

Using data to plan, develop and assess speaking skills of students at P5 level

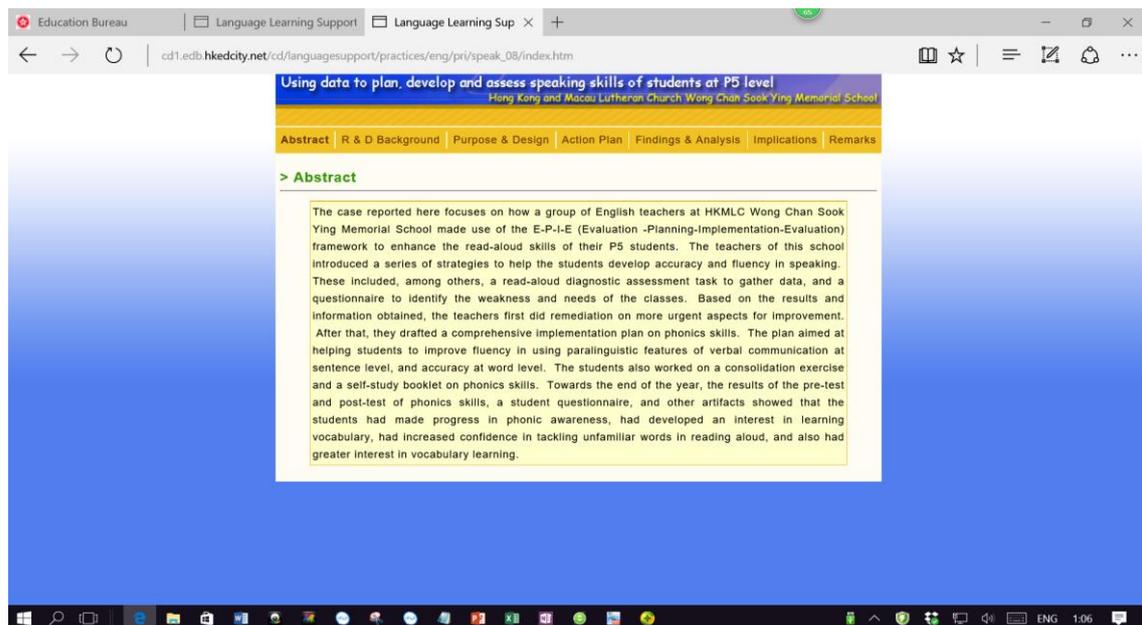
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Source:
School-based practices- primary skills development
Language Learning Support Section, Education Bureau.

Accessed

http://cd1.edb.hkedcity.net/cd/languagesupport/practices_pri_skills.html

3 June 2016



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following content:

- Address bar: cd1.edb.hkedcity.net/cd/languagesupport/practices/eng/pri/speak_08/index.htm
- Page title: **Using data to plan, develop and assess speaking skills of students at P5 level**
- Subtitle: **Hong Kong and Macau Lutheran Church Wong Chan Sook Ying Memorial School**
- Navigation tabs: **Abstract**, R. & D. Background, Purpose & Design, Action Plan, Findings & Analysis, Implications, Remarks
- Section header: **> Abstract**
- Abstract text:

The case reported here focuses on how a group of English teachers at HKMLC Wong Chan Sook Ying Memorial School made use of the E-P-I-E (Evaluation -Planning-Implementation-Evaluation) framework to enhance the read-aloud skills of their P5 students. The teachers of this school introduced a series of strategies to help the students develop accuracy and fluency in speaking. These included, among others, a read-aloud diagnostic assessment task to gather data, and a questionnaire to identify the weakness and needs of the classes. Based on the results and information obtained, the teachers first did remediation on more urgent aspects for improvement. After that, they drafted a comprehensive implementation plan on phonics skills. The plan aimed at helping students to improve fluency in using paralinguistic features of verbal communication at sentence level, and accuracy at word level. The students also worked on a consolidation exercise and a self-study booklet on phonics skills. Towards the end of the year, the results of the pre-test and post-test of phonics skills, a student questionnaire, and other artifacts showed that the students had made progress in phonic awareness, had developed an interest in learning vocabulary, had increased confidence in tackling unfamiliar words in reading aloud, and also had greater interest in vocabulary learning.

