



Effectiveness of Tutorial Classes for Beginners of the Japanese Language

Prof Hiroko Sano

Assumption University,
Bangkok, Thailand.

URL: <http://www.els.ngo/jels/2455-393X-57.pdf>

Rationale

The “Implementation Handbook” of National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Thailand, the TQF for Higher Education was initiated to assist the implementation of education guidelines set out in the National Education Act of 1999, to ensure consistency in both standards and award titles, and to make clear the equivalence of academic awards with those granted by higher education institutions in other parts of the world. The framework will help provide appropriate points of comparisons in academic standards not only for institution in their planning and internal quality assurance process, but also for evaluators involved in external reviews, and for employers in understanding the skills and capabilities of graduates they may employ.

The Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and the guideline in implementing the TQF have been proclaimed in July 2009 for higher education institutions to develop or improve their programs of study and the teaching as well as to enhance the quality of education provision so as to produce quality graduates. The TQF is also for the purpose of higher education qualifications recognition.

Under the framework, it is required that the quality of graduates at every level of qualifications and course/field of study fulfils the domain of learning set by the Office of the Higher Education Commission. At least 5 domains of learning need

to be fulfilled, namely (1) ethics and moral development; (2) knowledge; (3) cognitive skills; (4) interpersonal skills and responsibility; and (5) numerical analysis, communication and ICT skills.

Bachelor of Arts Program in Business Japanese, Assumption University was established in 1988. The curriculum has been modified in 2004, remodified in 2011 in compliance with TQF and the new curriculum was implemented in 2012. Objective of the courses, course description, develop of student learning outcomes, teaching methods, evaluation methods, lesson plan, evaluation plan were clearly written on the course specification (TQF3) and the course report (TQF5) was submitted to improve the courses every semester. Teaching method was transformed from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning and the students were evaluated not only by summative assessment but also by formative assessment such as small tests, role-plays and assignments in classes.

However, unexpected result was found that 51.06 % (D: 6.38%, F: 12.77% and W: 31.91%) of the beginners obtained below grade C in the second semester of the academic year 2014. According to the beginners' comments at the end of the semester, difficulty in following the lecturers in English, insufficient class hours, insufficient exercises in class, inequality of the students' background are pointed out.

To solve the above problems and support students' learning and to increase the percentage of the students who are able to pass beginners' courses, free tutorial classes for beginners were offered by the Department for two consecutive semesters. The teachers announced schedules of the tutorial classes on the Department website and in class, prepared review sheets including vocabularies, usage of particles, usage of verb conjugations, usage of question words, usage adverbs, writing sentences and techniques to memorize words and teach 3 hours (2 days x 1.5 hrs.) before the Mid-term examination and 3 hours (2 days x 1.5 hrs.) before the Final examination. During the tutorial classes, students were able to ask questions freely to the teachers and friends in class and do the exercise sheets together.

Literature Review

Some lecturers consider that higher education such as colleges and universities are not compulsory education, therefore inattentive students or slow learners who are not able to follow the lecturers should not study at higher level of education. Such lecturers sometimes expel the students from the classroom and do not mind that they deprive students' opportunity to learn. Some lecturers use traditional teacher-centered teaching method. They teach, give the students exercises and check their mistakes as their routine. This kind of traditional classroom learning is effective, if the students are attentive and motivated to learn. However, this kind of teaching

is not effective for inattentive students or slow learners and it does not help students to pass the subjects. According to four useful studies of Takahashi (1993), Kaznowski (2004) and Madtha (2015), inattentive students or slow learners are quite normal students who are simply not interested in studying under traditional teaching and therefore tutorial classes might be the effective method of learning.

Tutorials may be defined in different ways. Tutoring is commonly understood as the act of giving private lessons to an individual students or a small group of them to teach a specific or skill they are having problems with or want to master. Topping (1996) defines tutoring as people who are not professional teachers helping and supporting the learning of others in an interactive, purposeful and systematic way. Sailomraksa (2014) discussed in the article that staff members from the Office of Student Affairs of the university offered tutorial classes to all students in the university and it was concluded that students were motivated to learn English through their learning support. The tutorial classes were conducted by staff of the university and they did not conduct survey of incremental knowledge and they did not research the students' grades of the English courses after taking the tutorial classes.

