

Shared Identities: Our Interweaving Threads



Phonics as gateway: EFL reading in primary school

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Phonics is increasingly becoming recognized as an important tool in teaching native speaking children how to read in English. This paper will show that it is vital in teaching children to read English as a foreign language within the constrained time allotments of public education. It will also describe skills critical to teaching reading and examples of how these can be developed into eventual reading independence in the context of the Nagahama Elementary School English Program (NESEP).

英語を母語とする子供たちに読書指導にあたり、フォニックスの重要性がますます明確になってきている。この表情では、英語を外国語として学ぶ子供たちを対象に、限られた割り当ての授業時間内でも英語を読むことが教えられることを説明する。長浜小学校英語プログラム (NESEP) での事例と読書に必要なスキルを紹介し、そしてこれを使って子供たちが自由に読めるようになる指導方法を提供する。

The NESEP

The Nagahama Elementary School English Program (NESEP) is located in Nagahama City, Shiga Prefecture and has special permission from the Japanese Ministry of Education to teach English as a full subject at the elementary level. The program has been in existence for about 5 years. Before then, English was taught as well, but only in the sense in which it has predominantly been taught in Japan, which is sporadically and in the context of an internationalization agenda and not necessarily language education per se (Hosoya & Ushida, 2006).

One of its stated goals is to teach English communicatively, relying on student-centered teaching techniques as opposed to the teacher-centered techniques predominant at the junior high level and above. Another is to develop an awareness of different world cultures and foster positive perceptions of foreign peoples. Included in this is the goal of showing the children how learning a language can be enjoyable and

showing them how they can actually use language in their lives. A more recent goal has been to develop a smooth transition between elementary school and junior high, where we have seen the two distinct methodologies increasingly clash as students proficient in communicative English run up against a wall of apathy as they are confronted with the drastically different methodology. Apart from advocating widespread reformation of current junior high teaching methodology, one of our goals has been to prepare students in basic critical skills that will aid them once they begin the more academically rigorous regimen in junior high, skills that are not addressed adequately in the junior high system.

Classes are 45 minutes, during which we teach a curriculum of conversational English. Of this time, it is recommended to use 10 to 20 minutes for some kind of reading or writing component. In our program, the lower grades have English once a week, moving up to twice a week in the higher grades. The sequencing of the reading program will be discussed after the critical skills are introduced. However, it is first necessary to properly contextualize the program and then to address some of the current issues in reading instruction.

NESEP in context

Curricular content decisions in NESEP are generally made by the program leaders in consultation with a board of representatives from the city's participating elementary schools based on feedback from participating teachers. Implementation in the classroom is based on the English teacher's discretion, with minimal supervision or mentoring by program leaders. Teachers have traditionally been

hired through the JET Programme and receive additional NESEP training before assuming teaching duties. Phonics was initially introduced due to a heightened awareness spread through training in the JET Programme. However, misconceptions about the objectives and appropriate methods of teaching phonics resulted in a disorganized and non-integrated approach which culminated in little more than having children memorize arbitrarily selected vocabulary words to be associated with a particular letter. A resistance to explicit explanation of language features on any level meant that the students were never told of the objectives of these activities and they were not followed up by meaningful reading. Some teachers even utilized "Phonics Time" as a disciplinary measure, if they seriously taught it at all. The sequence did not lend itself to forming words. Reading and writing practice, by default, was little more than having children copy words devoid of context or comprehension. As a result, student motivation in the higher grades was low. Many students had adapted to an environment where they had no resources to catch up to their few *juku*-going peers, whose primary responsibility became to field questions for the rest.

The NESEP curriculum is provided for reference in the Appendix, although it must be stressed that although this is the official curriculum, almost no teachers teach according to its prescribed sequence anymore. Especially pertaining to phonics, reading, and writing, the curriculum provided still reflects the model of instruction that was in practice prior to the implementation of the methods described in this paper and does not represent the methods in which teachers have currently been trained. The curriculum is noticeably

arbitrary, vague, and impractical in regards to these points and, as such, teachers have generally utilized the discretion granted them within the program's constraints to adopt the strategies presented in the current paper.