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> Abstract

The case reported here focuses on how a group of English teachers at HKMLC Wong Chan Sook Ying Memorial School made use of the E-P-I-E (Evaluation -Planning-Implementation-Evaluation) framework to enhance the read-aloud skills of their P5 students. The teachers of this school introduced a series of strategies to help the students develop accuracy and fluency in speaking. These included, among others, a read-aloud diagnostic assessment task to gather data, and a questionnaire to identify the weakness and needs of the classes. Based on the results and information obtained, the teachers first did remediation on more urgent aspects for improvement. After that, they drafted a comprehensive implementation plan on phonics skills. The plan aimed at helping students to improve fluency in using paralinguistic features of verbal communication at sentence level, and accuracy at word level. The students also worked on a consolidation exercise and a self-study booklet on phonics skills. Towards the end of the year, the results of the pre-test and post-test of phonics skills, a student questionnaire, and other artifacts showed that the students had made progress in phonic awareness, had developed an interest in learning vocabulary, had increased confidence in tackling unfamiliar words in reading aloud, and also had greater interest in vocabulary learning.

> R & D Background

The success in using an E-P-I-E (Evaluation-Planning-Implementation-Evaluation) framework in education relies to a great extent on good use of data, particularly at the stages of evaluation and planning. Before initiating the process of data collection, it is important to first reflect on the types of data that are needed with reference to the objectives that we have set for a particular intervention. We should also have a clear idea about how we are going to go about the process of collecting that data and how it will be analyzed.

The range of data sources that can be used for the purposes of assessing the effectiveness of language teaching and learning includes, but is not restricted to, for example, video recordings of student performance, written work, portfolios, pre- and post-test papers, perception questionnaires, and interviews. The choice of source will depend, amongst other things, on

what aspect of student learning we wish to focus on, and how we wish to conceptualise that learning.

Although student performance data are more commonly used for the purposes of final grading and promotion to higher levels, Kirkup et al (2005) emphasize that teachers need to be aware of how they can make use of data to track student progress and set realistic learning targets, identify underachieving pupils for further support and inform strategic planning of teaching and learning activities.

As is now widely known and backed up by extensive research, assessment should serve not only the purpose of certifying student learning at the end of the process (i.e. assessment of learning), but also of guiding and informing that process (assessment for learning). The latter is defined as 'the process in which teachers seek to identify and diagnose student learning problems, and provide quality feedback for students on how to improve their work.' (1)

As the ultimate goal of making use of data and having assessment for learning is to improve student learning, what exactly can teachers do after analyzing the data collected? According to Kirkup et al (ibid), teachers can

- highlight specific weaknesses for individual pupils
- identify weaknesses in topics for the class as a whole
- inform accurate curricular targets for individual pupils
- provide evidence to support decisions as to where to focus resources and teaching

Johnson (1997) points out that for the sake of continuous improvement, it is crucial for teachers to choose a specific area to focus on as the data-collection cycle and subsequent action steps should be designed to address these needs.

To sum up, when planning to use student learning data for the purposes of curriculum development and to inform teaching and learning, teachers need to:

1. choose the specific area they want to focus on;
2. decide on what they want to find out;
3. select appropriate sources of data and collect data as they become available;
4. analyze the data and spell out the findings and implications for practice;
5. plan and implement actions that take into account the findings and implications worked out;
6. collect data about the impact of the actions implemented on student learning;
7. start another data analysis cycle (back to step 4)

> Purpose & Design

The P5 teachers of this school in Yuen Long would like to put more efforts into helping their students improve their read-aloud skills. Read-aloud skills are tested at TSA and the teachers reflected that when the students do it in class, they usually have problems tackling less familiar words and thus hesitate frequently during reading, and many cannot read sentences in a passage with appropriate pauses, word stress and intonation. So the teachers decided to use the E-P-I-E (Evaluation-Planning-Implementation-Evaluation) framework to analyse the problems and try out different strategies to improve the read-aloud skills of the students. They started with an evaluation of the current situation by using a diagnostic test. Then they planned immediate remedial actions and worked out a longer term plan.

In order to ensure their actions were relevant to the needs of the students, the teachers based their decision-making process on specific sets of data. For an evaluation of the project, the teachers collected ongoing student work, e.g. video recording of student performance, pre- and post-test results, and other relevant written work to measure the progress of students, used student questionnaires to learn about the views of students on the usefulness of the learning activities, and finally quantitative analysis of the results from the pre- and post-tests. In addition to that, the test results were analyzed to gauge the effectiveness of the measures taken.

