

Integrating English and Arts in Library-Based Outreach Programs for Young Learners in Japan

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Abstract

This presentation reports on two library-based English outreach programs conducted in Japan, designed to foster young learners' interest in English through creative, hands-on activities. Both events were collaboratively organized and facilitated by university students enrolled in a teacher training program for teaching English to children.

The first event, held in October 2022 at a public library, invited twelve children aged 5 to 11 to explore English vocabulary through the theme of "vegetable stamping." After a storytelling session and vocabulary introduction, participants created original artwork using cut vegetables and paint. Children gave English titles to their works and presented them to the group. Feedback from participants included comments such as, "It was fun!" and "I learned vegetable names in English and want to teach them to my friends."

The second event, conducted in June 2023 at a university library, engaged ten elementary school students in a panel theater activity based on the well-known Japanese picture book *Guri and Gura*. After an English warm-up game ("What's in the box?"), participants brainstormed ideas for egg dishes, drew key props, and created panel pieces. Each child then performed a short English scene using their creations, and the session concluded with a group video viewing of their collaborative performance. Children's responses reflected enjoyment and a sense of achievement: "I can say 'egg' in English now," and "It was fun making props and performing."

These activities not only offered meaningful English exposure in a non-formal setting but also served as valuable teaching experiences for university students. The integration of English and the arts in a library setting proved effective in fostering children's confidence, creativity, and willingness to use English in authentic contexts.