Soon after I entered the program, I was tasked with researching how phonics could be taught more effectively. Drawing initial inspiration from Blevins (2006), Cook (2001), Gentry (2006), and Johnston & Watson (2007), I began to implement reading-oriented synthetic phonics in the classroom. The change in student motivation was immediate and marked. Children who had all but given up on being able to accomplish anything were soon able to feel the accomplishment of reading simple books by themselves without substantial teacher intervention. Several approaches were tried which differed by the emphasis placed on group versus individual reading. While reading as a class inspired the more advanced children to take a leadership role in explaining content to their peers, lower level children could effectively avoid participation by defaulting to memorizing what their peers told them and bypassing the main intent of the phonics instruction. Most effective overall was instruction where emphasis was placed on individual ability to decode the books in the sequence. Furthermore, the ability to note down phonetic approximations of problem words and to be able to sound out new, unfamiliar words enabled students to ask specific questions after the fact and to explore English materials on their own.

After observing its effectiveness, the decision was made to instruct all NESEP teachers in this method. Unfortunately, the inability to secure adequate funding to obtain an appropriate sequence of readers for all schools means that

implementation has been practically limited to those schools where teachers voluntarily purchase books or content licenses by themselves. This also means that there is no one sequence of reading materials, and consequently no one set sequence of phonics, taught in all schools. Nonetheless, the results at those schools in terms of motivation and performance are readily apparent qualitatively. There has not yet been a formal scholarly assessment of the relative effectiveness of NESEP techniques. It is hoped that future research may provide such an assessment. Although, with heavy teacher turn-over due to the program's reliance on the JET Programme, increasing economic restraints, and the relative lack of incentive for veteran teachers to continue in the program as well as barriers to retaining veterans erected by the JET Programme's terms of employment, the longevity of the program itself may be in serious question. With this context in mind, and in the interest of recording what has been learned from the Nagahama program while it still exists, this paper presents a synthesis of phonics instruction as it has been successfully implemented in NESEP.

Reading models in EFL environments

Phonics is basically teaching the process of identifying the sounds represented by one or more alphabetic characters. There are numerous supplies and methods on the market all emblazoned with the title PHONICS in bold letters. However there are fundamental differences between the context of teaching reading in an English-speaking country and one that is not.

Most reading models in general, and then again even most phonics models of reading, assume a native English or at the

very least close to a full immersion teaching environment. The reality in Japan is that English is rarely used outside the classroom.

Also, native English speakers have a greater exposure to the language before they begin to attempt to read. The average spoken vocabulary of a child entering school is about 6000 words (Chall, 1967). This contrasts sharply with most elementary school students in an EFL context. They have almost no vocabulary apart from possibly a small group of loan words that are likely to be “false friends” or not recognized as English by the students at all (Daulton, 2007).

Consequently, the average student targeted by the majority of phonics materials already has a repertoire of rather well-developed language skills on which to draw while learning to decode written English. Students raised outside of such an environment have almost no such skills except for those which are shared with their L1: for example, a very basic awareness that words represent objects or concepts in reality and that the symbols of the writing system can be used to represent those same words.

Which method: Analytic or synthetic phonics?

Johnston & Watson (2007) inform us of the difference between two variants of phonics practice. In analytic phonics, children memorize some initial written words and then soon begin reading simple texts. The phonics element focuses on developing awareness of the connection between letters and their placement in words. Teachers often introduce sounds by eliciting student responses, such as “Do you know any words that begin with /k/?” This, of

course draws on an already extant vocabulary. Teaching then moves on to focus on sounds at the end of words, followed by CVC word forms, the blending of sounds as in (*bl* and *br*), and finally digraphs (such as *sh* and *ch*.) The defining characteristic of analytic phonics is that the students are trained in how to analyze words they know for representative sounds. This requires a certain level of preparatory memorization work before the phonics program can be implemented.

In synthetic phonics, the children learn a few initial sounds. Then they are shown immediately how to blend those sounds together to form words. This also has the effect of rendering unnecessary a later focus on what are traditionally called *blends* such as *cl*, *sl*, *dr*, and *br*. These would be read as part of the overall principle of blending sounds. It is important to present those sounds as closely representative of the actual sound expressed and perhaps not always in accordance with popular conventions. To an EFL student *kuh* and /k/ as pronunciations of the letter K are drastically different and the extra vowel sound can prove an obstacle to proper blending.