> Action Plan

Stage 1: Evaluation (I) (Fact finding)

- Decide on what to find out and select appropriate sources of data and collect data as they become available
- Choose an assessment task to collect read-aloud performance of students
- Design a questionnaire for students to complete after the task

Evaluation	Procedure
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With the data of the test and the questionnaire, the teachers analysed different aspects of students' pronunciation. They also tried to spot other weaknesses which had been neglected in the busy classroom. Through the collection of data about students' performance, the teachers were able to make informed decisions about which areas to focus on specifically and how to go about addressing the needs of their students.

Stage 2: Planning

- Analyze the data and spell out the findings and implications for practice
- Select a focus area for intensive teaching and learning

Oct 2010

Identify weaknesses and select focus areas for instruction

After the test, the teachers analysed the results and referred to the responses in the questionnaire when planning for remediation and instruction on difficult items. The test and the questionnaire provided useful information for the teachers. The students' initial performance was not entirely satisfactory. Some students read softly and could hardly be heard. Besides, many could not read the sentences in meaningful units; instead they read word by word. Some students' body language also showed a lack of confidence and hindered the rhythm of breathing during speaking. Paralinguistic features (i.e. gestures, facial expressions, volume, pauses, stress, intonation etc.) also required improvement because they can affect the meaning and delivery of the messages of a speaker.

The teachers also identified various kinds of mistakes in the pronunciation of the students. For example, some dropped the last sound of a word, mispronounced contracted words, and mixed up the blends and rimes of words.

Some words students find it difficult to pronounce

words	pronounced as	words	pronounced as
bus	<i>bass</i>	others	<i>orders</i>
have	<i>had</i>	late	<i>la(te)</i>
shouldn't	<i>should not</i>	talk	<i>tal(k)</i>
diet	<i>dear</i>	quiet	<i>quie(t)</i>

Thus the teachers found it necessary to give remediation lessons to tackle some more urgent aspects, e.g. contracted forms/ negative short forms (e.g. shouldn't). But the more intensive work was placed on how to tackle unfamiliar words when reading a text. The decision was made because these are also common problems as pointed out in a TSA report in a seminar by HKEAA in 2010.

The teachers learned about the problems and strategies reported by the students in the post diagnostic test questionnaire. For example, some students knew 'repair' strategies, e.g. 'transcribing the words literally to help with my pronunciation', 'to guess if I don't know the words.' Although the students had been previously told that they should rehearse silently before being asked to read a text aloud, this was of little value to them as they did not know any strategy to tackle the problems. So the teachers felt that they needed to teach basic phonics skills so that students could learn how to tackle unfamiliar words confidently.

Stage 3: Planning-Implementation (I)

- Plan and implement scaffolding activities for student learning that take into account the findings and implications worked out :

<p>Oct 2010– Mar 2011 Remediation and instruction</p>	<p>After selecting the focus areas for intensive teaching and learning, the teachers decided to provide remediation and instruction in the following aspects:</p> <p>Sentence level- to improve body language and other paralinguistic features of speech.</p> <p>a. Lessons on appropriate manners, voice and tempo when reading aloud.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher showed examples of good and bad manners when reading a text aloud • Group activity : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students discuss the appropriate and inappropriate manners and postures based on the data collected (recording of initial students performance) <div data-bbox="975 1588 1337 1960" data-label="Image"> </div>
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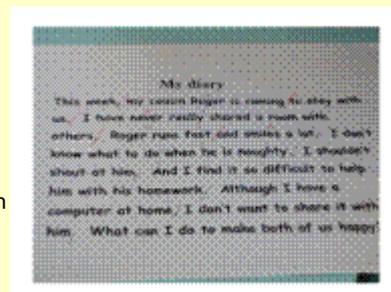
The students learned to pause and add stress to words in the text, etc. at the connected speech level. They also learned to use appropriate posture and gestures to make their voice audible when reading aloud. This helped with their fluency in speaking.

[Lesson \(PPT\)](#)



b. Lessons on using punctuation (e.g. comma, full-stop) to decide on the duration of pauses in the text and to choose which key words to stress when reading aloud.

- Teachers played the audio clips of the task to demonstrate how to read the passages correctly.
- Group activity:
 - Students pointed out the features of a good read-aloud example
 - They used symbols to suggest appropriate words for emphasis and place to pause in text: My Diary (adapted from TSA 2010 Speaking Paper 6ES07)
 - They tried to make good use of punctuation marks and connectives to display intonation and pause in appropriate places.



