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Studies On Educational Television For Schools In Japan

By

Sachiko Imaizumi Kodaira
Studies on Educational Television for Schools in Japan

by

Mrs Sachiko Imaizumi Kodaira
Japan

Outline of Studies on School Broadcasting in Japan

Since the beginning of educational broadcasting for schools by NHK (radio in 1935, TV in 1953), a large number of studies have been conducted on its different aspects in Japan.

NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute has played an active role in improving planning and production of NHK's school broadcasts, by providing various basic data continuously.

Other research groups studying educational methods and educational content at universities are also interested in school broadcasting. They have conducted a variety of studies on teaching methods for effective utilization of school broadcasts, on measurement and evaluation of children's viewing ability and on development of curricula for media education, and so on.

Another important characteristic of studies on school broadcasting in Japan is the huge accumulation of studies by school teachers based on their daily classroom experiences.

It is also very important to know that these professionals from different backgrounds and NHK's producers of school broadcasting also have been cooperating in various studies in many ways.

Studies on School Broadcasting by NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute

In this presentation, I would like to introduce some examples of studies on school broadcasting conducted by NHK's Research Institute. These studies can be divided into the following two major categories: surveys on current use of radio and TV school broadcasting and studies by experiments to improve programmes and develop new programmes.

NHK School Broadcast Utilization Survey

The first category of studies uses the methods of social survey. Nationwide questionnaire surveys by sampling method called "NHK School Broadcast Utilization Survey" have been conducted annually since 1950. The survey covers a total of around 5,000 kindergartens, nursery schools, primary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, and schools for handicapped children throughout Japan.

One of the main topics of this survey is the utilization rates and styles of radio and TV school broadcasts. Another important topic is evaluation of individual programmes and of school broadcasting as a whole. (It is possible, for example, to learn even through questionnaires how...
Studies on English Language Programmes

This is an example of a multiple-approach study on school TV English Language programmes conducted by myself in the early 1980’s.

In the first step of the study, the result of the surveys covering teachers of English and pupils at junior and senior high schools revealed that the proportion of both teachers and pupils who regarded NHK’s school TV English programmes as “difficult” was considerably high.

In the subsequent stage, I conducted experiments using a programme analyzer, asking pupils to respond whether they could understand the contents of the programme, chosen from the NHK’s school TV series, during their viewing. The result of this analysis indicated that 30% to 50% of the pupils responded reacted as “I couldn’t understand” even when English sentences with simple structures were presented on TV, and this was presumed to result from the use of relatively difficult terms.

In the next stage of the study, I prepared several kinds of experimental VCR segments, and the relationship between the degree of difficulty of English terms used in the segment and the comprehension of the pupils was analyzed. The result revealed that listening ability of the pupils is generally lower than estimated by their teachers. As for the pupils’ abilities to comprehend the main points of English sentences, pupils, especially those whose achievement in English Language is low, are not able to properly understand individual sentences or the whole story when the terms which they have not learned at school are used, even when such unknown terms are not essential for the comprehension of the story.

These data could give both teachers and producers of NHK’s school programmes some basic, important suggestions.

Studies for Development of New Programmes for Preschool Children

Various surveys in the mid-1970’s revealed that children at the age of two and three watch television for surprisingly long periods of time and seem highly susceptible to TV influences. At the same time, the study of developmental psychology has made it clear that a number of things which children in this age bracket should learn can be taught through television.

In response, the producers of NHK’s “With Mother”,** the researchers at the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, and developmental psychologists and pedagogists at universities got together to form a project team called "Research Project on Television Programming for Two-year-olds" in 1978, and they have since been working together to develop new types of educational programmes for very young children. In doing so, they have often adopted the method of viewing-experiments using test-produced programmes which are shown to children (2-6 years old) individually in an experiment room.

In the case of developing "Hi, Pose!" -- a yoga-type exercise segment for two-year-olds, as a part of “With Mother”, -- eight experimental segments were made using different approaches (such as using a man or woman performer, variety of poses of yoga and variety of instructions, and so on.) These were shown to children individually, and their reactions were analyzed, to obtain useful suggestions for the most appropriate composition of the segment.

The most recent example of programme development is a one-minute animated series called “Kids Like Us” which has been broadcast every day as a part of “With Mother” since September, 1986.
For further information on the studies for development of programmes for young children, including background of the studies and precise explanation of the method of experiments, the following references are available in English.