Once students have a repertoire of about five sounds (e.g., *n*, *a*, *p*, *c*, *d*), they can start reading simple decodable books. As soon as the students start reading, they are introduced to phonetically irregular or *sight words* as they come up. Although these words must be memorized, the teacher makes sure that children are aware of the phonetic cues to pronounce them, like the letter *r* in *are* or the *u* in *you*.

Finally, the critical difference is that new written words are not taught as they are introduced. They must be decoded by the student first. The teacher only plays a supporting

role in perhaps reminding the students of the pronunciation of individual letters. Once the student can produce the word, then the teacher can move in to further support the acquisition of meaning or to clarify precise pronunciation. So which method is best?

Johnston & Watson (2007) compared analytic, synthetic, and mixed phonics programs in Clackmannanshire, Scotland. They measured reading ability over the first 3 years of school using standardized reading instruments. They measured isolated word reading, spelling, and reading comprehension.

Their results showed that the synthetic group was 7 years ahead of their age level in word reading and spelling. The analytic group was average. The synthetic group was also better at reading irregular words and reading comprehension was also markedly improved. Even more surprising was that the synthetic phonics program effectively eliminated the gender gap in reading ability. Traditionally, girls have tended to read at a higher level than boys, but perhaps the systematic constructive nature of the synthetic model appeals to boys in some way that other methods do not. They also found that the synthetic program eliminated the proficiency gap for students from economically disadvantaged environments. And this is also probably due to the fact that the disadvantaged students benefitted from learning explicit rules, whereas children from more well-to-do families tend to have more exposure to reading before they enter school and thus have traditionally had a great advantage.

Although this research was conducted on native speakers, there is a similar phenomenon in Japan in the so-called *juku* kids. These are children from families that can afford extra tutoring after school. Our experience in NESEP has

shown that synthetic phonics has been effective at narrowing the achievement gap between these children and their less advantaged peers. This has also had the effect of increasing overall motivation and class participation.

In further support of this, a study was done in America in 2000 (National Reading Panel, 2006). Academic research on reading and writing was surveyed to reach a consensus on how reading should be taught in public schools. Systematic synthetic phonics programs were found to benefit both children beginning school and older students with reading difficulties. They also found that synthetic phonics helps improve reading comprehension. They called it “a valuable and essential part of a successful classroom reading program.” But they qualified this by stating that phonics is a “means” and not an “end.”

Based on our experience, this point needs to be stressed. Too often we have seen phonics introduced into reading programs as an isolated and unrelated skill which is taught simply as a system of memorizing sounds for letters. This just becomes another set of designations for characters that students have to learn alongside the alphabet. The goal of phonics is reading. It is not to learn phonics. Divorced from an integrated reading program, phonics is of questionable value. Integrated into a reading program, it is invaluable.

A recommended methodology

A synthetic phonics model is the most appropriate. Furthermore, instruction must be explicit. The children have to know why they are learning these sounds, they have to be shown how they can use these sounds to form words,

and they have to know why they should even want to bother being able to read in English. These are all things which young students need to be guided to see.

There needs to be a systematic logical sequence. The teacher needs to know why they are introducing the letter sounds in the order they are. Preferably the sequence should enable the students to start reading simple picture books as soon as possible. Since reading materials vary according to circumstance, it may be useful to select a sequence of reading materials and then fit the sequence to the targeted texts. Readinga-z.com has a series of decodable readers that use simplified pictures to accurately portray the text. These have been very successful. However, there are a number of alternative sequences on the market and there is no single set prescribed order to teaching the letter sounds. It should be noted that the alphabetic order is perhaps the least useful as it does not assist the rapid creation of words.

The program must be consistent. Phonics instruction is usually completed within the first 2 years of English instruction in a native environment. Due to constraints of time and exposure, this is not feasible in a public school foreign language program. Consequently, reading needs to be charted out over the duration of a child's elementary school exposure, and this pattern needs to be consistent and maintained throughout the duration of their participation. Each new sound should be added to a repertoire of previously learned ones. Students then need to move up in complexity in accordance with their cognitive development. Inconsistency in a reading program can confuse and demoralize the students. If that happens, it can potentially undermine future attempts at instruction and possibly create a long-lasting aversion to language study in general.

