How to develop critical thinking skills in English lessons for Japanese junior high school students - By using dialogue materials in English textbooks -

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1. Introduction

It has been said that English ability of Japanese is lower than that of learners in most of other Asian countries. To improve English education, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, 2014) suggested the five opinions. Of these five opinions, one opinion indicated that textbooks have been needed to be improved. Moreover, to improve textbooks, MEXT suggested five ideas. Especially of these five ideas, how to foster ability to think, the ability to make decisions, the ability to express themselves in textbooks have a room for discussion. Given that the opinion was enforced in 2014, it will take time to know the effect of the opinions are reflected in English textbooks due to the system of textbook authorization. Thus, this study aims to explore how to foster the ability to think, to make decisions, and to express themselves in English classes.

2. Research questions

According to previous references, it is found that “Critical reading literacy of students during reading English with nonverbal elements” has enough ground for discussion. On the basis of the fact, This study sets three research questions: (1) What is students’ perceptions on their critical reading practice before having the experimental teaching?, (2) What is students’ perceptions on their critical reading practice after having the experimental teaching?, (3) Did the students’ perceptions change after the class? This study investigated students’ perceptions on critical reading literacy during reading dialogues with pictures in English textbooks before and after the class. After that, this study analyzed the change of the students’ perceptions.

3. Methods

The experiment teaching consists of three stages: pre-task, main-task, and post task.

First, in the pre-task, the author showed students one picture. The picture expresses the situation where two people are talking in a certain place.
Second, the author gave students two dialogues. They read two dialogues, type A and type B. Type A is the original one and Type B is created by the author. The two dialogues were not shown at once. Students read only type A and confirmed the contents at first. Next, they read type B. After that, they searched differences between the two dialogues. The author gave students some hints according to their requests. By comparing the two dialogues, students considered which dialogue is more appropriate for the scene of the picture. Given that it is difficult for them to do that suddenly, the author provides an opportunity where students conduct a pre-task. After that, the author asked some students which they selected and why.

Finally, in the main task, students tried to compare the two dialogues on their own. After that, they made groups. The author gave another picture. The procedures of the main task is the same as the pre-task Students have to work in cooperation with other students. This means the author’s support was limited to the minimum level.

4. Results and discussion

According to the results, in some categories, the ratio of students’ perceptions on critical reading practice changed. For example, the rate of students who think the relationship between the dialogues and the situations increased, and the rate of students who infer intentions of characters’ utterances and behaviors increased. It is found that the practice teaching has possibilities of developing perceptions related to such abilities.

On the other hand, in some categories, the ratio is lower than that of prior questionnaire or hardly changed. For instance, the ratio of students those who infer characters’ utterances and behaviors not written directly in dialogues is lower than the results of prior questionnaire. The ratio of students those who infer characters’ utterances and behaviors after the dialogue is also lower than the results of prior one.

5. Conclusion

It is found that the practice teaching has possibilities of developing perceptions in some categories. However, in some categories, the ratio is lower than that of prior questionnaire or hardly changed.it seems that there is room for improvement in the experimental teaching mainly in terms of the teaching materials.
References


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