Word level- to learn phonics skills

If students learn phonics skills, they can develop the basic awareness of the basic sound patterns and phonics rules, and this will help build up their confidence in decoding new words. Then they are more likely to pause at meaningful units when reading aloud rather than pause at every word they find difficult. The teachers decided to adopt the following methods to teach phonics to the two P5 classes. As

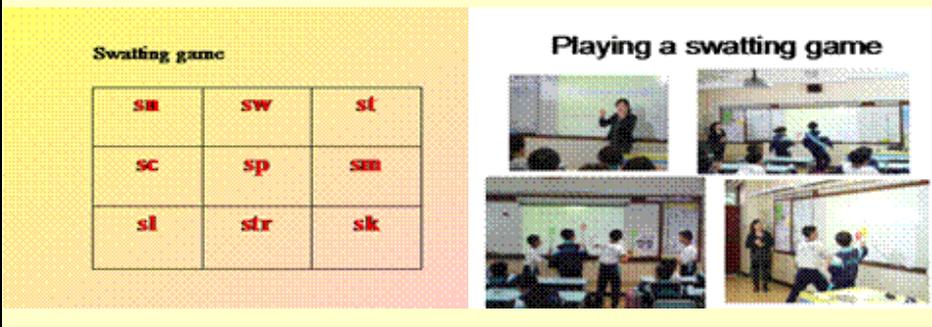
the students had been taught some initial phonics skills at their P3 level, the teachers arranged more intensive skills instruction and practice now.

[Phonics skills schedule](#)



Some lessons on phonics skills:

- Teach students how to read initial consonant cluster words (sc-, sk-, sl-, sm-, sn-, sp-, squ-, st-, str-, sw-)
- Teach students how to work out the pronunciation of difficult words:
 - Select the target content of a phonics teaching syllabus
 - Teach the set of blends and rimes through explicit instruction
- Activities: Play a swatting game on initial consonant clusters. Have guided practice to revise the letter sounds and worksheets for consolidation and independent learning



Stage 4: Evaluation (II) (Assessment for learning)

- Design a test to track student progress in phonics skills

Jan 2011
Assessment
for
learning:
collect data
about the
impact of
the actions

In addition to providing scaffolding activities to help students address the problems identified earlier, the teachers also collected data to gauge the effectiveness of these scaffolding activities and to inform successive action cycles. To track students' learning progress, the teachers devised a phonics test to be used as both pre-test and post-test.

[Phonics test paper](#)



implemented on student learning

Focus: Rimes and blends

Phonics in words test/ Primary

Focus: rimes
 Name: _____ Date: _____
 Level/ Class 5 _____ No. _____ Total: _____/36
 Read the words loudly and clearly.

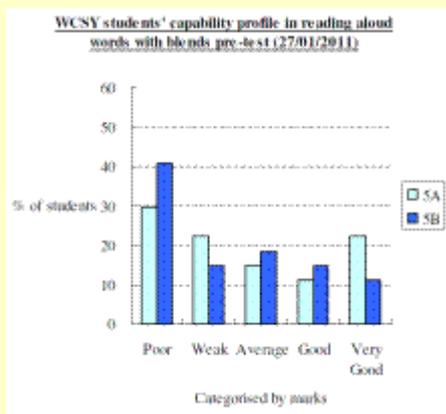
Part 1 (7)			
Tuck	snack	cake	kind
chap	chat	play	
Part 2 (7)			
van	sit	risk	ring
till	came	wins	
Part 3 (8)			
garden	grass	risk	wall
drink	lamp	cube	bag
Part 4 (4)			
west	main	gate	bank
Part 5 (10)			
Tai Wai	role	tag	rash
hot	sick	ship	bug
lump	trunk		

The pre-test is a test paper for students to read aloud individual words. Students had to read 36 words in the section on rimes and 35 words in the section on blends. Words are chosen from words in the textbooks or words they should know in daily life, e.g. Tai Wai; and the words are grouped into categories based on their similarity in the letter pattern, e.g. sm, sn, sc, st, sk, sp.

Part 1 (5)

smoke	snow	scout
stop	skate	spoon

A profile of students' knowledge of phonics skills was obtained through the pre-test in term 1. Students were put into groups (i.e. poor, weak, average, good and very good) according to the marks they obtained in the pre-test in the section on blends and the section on rimes. This enabled the teachers to identify a group of weaker students that required special support, and also difficult areas common to most students.