Inoue, Ikeno, Utsunomiya (2016) discussed in the article that there is a decline in the students' scholastic ability in their university, therefore they implemented placement test to all freshmen and offered remedial course for the students who obtained lower scores. They tested the students' ability before and after their tutorial classes on Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology and it was found that tutorial classes were effective to raise the students' scholastic ability. They offered the tutorial classes for one semester and concluded that the tutorial classes are effective for the students.

Research Methodology

The tutorial classes in my research were taught by the professional Japanese language lecturers, students' grades of the beginners' courses of the Japanese language before and after the tutorial classes were compared and survey regarding incremental knowledge and level of satisfaction of the students was concluded.

Analysis Result and Discussion

1. Percentage of tutorial classes' participants:

Tutorial classes for JA1700 Introduction to Japanese (semester 1 of first year of study)

Semester	Number of students who participated in tutorial courses	Percent of participants
1/2015	22 students	19.47%
2/2015	16 students	<u>30.77%</u>

Tutorial classes for JA1701 Japanese I (semester 2 of first year of study)

Semester	Number of students who participated in tutorial courses	Percent of participants
1/2015	8 students	20%
2/2015	31 students	<u>45.59%</u>

It was found that the percentage of the participants were much increased. Therefore, the beginners of the Japanese language are interested in the tutorial classes.

2. Grading range of participants who participated in the tutorial classes:

Grading range of JA1700 Introduction to Japanese (semester 1 of first year of study)

Semester	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F	W
Before tutorial 2/2014	14.89%	0%	4.26%	12.77%	8.51%	8.51%	0%	0%	6.38%	12.77%	31.91%
After tutorial 1/2015	27.28%	9.09%	4.54%	4.54%	0%	0%	13.64%	13.64%	13.64%	9.09%	4.54%
After tutorial 2/2015	12.5%	0%	6.25%	18.75%	6.25%	6.25%	6.25%	0%	<u>31.25%</u>	<u>12.5%</u>	0%

Semester	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F	W
Before tutorial 2/2014	17.39%	10.87%	10.87%	13.04%	6.52%	6.52%	6.52%	4.35%	10.87%	1.09%	11.96%
After tutorial 1/2015	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	25%	12.5%	0%	0%	<u>12.5%</u>	0%	0%
After tutorial 2/2015	32.26%	6.45%	16.13%	16.13%	6.45%	6.45%	6.45%	0%	0%	<u>9.68%</u>	0%

Comparing grading range before and after tutorial classes, it was found that the number of unsuccessful beginners were decreased from 51.06% (D: 6.38%, F: 12.77% and W: 31.91%) to 40.91% (C-: 13.64%, D: 13.64%, F: 9.09% and W: 4.54%) in 1/2015. In 2/2015 the beginners who obtain below C are 43.75% (D: 31.25% and F: 12.5%). Therefore it seems that tutorials were not effective. However, they attended the tutorial class only once, therefore it is not to be concluded that tutorials are not effective for beginners to pass the subject.

Grading range of JA1701 Japanese I (semester 2 of first year of study)

Comparing grading range before and after tutorial classes, it was found that the number of unsuccessful beginners were decreased from 28.27% (C-: 4.35%, D: 10.87%, F: 1.09% and W: 11.96%) to 12.5% (D: 12.5%) in 1/2015 and 9.68% (F: 9.68%) by participating in the tutorial classes. However, students who obtained D in 1/2015 and F in 2/2015 attended the tutorial class only once.

3. Questionnaire survey with 5 point scale

Tutorial classes for JA1700 Introduction to Japanese (semester 1 of first year of study)

Incremental knowledge skills	Average	SD
1. Knowledge on vocabularies	4.166667	0.752773
2. Knowledge on particles	4.333333	0.816497
3. Knowledge on adverbs	4.166667	0.752773
4. Knowledge on question words	4	1.095445

5. Knowledge on verb conjugations and usage	4.166667	0.752773
6. Knowledge on making sentences	4.166667	0.408248
7. Listening skills on the Japanese language	4	0.632456
8. Speaking skills on the Japanese language	3.833333	0.408248
9. Reading skills on the Japanese language	4.166667	0.752773
10. Writing skills on the Japanese language	4.333333	0.516398