Early, frequent, real use is key. Getting students into actually reading stories, websites, anything with a true communicative functional value at a young age, when the students are still eager to learn, is vital. If students become inured to an English learning environment where nothing builds on anything else, and they are never certain how they are supposed to be able to use what they have been taught, then they can shut off. If they can see that they can develop a certain amount of independence from the teacher in their language study, then reading can become an empowering, energizing force.

Content should be engaging and communicative. It should correspond to their interests and their cognitive level. Materials must also serve a communicative function. Simply reading sentences off the board isn't enough. Picture books, for example, are a readily available tool which meets these requirements.

Critical skills for reading

The following skills are not chronological or linear. They are not isolated, discrete abilities. Instead, they are complementary with more complex skills frequently including combinations of simpler component ones. As they are introduced to children, they should be approached with respect to their cognitive level and implemented in stages of gradually increasing complexity. There are drastic differences between a 1st year and a 6th year student that must be kept in mind when choosing materials, deciding the pacing of the program, and so on. Also, ideally, the phonics program should be connected to other aspects of the curriculum.

Letter Recognition

Letter Recognition is simply being able to associate the name of a letter with its shape. In a synthetic phonics program, Letter Recognition isn't an essential element at the early stages of instruction (Adams, 1994). Although, depending on the demands or expectations of other stakeholders in the program, it may be required to teach the standard ABCs first before moving into a phonics-based reading program. Letter Recognition A is knowing the name of the letter when it is seen. It's basically visual recognition. Letter Recognition B is auditory. It consists of being able to identify a letter when its name has been spoken.

Letter Production

There are four types of **Letter Production** skills, A-D. A is simply being able to trace a letter with a finger or pencil on paper or in the air, based on a model. B is copying from a model onto paper. C is what I call Letter Dictation, being able to write a letter when you hear its name. A related skill would be being able to say a letter's name when it is pointed out. In this way it's connected to Letter Recognition. Finally D is Phonetic Dictation. This is the ability to hear a sound and write an appropriate phonetic estimate. The goal here is not precise spelling. The goal is developing familiarity with the phonetic code. However when using activities to develop this skill, it is recommended that sounds with multiple representations be avoided as much as possible. For instance /k/ can be represented by *c*, *k*, and *q*. However, after the students have developed some familiarity with the principles involved, this should not be as problematic.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness (Al-Yamimi & Rabab'ah, 2007) is closely related to being able to take Phonetic Dictation. It's basically the phonetic version of letter recognition. It also is represented by a visual and an auditory subskill. Phonemic Awareness A is simply upon seeing a letter, knowing what its sound is, like /k/ for C. Phonemic Awareness B is auditory. When you hear a letter sound, you're able to identify the letter.

Blending and Segmenting

Blending is seeing a group of letters and being able to string their sounds together properly to pronounce the word. **Segmenting** is the opposite skill (Al-Yamimi & Rabab'ah, 2007). You hear a word, are able to break it into component sounds, and then come up with phonetic estimates to represent the word. This is like an advanced form of Phonetic Dictation.

Chunking

Chunking is, initially, being able to recognize a group of letters as representative of a single sound. As readers become more advanced they are then able to apply chunking rules more broadly across larger spans of text and develop scanning and skimming skills. But initially it concerns things like digraphs such as *th*, *ch*, and *ph*, and then on to more complex groupings like *ough* and *igh*. Chunking also covers sight words, which must be memorized as a block of letters. See Ellis (2003) for a more detailed discussion of chunking in language learning.

Grammar

Next is **Grammar**. This is a vital skill to understanding written language. But since detailed explicit explanation of grammatical structures has doubtful benefits (Krashen, 2004), it would seem that at early stages of instruction such strategies should be avoided. Of course if the children ask a question we should make attempts to answer it. But we should avoid getting bogged down in trying to explain *the* to a 7-year-old child. The children won't understand. They will get bored and shut off.

Instead, implicit comprehension of grammar should be encouraged through the use of context clues and visual representation of texts. Rather than explaining the nuances of *-ing*, we could show children pictures which express clearly the differences of those states. In practice, students often can fill in the blanks of grammatical structures with assumptions from their native discourse community. The presence of the past tense in storybooks posed no obstacle to comprehension among 6th year students even though the past tense was not explicitly taught. After conversing with students, it was found that this was because the students understood it to be a fairy tale and thus assumed that it followed the same discourse pattern as their L1. It is in this way that students can adapt to grammar implicitly, although care must be taken in cases where L1 discourse traditions differ from L2.