In the pre-test, the overall trend of the performances of individual parts:

For 5A, it is recommended that rimes be taught more intensively.

Rimes - Part 4, part 5

Blends - Part 5

For 5B, it is recommended that rimes be taught more intensively.

Sequence of teaching :

Rimes - Part 4, part 5

Blends - Part 2

Teachers addressed the results of the pre-test by changing emphasis on the content of teaching:

Stage 5: Planning-Implementation (II)

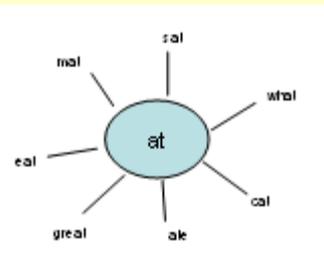
- Plan and implement actions that take into account the findings and implications worked out : to provide scaffolding activities for student learning

Apr 2011-

May 2011

Remediation and instruction

The teachers planned a series of interesting games to encourage students to practise English word sounds.



Consolidation and self-learning

The teachers assigned further phonics skills exercises in class and produced a self study booklet for students to do more practice at home over the long holidays.

Self study booklet	←	<p style="text-align: center;">UNIT 3 ask of an address of us A. Read them out loud.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>exam</td><td>state</td><td>opt</td><td>snake</td></tr> <tr><td>weak</td><td>quake</td><td>swan</td><td>snake</td></tr> <tr><td>skew</td><td>spelt</td><td>swell</td><td>snake</td></tr> <tr><td>smack</td><td>smear</td><td>slab</td><td>share</td></tr> <tr><td>spread</td><td>stern</td><td>sway</td><td>slap</td></tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">B. Read them out loud.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Press into Emily's shoes. 2. The film is repeated every evening to ensure it does not wash. 3. The smell of my snake attracts a snake. 4. Mrs. Smith is scared of the slab. 	exam	state	opt	snake	weak	quake	swan	snake	skew	spelt	swell	snake	smack	smear	slab	share	spread	stern	sway	slap						
exam	state	opt	snake																									
weak	quake	swan	snake																									
skew	spelt	swell	snake																									
smack	smear	slab	share																									
spread	stern	sway	slap																									
Consolidation exercise	←	<p style="text-align: center;">EXERCISE 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Student A --- Student B</p> <p>Read the following words out loud to Student B: number 1: smash...</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>smash</td><td>3</td><td>bean</td><td>5</td><td>swice</td><td>7</td><td>swill</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>spal</td><td>4</td><td>skim</td><td>6</td><td>strand</td><td>8</td><td>spoon</td></tr> </table> <p>or.....</p> <p style="text-align: center;">EXERCISE 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Student B --- Referee:</p> <p>Write down numbers 1, 2, 3, 4... when you are listening to the words read aloud by your partner: number 1: smash...</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1</td><td>smash</td><td>skim</td><td>spal</td><td>strand</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>spoon</td><td>bean</td><td>swill</td><td>swice</td></tr> </table> <p style="font-size: small; text-align: center;">© 2004 Macmillan Education Ltd. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the prior written permission of Macmillan Education Ltd.</p>	1	smash	3	bean	5	swice	7	swill	2	spal	4	skim	6	strand	8	spoon	1	smash	skim	spal	strand		spoon	bean	swill	swice
1	smash	3	bean	5	swice	7	swill																					
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Stage 6: Evaluation (III)

Evaluate the effectiveness of the project with reference to the video recordings of student performance, test papers, questionnaires and other relevant written and oral work to measure student progress

Jun 2011	In June, the students took the same test and the results of the post-test were compared with those in the pre-test. The analysis showed some progress had been made by different groups of students.
End-of-Year Assessment	Evaluation:
Overall evaluation	<p>End of year questionnaire for students ←</p> <p>The end-of-year evaluation questionnaire contains a new question on the teaching/learning activities:</p>

