

EDU-Port Japan

Enhancement of English Education in Cambodia through ICT

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Abstract: The Education Ministry of Japan approved a proposal to support ICT education in Cambodia through EDU-Port Japan, a public-private initiative to disseminate Japanese-style education overseas. The Japan Society for Educational Technology and UCHIDA Co. Ltd. were the primary sponsors of the EDU-Port project in Cambodia. The theme of this project was the development of English training programs for elementary school teachers by connecting a Cambodian teacher training center (TTC) with Japan-based instructors, and using remote technology and Japanese-developed teaching materials. We visited the TTC classroom in Cambodia almost every month to enhance the level of ICT education and interactive learning that were at the core of a new course of study proposed by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). ICT and interactive learning were combined to enable Cambodian students to practice reviewing the design of English learning programs that look toward Cambodia's future.

Keywords: Digital video clip, EFL, Cambodia support, Education Ministry of Japan project

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

In 2016, the Education Ministry of Japan launched the EDU-Port project. This project aims to share successful innovations in the field of education in Japan with other Asian countries where the Japanese education system is highly valued. These innovations are tried and tested, and have been highly praised, both at home and abroad. Every year, outstanding achievements are presented at various international forums, allowing foreign education ministries to gain deeper insight into the Japanese education system. One of these achievements is the high rate of school-clearing, which deepens moral education. Another is collaborative learning, or ICT education, which enhances self-directed learning and democracy among students. Every country is eager to switch from the "chalk and talk" style of teaching to a learner-oriented style (Reigeluth, 2016).

While respecting the differences between Cambodia and Japan, we would like to focus on what we can do for Cambodia. The per capita GDP is US\$1,300 in Cambodia, compared to US\$388,000 in Japan.

When we think about the future of English education in Cambodia, we should focus on tourism, which accounted for 15 % of Cambodia's GDP in

2011. We see tourism as a key industry in this country, largely dependent on international tourists.

A provincial teacher training center (TTC) is a two-year college that develops the qualifications of elementary school teachers. This organization is the counterpart of the Japanese project. We have been visiting Cambodia every year to illustrate ICT English education and guide English education here.

In 2017, the Education Ministry of Japan approved our proposal for a study focusing on ICT education and the interactive learning method. This project is based on instructional design theory, such as the ARCS model (John Keller, 2010).

Goals of the study

Our study aimed to elucidate strategies for enhancing learning in a TTC in Siem Reap. To develop elementary teachers' basic English communication skills, more attention should be paid to ICT demonstrations, which is also the approach we adopted.

We identified the following goals for our study:

- To clarify effective classroom design for ICT education.
- To familiarize students with ICT equipment.
- To disseminate skills in enhancing small-group interactive learning, which had already been tested in Japan.

- To use students' experiences at the TTC to instill confidence in them to try ICT even after graduation.

METHODOLOGY

While visiting this TTC, we implemented several strategies, already tested in Japan, to set up ICT education and interactive learning. We visited the TTC almost every month, while university student volunteers stayed back for more than two months.

TTC students

Most of the students at the TTC are aged 18–20 years. They are selected after they pass a difficult and competitive entrance examination. After two years of training, with a few exceptions, they are hired as primary school teachers. Around 200 students for one grade are selected from a pool of 4,000 candidates. Those who are selected are highly motivated to be well-trained primary school teachers. One of the aims of this project is to conduct an ICT practicum with them.

As part of their morning routine, the students would lead a flag ceremony and perform cleaning activities at 6:30 a.m. After these preliminary activities, they started their lessons for the day. In the morning, there are four periods lasting until 11:00 a.m, followed by a two-hour break for lunch. In contrast to the situation in Japanese colleges, all subjects are compulsory. Consequently, the students have to attend eight classes a day, from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Design for future classrooms

In Japan, one projector and one computer were set up in each classroom. This setup motivated students to meet classroom challenges. Over the network, a lecture by a professor in Japan, who was teaching instructional design, enabled the students to become familiar with the basic theory of learning.



Figure 1. Cambodia and Japan

Figure 1 shows a TV conference in progress. In this figure, the teacher is engaged in a TV conference with the professor. The theme is instructional design. Attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction are

the key dimensions in learning. The Cambodian students are being introduced to instructional design to enhance their learning.

Video clips (Japanese product) and projector

ICT education was imparted using the tools referred to earlier. An English teacher tutored students to speak key sentences repeatedly, trying to drill rhythm and intonation. English is a foreign language in both Cambodia and Japan. Therefore, adequate practice, through speaking and pronunciation drills, is very important (Kageto, 2015).

It is said that learning English is a kind of physical training: students should practice speaking, rather than merely understanding English grammar. You might know English grammar from A to Z, but if you do not practice speaking, you cannot really make use of this grammatical knowledge. However, student volunteers from Japan conducted several demonstrations. They showed the students how to use the projector and video clips according to the Japanese lesson plan, and focused on interactive learning. At the end of a lesson, group work was conducted by the student volunteers. In 2014, the Education Ministry of Cambodia set forth a strategic direction for English education in primary schools.