Vital to this method is that children understand that when they are asked to read things or people say things to them, what they are trying to express has a reason to it. Even if they do not understand every single facet of the expression, they must try to look at what they do recognize and try to fill in the gaps with what would make sense. Of course that

also makes us responsible for ensuring that our examples are properly contextualized.

Here's an example that I use with my class. I put up a row of black cards on the board. I then ask them to imagine that they run into a foreigner one day who can only utter broken phrases to them, but that he desperately needs to communicate something in their language. I then turn over only cards which are concealing grammatical elements of a sentence like *My...is...the* and ask them if they can figure out what he's talking about. Of course the answer is no way! But when I replace those words with *cat...under...table* then all of them instantly understand. A fundamental of teaching grammar and reading comprehension implicitly is in helping students get used to the ordering of ideas in English, not necessarily in explaining complex grammar that even we perhaps do not understand as well as we would like to think.

Comprehension

Finally, **Comprehension** is also vitally important (Brantmeier, 2004), but, as with grammar, detailed explicit explanation should be avoided. Looking for direct translations from elementary age children simply will not work for the majority of students. The focus should be on eliciting responses from the children, in motivating them to think about what it seems like the passage is saying rather than giving them the one set answer to which they must adjust. Motivating them to engage with the meaning personally will be far more useful in tackling new and unfamiliar texts.

Reading content should be integrated with the communicative component of the syllabus. They can build on and feed off of each other. And with the communicative syllabus just as with the reading program, the children should be encouraged to understand what it is they are learning. Developing rote responses to fixed questions is the antithesis of a communicative methodology regardless of how much it sounds like they are communicating. We must change things around and challenge their ability to solve puzzles. After all, that is what language fundamentally is, a very intricate puzzle. To help them decode that puzzle, we should use accurate visual representation of the text to help students clear hurdles of unfamiliar vocabulary or grammar. This is a deviation from pure synthetic phonics, but also EFL students don't have the linguistic resources available to a native speaker. I think that in this sense, certain whole language method teaching practices can sometimes help us mediate the gap.

However, this is only true when applied to the comprehension aspect of reading. Learning how to systematically decode the alphabetic system is still vital to being able to develop eventual acquisition and even when grammatical words may be unclear in meaning, students must be encouraged to read them. It is only in this way that, through repeated exposure, they can come to learn what those words represent.

The NESEP reading sequence in practicum

In the 1st grade, the lower case alphabet is introduced. This involves both visual and auditory letter recognition. Students also do Letter Tracing, or forming letter shapes with hands

or their bodies. Grammar is implicitly introduced through the learning of simple functional phrases like *How are you?* and *What's your name?* At this stage the emphasis is on responding to questions appropriately and acquiring some basic vocabulary and familiarity with the spoken language rather than on strictly accurate production ability.

In 2nd grade, most of the lexical content is recycled while introducing new conversational material. Upper case letters are introduced, and practice begins to involve copying activities. For example, coloring sheets where children must find concealed letters and color them in becomes implicit writing practice.

In 3rd grade, there is an explosion of skills because this is the start of the phonics program proper. This means that phonemic awareness skills, blending, and some chunking are introduced in step with their progression through their first readers and the reading regimen. The students consequently also begin to be exposed to written grammar implicitly through these stories.

4th grade continues the sequence, while introducing some more emphasis on segmenting sounds and emphasizing explicit phonemic awareness. 5th and 6th grade consists of further developing their reading skills with an emphasis on personal exploration, either by writing letters to other schools in the program, or using interactive Internet sites like starfall.com.

Guidelines for materials and activity design

When designing activities, or looking for materials, we try to keep the following guidelines in mind. First, if students are

having problems, thinking of which skills are being targeted in a given activity provides clues as to how to support individual students' needs. Next, variety is important. Younger students prefer repetition whereas older students need more frequent challenges.

Phonics instruction must be incremental and consistent. Each new rule should build on what has been taught before, with minimal omissions. It is also more important that students understand what they have been taught up to a certain point than that they get to a preset or arbitrary goal on schedule. Vocabulary should be level appropriate. This means that younger children should be taught prototypical words such as *table* or *chair*, before subordinates like *ottoman* or superordinates like *furniture* (Aitchison, 2003, p. 53).