Level of Satisfaction	Average	SD
11. Adequacy of contents of the tutorial classes	3.833333	0.752773
12. Clearness of explanation by the teachers	4.333333	0.816497
13. Usefulness of supplementary sheets of the tutorial classes	3.833333	0.752773
14. Opportunity of asking questions to the teachers	4.166667	0.983192
15. Classroom of the tutorial classes	4.333333	0.816497
16. Date and time of the tutorial classes	4	0.632456
17. Duration of the tutorial classes	3.833333	0.752773
18. Announcement of the tutorial classes	4	0.894427
19. Confidence in taking exams after attending the tutorial classes	4.166667	0.752773
20. Motivation after attending the tutorial classes	4	0.894427

Tutorial classes for JA1701 Japanese I (semester 1 of first year of study)

Incremental knowledge skills	Average	SD
1. Knowledge on vocabularies	4	0.534522
2. Knowledge on particles	4.5	0.534522
3. Knowledge on adverbs	4.625	0.517549
4. Knowledge on question words	4.375	0.916125
5. Knowledge on verb conjugations and usage	4.25	0.886405
6. Knowledge on making sentences	4.625	0.517549

7. Listening skills on the Japanese language	3.75	0.707107
8. Speaking skills on the Japanese language	3.75	0.707107
9. Reading skills on the Japanese language	4.25	0.46291
10. Writing skills on the Japanese language	4.375	0.517549

Level of Satisfaction	Average	SD
11. Adequacy of contents of the tutorial classes	4.25	0.534522
12. Clearness of explanation by the teachers	4.5	0.534522
13. Usefulness of supplementary sheets of the tutorial classes	4.625	0.517549
14. Opportunity of asking questions to the teachers	4.625	0.916125
15. Classroom of the tutorial classes	4.5	0.886405
16. Date and time of the tutorial classes	4	0.517549
17. Duration of the tutorial classes	4.125	0.707107
18. Announcement of the tutorial classes	4.25	0.707107
19. Confidence in taking exams after attending the tutorial classes	4	0.46291
20. Motivation after attending the tutorial classes	3.875	0.517549

4. Comments from the students who participated in the tutorial classes

According to the students comments, it was found that:

- Students want to join the tutorial classes again.
- Time duration is not enough.
- After attending the tutorial classes, they can memorize the words easily.
 - They need more exercise sheets.
- Tutorial is useful for preparing examinations.

Conclusion

Madtha (2015) discussed in the article that motivation and encouragement is the most significant in language learning. Beginners of the Japanese language have strong motivation to learn the Japanese language in the beginning of the study, because they are interested in Japanese sub-culture such as manga, animation, cosplay, TV series, movies and songs. However, after they received low scores, they lose confidence, become to dislike the Japanese language, give up studying and change their major. According to the analysis result and discussion of this research, tutorial seems to be effective to help them obtain better grades and it could break such a negative cycle and make it positive cycle. However, data from just only 2 consecutive semesters are not enough to conclude that tutorial classes are effective and crucial for the beginners' learning. Therefore tutorial classes will continue to be offered to the beginners and there will be a close watch on them in the following semesters.

Reference

Inoue, Y., Ikeno, S. and Utsunomiya, I. (2016), Remedial Courses Executed by the Learning-Support Team of Showa Pharmaceutical University and Their Effectiveness, *Showa Pharmaceutical University Journal*, vol.50: pp.33-38.

Kaznowski, K. (2004), Slow Learners: Are Educators Leaving Them Behind?, *NASSP Bulletin*, December 2004; vol. 88, 641: pp. 31-45.

Madtha, J. L. (2015), Motivation and Encouragement in Teaching Slow Learners. *International Journal of Current Research* Vol.7, 04, pp.14643-14644.

National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Thailand: Implementation Handbook, Retrieved from

<http://www.mua.go.th/users/tqfhed/news/FilesNews/FilesNews8/NQF-HEd.pdf>

Perlman, C. Weston, C. and Gisel, E. (2005), A Web-Based Tutorial to Enhance Student Learning of Activity Analysis, *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, June 2005; vol. 72, 3: pp. 153-163.

Sailomraksa, P. (2014), English All by Albert Laurence. Paper presented at the 14th Asia Pacific Student Services Association International Conference, Kyoto, Japan. Retrieved from http://www.apssa.info/ace_upload_files/apssa_doc1419934073.pdf

Takahashi, Y. (1993), Learning Strategies of Unsuccessful Beginning Students of Japanese (Unpublished doctoral thesis). West Virginia University.

Topping, K. (1996), The Effectiveness of Peer Tutoring in Further and Higher Education: A Typology and Review of the Literature, *Higher Education*, 32(3), pp.321-345.