Interactive learning

At the end of a video clip training, students were challenged through interactive learning, in which they formed groups and initiated interactive conversations based on given roles. For example, they played the roles of A, B, C, and D.

A asks, "What sport do you like?"

B replies, "I like baseball."

B then asks, "May I ask what your favorite sports are?"

C answers, "My favorite sport is tennis."

C then asks, "What sport do you like?"

During this practice, students were required to participate in self-directed learning. They had to choose one sport and give it as an answer. This training surely improved the cognitive abilities of EFL learners (Kageto, Sato, & Kirkpatrick, 2012).

Teaching practicum at local elementary schools



Figure 2. Teaching practicum

Figure 2 shows a teaching practice session in progress at a primary school. The teacher in this case was a student from the TTC and was teaching English to fourth grade students. After grasping the overall content, the students practiced key sentences by repeating them. The students also enjoyed singing songs to polish their English listening skills.

The teacher used not only the methods of drill and shadowing, but also gave the students the opportunity to try interactive learning. After the groups were formed, students took turns asking and answering.

These methods were introduced by the EDU-Port project and supported by the so-called learning pyramid theory, according to which teaching others is the best way to create active learners. Once again, ICT education consists of ICT equipment and interactive learning.

RESULTS

We prepared a textbook for ICT education in Cambodia and published a brochure for students to explain how ICT functions, and what interactive learning is. This brochure was available in both English and Khmer.

The contents of the brochure are as follows.

1. How to use video clips in an English class
2. How to practice with sounds
3. Lesson plans with video clips
4. How to deliver a presentation
5. Tips for an effective presentation

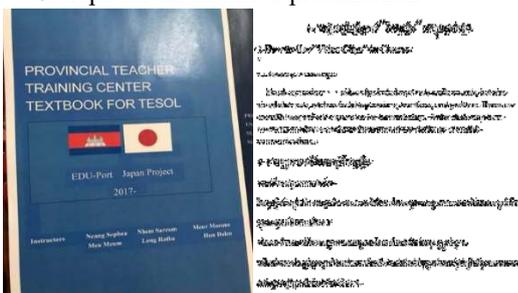


Figure 3. Textbook

Figure 4 shows the results of a survey of ICT education. We administered the questionnaire to second grade students at the provincial TTC. We started this project in November 2017 and conducted the survey in February 2018. Only four months had passed, resulting in a limited period for evaluating the project. However, the survey results show that most students had positive feedback.

The survey questions were as follows:

1. Do you find this project interesting?
2. Do you understand how to use the video clips?
3. Is the textbook from Japan useful?
4. In the near future, do you want to use video clips in your English lessons?
5. Do you understand how to use the video clips?
6. Are you confident to lead your students in interactive learning?

Question 4, “In the near future, do you want to use video clips in your English lessons,” received 150 “Strongly agree” responses and 20 “Agree” responses. However, survey respondents said it might be difficult to arrange ICT equipment when they became teachers.

Financial support will be one of the factors in proceeding with this endeavor.

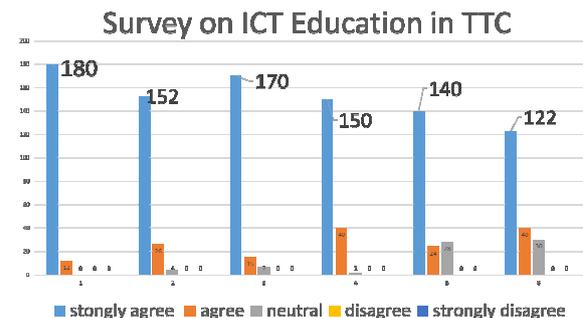


Figure 4. Survey of ICT education

In anticipation of a democratic future for Cambodia, we hope to pursue the project.

DISCUSSION

The EDU-Port project is now expanding in Cambodia (EDU-Port Japan, 2018) and includes ICT utilization and interactive learning. These methods have been tried and tested in Japan in the fields of EFL learning and ICT education (World Youth Meeting, 2018). We expect the methods of the Edu-Port project to be disseminated in other areas and other TTCs. We would now like to clarify our plans for the coming year.

We intend to continue supporting ICT and active learning in Cambodia under the banner of “EDU-Port Japan.” EDU-Port introduced ICT education, which includes knowledge of both ICT equipment and interactive learning. Each teacher from a TTC will go on to teach at least three classes per year. Nearly 150 students could learn and practice English with each teacher. Since about 200 students graduate from a

TTC every year, each crop of graduates could end up influencing as many as 30,000 primary pupils every year.

The most important thing for TCC students is to recognize that the system of ICT education in Japan is a very efficient way to teach English, since it draws on students' experiences. This project will succeed as long as the students at TTCs feel that a new method for ICT education will be valuable.

We would like to enhance the ties between Cambodia and Japan. One specific reason is the higher gender equality among the younger generation in Cambodia, compared with other countries. These students were able to learn together and gained insight into how to build something new through their interaction with students of other genders. Their learning style will be a key factor in helping their society grow into a democratic country. As for the project's washback effect, schools in Japan could review their own high-quality educational environment and more firmly follow the direction suggested by the "New course of Study," proposed by the Education Ministry of Japan (MEXT,2018).

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