Images are powerful, but they must be used carefully. A picture book with a lovely picture of a giant fox with wonderful colors and text which reads "once upon a time there was a fox who lived in a cave and loved to eat eggs so he often raided the hen house of Polly the chicken..." is useless. The picture has almost nothing to do with the text it is accompanying. But if on one page it reads *This is a fox* and there is a picture of a fox and nothing else, then *He likes eggs* and a picture of him happily eating eggs, then the students can begin to see the relationship between the concepts represented by the images and the concepts represented by the words. Making sure that this is as close as possible to a one to one relationship, and is still a phonics based reader, is perhaps the most difficult part of selecting readers for a phonics program.

Finally, activities and materials should be engaging. They

should grab a child's interest. Listen to them and they will let you know what they think is funny and interesting, or stupid and boring. And remember that reading and writing are communicative and can be so. Showing the children how they can be so can be challenging, but the rewards are immeasurable.

Above all else, remember that the end goal is eventual communicative independence. Everything must be geared towards the students' achievement of that goal. We must never forget that at elementary school we have the opportunity to give children the fundamental skills which will open the gateway to a world of ideas that they can discover by and for themselves.

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Appendix

NESEP curriculum as of 3/17/2009

(*Italics signifies optional content.*) *Note: This curriculum is presented as an abbreviation of the official NESEP training materials. The author does not advocate or claim responsibility for the model of teaching presented within. The author's comments appear in brackets [].*

1st Grade

1st Term (11 lessons)	2nd Term(14 lessons)	3rd Term (9 lessons)
1. Good morning; Hello; See you later / tomorrow. Hi, I'm ~.	Introducing the lower case alphabet. (To be taught over the entire 2nd and 3rd terms).	Introducing the lower case alphabet. (To be taught over the entire 2nd and 3rd terms).
2. Stand up; Sit down; Be quiet; Look at ~; Listen carefully; Make a circle / line.	6. <i>Janken</i> : Rock, paper, scissors, 1, 2, 3 go!	11. What's this? It's a(n) apple / banana / orange / watermelon / peach / pear.
3. How are you? I'm fine / so-so / not so good / great / cold / hot / hungry / sick.	7. What color is this? It's white / red / blue / green / yellow / black.	12. Numbers 1-12 <i>*How many pears (are there)? 5 (pears). *How old are you? I'm 7.*</i>
4. What's this? It's a cat / dog / monkey / fish / bird / rabbit.	8. Numbers 1 – 10.	13. Are you happy / sad / hungry...etc.? Yes, I am. No, I'm not.
5. ~ please. Here you are. Thank you. <i>*You're welcome.*</i>	9. What's this / that? It's a(n) chair / book / pencil / desk / eraser.	<i>*This is a brown chair. (color+noun)*</i>
	10. Learning about & experiencing foreign holidays and culture.	

2nd Grade

1st Term (12 lessons)		2nd Term(14 lessons)		3rd Term (9 lessons)	
1.	What's your name? My name is ~. <i>*It's nice to meet you. It's nice to meet you, too.*</i>	5.	How many ~ are there? (# + plural noun). Dogs, monkeys, birds, rabbits, elephants, lions, dolphins.	10.	Do you like ~? Yes, I do. No, I don't.
2.	Introducing the upper case alphabet.	6.	Numbers 1-20. Is this 19? Yes, it is. No, it isn't. <i>*No, it's not.*</i> How old are you? I'm ~ <i>*years old*</i> .	11.	Review the alphabet.
3.	What day is it? It's Monday / Tuesday / Wednesday / Thursday / Friday / Saturday / Sunday	7.	Review the alphabet.	12.	Who's he / she? <i>*He is / She is*</i> my mother / father / brother / sister / grandmother / grandfather.
4.	What are these? They're apples / bananas / oranges / grapes / cherries / strawberries.	8.	Touch your head / nose / mouth / eye(s) / ear(s) / arm(s) / leg(s) / hand(s) / finger(s).		
	<i>*Any questions? Do you understand? One more time, please.*</i>	9.	Learning about & experiencing foreign holidays and culture.		