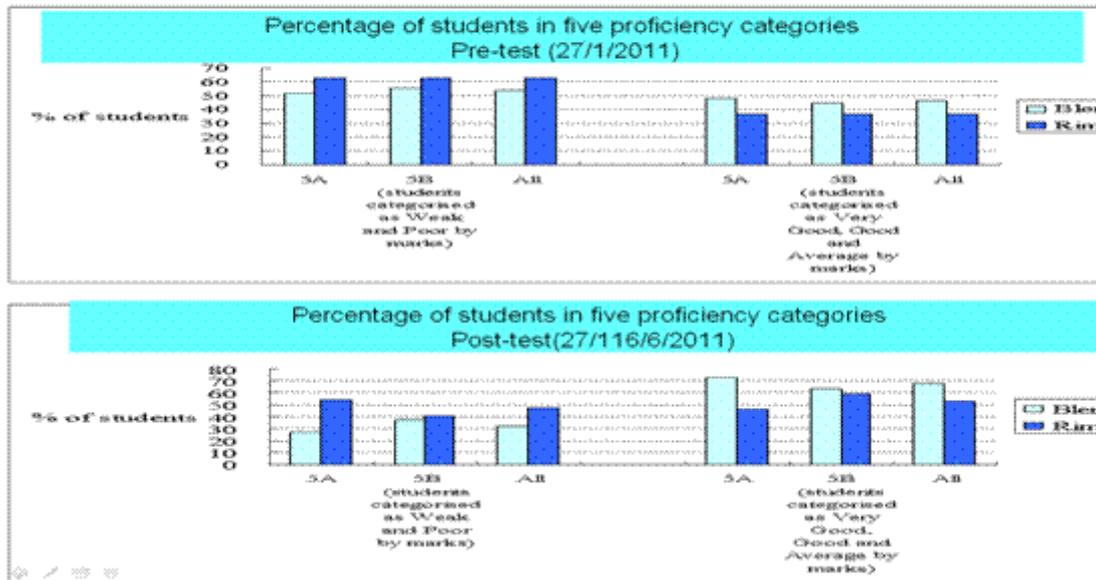
	<p>Which of the following activities help raise your speaking ability? You can circle more than one. 以下哪一項活動能幫助提升你的朗讀技巧</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A. PowerPoint (課堂簡報)▪ B. Phonics games (拼音遊戲)▪ C. Booklet (拼音朗讀手冊)▪ D. Mind map (生詞腦圖)▪ E. Bonus part of the dictation (默書加分站)
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> Findings & Analysis

The project reported here entailed a cycle of assessment used for learning purposes (rather than to grade students), direct instruction, self-learning, and reflection. The teachers made use of data from assessment tasks for different purposes, viz. identifying and understanding their students' weaknesses, and devising materials for remedial teaching. The design of phonics pre-test and post-test helped the teachers develop targeted phonics materials and track student learning progress.

According to the results of the read-aloud test, the actions implemented had a positive impact on student learning. From an analysis of phonics post-test results, students of both P5 classes were able to make progress in the target skills.

Pre-test and post-test profiles: Distribution of students in five proficiency categories



The above table shows that there is a significant drop in the percentage of students in the proficiency categories 'weak and poor'. The improvement of student performance may also be understood through triangulation of other data, e.g. an end-of-year questionnaire, and student work.

Class 5A (Total no. of students: 27)

The activities gave them opportunities to practise speaking English. The majority of the students (16) felt that they had tried their best to improve their performance. Quite a number of them found that the phonics games and the bonus part of the dictation helped them improve their target skills. This was reflected in the increase in the number of students obtaining higher marks in their post-test in this class (12 students in blends test and 3 students in rimes test).

Class 5B (Total no. of students: 27)

Many of the students (11) felt confident about their learning. Many of them found that the PowerPoint (12), phonic games (10), booklet (6) and the bonus part of the dictation (6) helped them improve their target skills. This was reflected in the increase in the number of students obtaining higher marks in their post-test in this class (13 students in blends test and 15 students in rimes test).

The end-of-year questionnaire (Jun 2011) also gave students an opportunity to describe the strategies they used when preparing for the phonics post-test. This is a sign of progress since they did not write much on this question in the questionnaire completed in the first term.

Question: How did you use the preparation time?

自己不懂的, 自己不會的, 試讀不會的單詞, 讀給同學聽, 我會將那些生字, 讀幾次, 令我記得。
留意生字的字母拼出來, 和同學一起溫習

Students also appreciated teachers' effort to provide various activities for them.

