

Micro Acting for Young EFL Learners in Japanese Elementary Schools

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Japanese public elementary schools have started “English Activity Programs” as a part of regular courses recently. The speaker has been an on –the job teacher trainer for them for three years, and have observed how micro-acting foster young learners’ confidence in communication in a foreign language. On a daily basis, pupils practice basic communication patterns by changing their roles and settings. On a special event, they spend more time to carry out a longer discourse in English. This is a report and analysis on the two types of micro acting activities.

The first type is more like “Talking with plenty of emotional expressions” than acting a play. For example, when pupils learn “How are you?” “I’m fine, hungry, thirsty, scared...” , teachers invite pupils to speak with appropriate facial expressions and gestures to go with the words they are saying. Sometimes we say “How are you?” with angry faces to make them say “I’m scared!” Micro acting produces limitless variations of the expressions in limited word combinations. Pupils enjoy watching other pupils “act” as much as acting by themselves to have applause from classmates.

The other type takes a few weeks to prepare. At the year-end in my area, children visit schools for their future learning environment. It is a great chance to stretch their performance. I was involved in a joint program for first graders of elementary school and the final year kindergarten kids to do a shopping game in English; and a bilingual Science English joint program for the 4th, 5th and 6th grades to do experiments at a university lab. Both are the cases that pupils activated their knowledge they have gained and practices at school to use it for real purpose.

Micro acting alone is a fun activity in class with familiar people, yet it brings young learners farther than that.