3rd Grade

Introducing Phonics: (All year) Either at the beginning or end of a standard lesson, the ELT should present the lesson's letter. After introducing the letter's phonetic sound, the ELT can ask students to produce English words that match the lesson's letter.

Basic writing: (All year) Students should practice writing the letter of the lesson.

<i>1st Term (18 lessons)</i>		<i>2nd Term(22 lessons)</i>		<i>3rd Term (15 lessons)</i>	
1.	How are you? I'm hot / fine / not so good / so-so / great / cold / hot / hungry / sick / tired / sleepy. Gg & Hh phonics.	5.	What animals do you like? I like ~. Cc, Dd, Jj, & Zz phonics.	8.	What are these? They're ~. Aa, Kk, Vv, & Xx phonics.
2.	How's the weather? It's sunny / snowy / rainy / windy / warm / cloudy / cold / hot. Rr, Ss, & Ww phonics.	6.	How does ~ taste? <i>*How is it?*</i> It's good / bad / sweet / sour / bitter / spicy / salty / <i>*yummy*</i> . Bb, Ll, Pp, & Yy phonics.	9.	What time is it? It's ~ o'clock. Ee, Ff, & Tt phonics.
3.	What's ~ in English / Japanese? Excuse me. Please help him / her. One more time, please. I have a question. Do you have any questions? Please be quiet. Qq & Mm phonics.	7.	Where's the ~? It's on / under / in / next to <i>*by*</i> the ball / key / notebook / octopus / umbrella. Ii, Nn, Oo, & Uu phonics.	10.	Do you have a / the ~? Yes, I do. No, I don't.
4.	Numbers 0-60. How many ~ are there?	Learning about & experiencing foreign holidays and culture.		<i>*It's big. Adjectives.*</i>	

4th Grade

Phonics review, long vowel sounds + Writing: (All year)

Either at the beginning or end of a standard lesson, the ELT should present the lesson's letter. After reviewing the letter's phonetic sound, the ELT can ask students to produce English words that match the lesson's letter. Introduce the /s/ sound of c, /j/ sound of g, and the long vowel sounds. Additionally, students should practice writing the target language in units 2, 6, & 7.

<i>1st Term (18 lessons)</i>	<i>2nd Term (22 lessons)</i>	<i>3rd Term (15 lessons)</i>
1. What grade are you in? <i>*I'm in*</i> the 4th grade. 1st-6th ordinal numbers.	4. Who's he / she? He's / She's my aunt / uncle / cousin / (little / big) sister / brother.	7. What foods do you like? What sports do you like? I like pizza / fish / curry <i>*rice*</i> / French fries <i>*chips*</i> / sushi / ice cream / cake / soccer / baseball / volleyball / basketball / dodgeball. <i>*What food / sports do you dislike / not like? I don't like ~.</i>
2. Do you like to ~? Yes, I do. No, I don't. What's your hobby? I like to cook / read / draw / fish / play the piano / play video games / play sports.	5. How old is he / she? She / he is ~ <i>*years old*</i> .	8. What subjects do you like? I like math / Japanese / English / science / social studies / music / art / PE <i>*gym*</i> . <i>*When's social studies? It's 2nd period.*</i>
3. What time is it? It's 9:25. Numbers 1~100.	6. What does she / he do? He's / She's a teacher / police officer / doctor / nurse / farmer / cook / pilot. <i>*What do you want to be? I want to be a ~.*</i>	9. Where's the school / hospital / supermarket / convenience store / park? Turn left / right. Go straight / back. Stop.
	<i>*Do you have a blue shirt? (adj + nouns) Clothing.*</i>	<i>*What do you want to eat? What do you want for breakfast / lunch / dinner? I want ~.*</i>
	Learning about & experiencing foreign holidays and culture.	<i>*What's the matter? I hurt my ~. My ~ hurts. I have the flue / a headache.*</i>

5th Grade

[*Reading-Writing Curriculum & Spoken Curriculum*: As of the 2008 school year, the curriculum for 5th and 6th grades was split into a written and a verbal component. This was done to accommodate an increase of Japanese teachers being brought into NESEP, but not trained in the communicative techniques of their native-speaking colleagues. The assumption was that Japanese teachers could teach the written component and native speakers the verbal. Unfortunately, due to a lack of coordination and training between the two groups, the result has been a discontinuity in the reading program that is generally believed by participating teachers to have resulted in a serious decrease in student morale. A further problem has been that the new Reading-Writing Curriculum focuses on different target language than the spoken curriculum, so effectively it doubles the content load on students while abandoning the phonics program successful in the 3rd and 4th grades. This paper was originally conceived before the implementation of this new curriculum, so the 5th and 6th grade curriculum content will be presented as it was before the present revisions.]

