposal, foreign language activities will be mandatory for 3rd and 4th graders from 2020. Consequently, gaining better access to English learning opportunities becomes one of the primary concerns even in early childhood education. Thus, in this project, we aim to explore some nursery schools' attempts at providing toddlers with online English lessons via Skype. The main purpose of this project is to look deeply into what roles online English lessons in the nursery schools play in guiding nursery school children to enjoy learning the English language as well as to acquire English communication skills. Research Methods: Setting; The main research site is a nursery school located in the northern part of Japan. The nursery school has been offering a 20-minute online English lesson via Skype twice a week to 7 toddlers since September 2015. The teacher of the online English lessons is a male person who lives in the Philippines. Fieldwork & Data; We have just begun collecting data by attending the Skype English lessons. Direct observations are the principal components of the fieldwork. By closely observing how the toddlers respond to what the teacher does via Skype, we examine what components stimulate the toddlers to pay attention to the English lessons. Preliminary Findings & Expected Outcomes: Although both data collection and analysis are ongoing, we found that the online English teacher remembers the first name of each toddler and calls them by their first name via Skype, a technique that is crucial in motivating the toddlers to actively participate in the lessons. In addition, when the teacher asks the toddlers the name of a plastic object such as grapes in English, the toddlers tend to respond to the teacher in Japanese. Accordingly, the effective use of Japanese in teaching English for nursery school children need to be further examined. The anticipated results of this project are an increased recognition of the significance of creating English language learning opportunities for nursery school children and a significant contribution to the field of early childhood education.

**Keywords :** teaching children, English education, early childhood education, nursery school

**Conference Title :** ICLLT 2016 : International Conference on Language Learning and Teaching

**Conference Location :** San Francisco, United States

**Conference Dates :** June 09-10, 2016