

IOE Confucius Institute for Schools
Annual Chinese Conference 2014

Action Research:
How to prepare effectively for
GCSE Mandarin reading exam
(April-May 2014)

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objective

To outline briefly:

- What I did
- What I learned
- What I plan to do next



context

- Y11 Mandarin class
- 18 students, predicted A*-C

Problem:

- Low grades in December mock reading exam
- Because of poor retention of characters

goal

To find more and better ways
to help students to
memorise characters and
develop reading skills
in order to
achieve better GCSE grades

What I did

1. Letter to parents
2. Questionnaire to students to find out:
 - How useful current activities were
 - Ideas for what the teacher could do to help more
3. Semi-structured interviews with students to probe some questionnaire results more deeply.

Questionnaire

How can you prepare effectively for the GCSE reading exam?

Predicted grade for Chinese GCSE: Mock reading grade (Dec 2013):

Please answer the questions below.

1=very useful, 2=useful, 3=okay, 4=not useful, 5=useless, 6=I don't know

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. How useful is a weekly vocab test? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2. How useful are past GCSE questions grouped in topics? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 3. How useful are past AQA reading papers? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4. How useful are past Edexcel reading papers? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5. How useful are on-line resources? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Please list any on-line resources you use, and how you use them:

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6. What ways are most effective for you to learn vocabulary?

List as many as you can (10 maximum).

Then number them 1 – 10. Most effective = 1. Least effective = 10

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7. What can your teacher do to help you to learn vocabulary and to prepare for the reading exam?

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What I learned

Varied usefulness:

- Edexcel past papers
- On-line resources

Surprising:
student comments in i/v
re on-line learning

To learn vocab, what they thought most effective:

1. Writing & re-writing characters
2. Flashcards
3. Games/past papers/vocab lists/on-line

What the teacher could do:

1. Past papers
2. games/puzzles
3. vocab lists

What I did next

Adapted my lessons:

- Time to write/re-write on 'pretty' sheet
- Time to make flashcards in class & test each other (games in pairs/groups)
- Found 'puzzle' starters
- Put Edexcel past papers in shared drive and 'made' students try them
- Reminded re Quizlet website details
- Access to Vocab Express - free trial
- Continued with games, vocab test, AQA qns

Three Times!

Can you write your spellings out in three different ways? How will you do it? Different colours? Different handwriting? Different sizes? You choose!



Spelling Word	Spelling Word	Spelling Word
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9
10	10	10

What happened

- Increased motivation & engagement
- Edexcel papers - students said they would now access independently to revise
- Vocab Express - most students used it; some found the learning format helpful; others liked the competition
- Quizlet - most students used it; some preferred the format to V.E.

Future ideas

Consider:

- Subscription to Vocab Express or something similar for whole of GCSE course
- Use other ideas (eg 'pretty' vocab copying sheet) earlier