- (A) Powerpoint (課堂簡報)
- (B) Phonics games (拼音遊戲)
- (C) Booklet (拼音朗讀手冊)
- (D) Mind map (生詞腦圖)
- (E) Bonus part of the dictation (默書加分站)

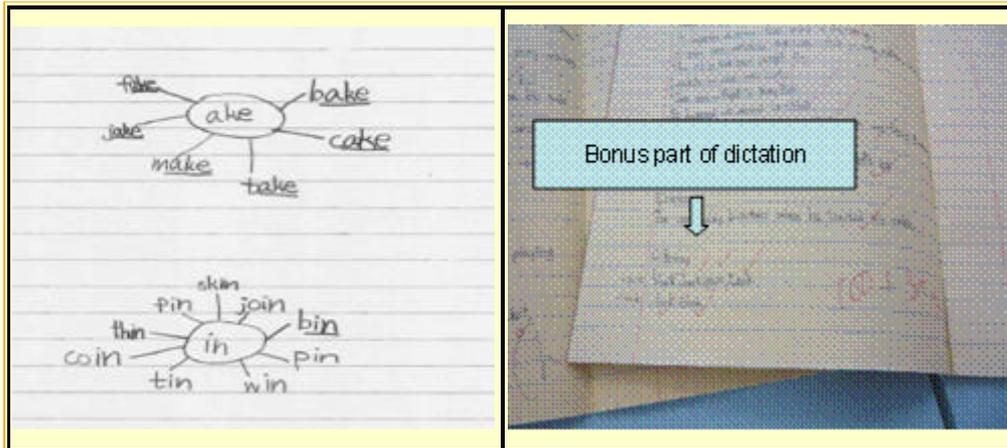
For some students, reading English texts is still a challenging task:

朗讀英文時, 英文字真的很難讀
難記入腦。

But some began to get interested in reading aloud:

我覺得很有趣, 可以知道多一些生字。

Apart from the good impact on phonic awareness, the teachers pointed out that the project also helped the students enrich their vocabulary. For example, they learned new words when they were looking for words to complete a mind map exercise in their note books.



Students' positive attitude to learning was also reflected in the effort they put into completing the bonus section of the dictation. They became very serious and eager as they worked hard to get marks on the phonics skills related part. The teachers noted that some students were more willing to apply the phonics knowledge in the oral exam to tackle unfamiliar words. The students were serious and motivated in learning and their vocabulary was enriched as a result of classroom activities.

> Implications

This project involved the Panel Head, P5 teachers, and the NET. In the evaluation meeting by the end of the second term, the Panel Head expressed appreciation for the effort of the panel and the way the initiative was conducted. She pointed out the use of data to inform teaching and learning in this way was new to the panel. The systematic analysis of data helped the teachers set a focus for their actions and build appropriate evaluation mechanisms to gauge the effectiveness of the strategies used.

For a project on using data to improve student learning to be successful, teachers need to pay attention to the following:

1. Reflect on how to collect, analyze and use data (c.f. R&D section).
2. Collect a mix of qualitative and quantitative data, if possible, as this will provide a more holistic picture of the students' needs and how to address them.

3. Use the data to understand how students feel about their English language learning experience.
4. Share the data with the students and raise their awareness of their weaknesses to help them understand the rationale for teachers' actions.

Finally, it is important to share some of the difficulties the teachers faced in the project. The teachers tried out a read-aloud assessment, a pre-test and a post- test, all of which required them to assess individual students. As they wanted to keep the class time for teaching, they decided to use recess, and lunch time for these tasks. The two teachers and the NET shared out the assessment work in both classes. Moreover, the lessons for remediation and new teaching also took extra time that had not been initially set aside. So when embarking on any teaching and learning enhancement project, teachers need to think carefully about how they can re-allocate tasks to ensure effective use of time.

In order to cope with the issue of time, the teachers involved in this project recommended the following strategies:

- Use 5 minutes in a lesson as warm up to teach the skills or practise skills learnt previously
- Infuse some strategies into other activities and games used whenever appropriate
- Add more intensive phonics syllabus to the scheme of work early and teach the phonics package extensively across P1-P6 levels
- Share out the diagnostic assessment and pre- and post- tests among all teachers

> Remarks

Note: (1)

The definition of assessment for learning was accessed on EDB website, 25 August

2012

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=2410&langno=1>

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<http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-3/data.html>

Acknowledgements:

Ms Winnie Chan

Ms Purdey Kum

Ms Janet Wong

Hong Kong and Macau Lutheran Church Wong Chan Sook Ying Memorial School