Phonics II: (All Year) Either at the beginning or end of a standard lesson, the ELT should present one blend (*th*, *sh*, *ch*, *ph*, or *st*). After teaching the blend's unique sound, the ELT should introduce a keyword, which contains the blend. At minimum, students need to write in the missing target letters from several keywords.

Writing: Students practice writing sentences by copying sentences. The following rules of writing are brought to their attention: capitalization, punctuation, spaces between words,

not to divide words between the end of one line and the beginning of the next.

Months of the year: Throughout the year the names of the months should be input for the students. The ELT should figure out a way of presenting the vocabulary in a communicative interaction between the ELT, HRT, and students.

<i>1st Term (24 lessons)</i>	<i>2nd Term(28 lessons)</i>	<i>3rd Term (18 lessons)</i>
1. What's your name? My name is ~. It's ~. How do you spell that? <i>*What's your first / last name? What's your nickname?*</i>	5. What's your favorite ~ ? It's ~ .	Write the days of the week. (All term).
2. What day is it? It's ~. <i>*Today / Tomorrow is ~.*</i>	6. Can you ~ ? Yes, I can. No, I can't. Play an instrument, play baseball, swim, ski, speak English. <i>*Can you ~ well / fast?*</i>	8. How much is this? It's ~ yen. Numbers 0-1000. <i>*How much are these? They're ~ yen. That's cheap / expensive. That's too low / too high.*</i>
3. When is 1st period? Ordinal numbers 1st – 6th.	7. Where's Hanako / Taro? He's / She's at home / the bank / a restaurant / the lake / juku / the supermarket / the convenience store / school / the post office. She's / He's in the staff room / library / gym / nurse's room / computer room / science room / music room / classroom.	9. Here's ~ yen. Where do you want to go? I want to go to ~.
4. What's 5th period <i>*today, tomorrow, Friday*</i> ? Math, Japanese, English, science, social studies, music, art, PE / gym. <i>*What's next? Club / committee / recess / lunch / I'm going home.*</i>	Learning about & experiencing foreign holidays and culture.	<i>*What do you want to do this weekend? I want to ~*</i>
	<i>*What do you want to buy? What do you want to eat? What do you want for Christmas?*</i>	

6th Grade

Greetings from ~ Elementary School: (All year) The standard format is that students write the school's address on an envelope and writes a simple letter including a simple self-introduction. Schools in the city will then exchange letters throughout the year.

International Days: (Once per year per school). 6th grade students will participate in games, interviews, crafts, and skills with foreign teachers visiting from other schools.

1st Term (24 lessons)	2nd Term(28 lessons)	3rd Term (16 lessons)
1. Hi. I'm ~. My name is ~. What's your name? Where are you from? What's your favorite ~? Thank you very much. <i>*Usually, the interview unit is timed for the International Day. Students may prepare an interview for foreigners they may happen to meet on their school trip.*</i>	Writing months. (All term).	6. What do you want to be? I want to be a ~. I don't know. <i>*What do you want to do in junior high / the future?*</i>
2. What's ~ in English? It's ~. <i>*How do you say ~ in English?*</i> What are you like? I'm outgoing / friendly / kind / cool / quiet / funny / shy / hard-working. <i>*What's he / she like? He's / She's lazy / easy-going / smart.*</i>	4. What's the date? When's your birthday? Months of the year. 1st-31st ordinals.	7. Dear ~, thank you for ~. (Give a simple speech in English.) My best memory of ~ Elementary School is ~. <i>*Where do you want to go? Why? What do you want to eat / see? Who do you want to see / meet?*</i>
3. Where do you live? I live in ~.	5. What's your favorite place in Nagahama? It's the train station / lake / park / ~ Temple / ~ Shrine / ~ Castle / ~ Elementary School / home / etc. Where's ~. Directions. What's ~ like? Describing places.	
	Learning about & experiencing foreign holidays and culture.	