

INTERCHANGE WORKS:

A Report on Two Studies

INTRODUCTION *Interchange* has been used by more than 50 million people all over the world. Throughout its several editions, teachers have consistently reported that it works. Their students learn English when they study with *Interchange*.

This kind of anecdotal evidence is interesting in its own right, but data tells a better story. This paper reports on two independent studies on how well students learn English when they study with *Interchange*. In each case, the results indicate that teachers are right. *Interchange* works.

THE RELIABILITY OF THE INTERCHANGE PLACEMENT TEST Each of these studies uses the Interchange placement test as a way to measure student learning. This is only possible due to the rigorous reliability analysis that the test underwent. Analysis with hundreds of students from all over the world show a reliability coefficient of 0.95 (reliability coefficients run from 0.1 to 1.0, and a coefficient of 0.80 is regarded as the minimum for good reliability.). This means that the test can be confidently used as a measure of student learning with *Interchange*.

Study #1

A University in Japan

BACKGROUND

Gregory Hadley designed an English curriculum for a private university in Japan. The goals of the program were for students to be able to communicate confidently in English. He needed materials that would be of similar quality to what he and his teachers would create on their own if they had the time to do so. He also needed those materials to be relevant to Japanese learners.

After careful consideration, he chose *Interchange* for the program. He found the syllabus to be appropriate; the content to be inclusive of a wide variety of nationalities, roles, and accents; and its modular design allowed him to customize the order in which the material is presented and practiced.

Hadley participated in the global assessment of the placement test, and years of use upheld these findings, as students were well placed based on the results of the test.

At this university, all students are required to study English for the first two semesters. Hadley wanted to know whether the course materials he had selected, designed as they were for a global audience, would result in good learning outcomes for the students in his program.

METHOD

From 2006 to 2011, all incoming freshmen completed the *Interchange* placement test twice. The first administration was at the beginning of the first semester and the second after having completed the second semester. In all, approximately 700 students' learning was tracked.

RESULTS

Students consistently showed that they had moved up in level. They hadn't simply passed their classes; their English had improved enough to move on. See *Chart 1*.

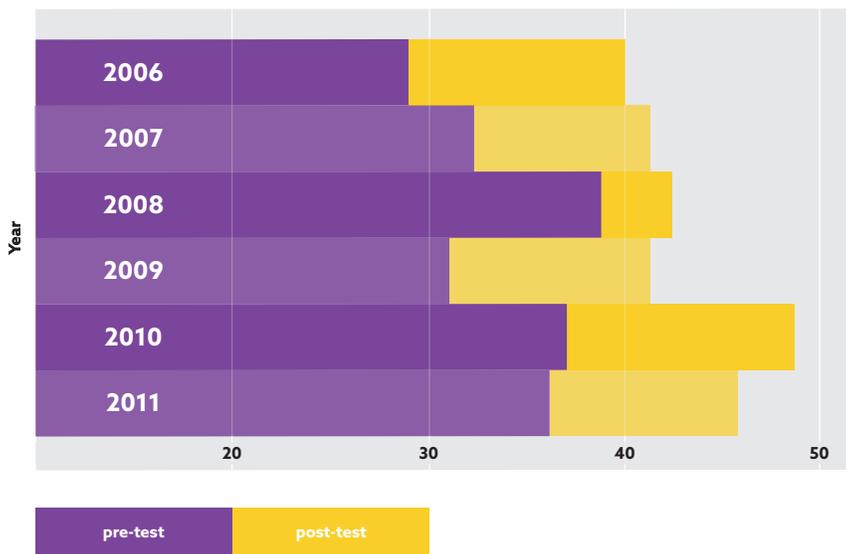


Chart 1. Mean scores converted from placement test results. For a full statistical analysis, including reporting on statistical significance and effect size, see Hadley's book chapter.

It is worth noting that in one year, 2008, a much smaller effect is seen. Hadley explains that a new teacher was hired who did not follow the curriculum, whose textbook use was sporadic, and who was generally seen by students as someone whose class can be passed with minimal effort. He notes that “[No coursebook], regardless of how varied the materials, careful the

modifications in sequencing, or organized in terms of classroom management, will succeed if teacher cooperation is lacking. Program administrators forget this point at their peril.”

Hadley rightly points out that a number of factors are involved in student success. However, after 6 years and 700 students, he concludes that *Interchange* made a significant impact on learning.

Study #2 A Secondary School in Brazil

BACKGROUND

Liliana Covino noted that many secondary students in Brazil never achieved a B1 level of English, despite studying it for many years. Those who were successful often had to attend additional classes after regular school hours. She wanted to know whether a new type of program could be developed in which students could reach B1 without the need for extra-curricular instruction.

Her school, near Sao Paolo, includes both lower and upper secondary classes. Covino chose *Interchange* level 1 (split editions) for the final two years of lower secondary and *Interchange* levels 2-3A for the first three years of upper secondary.

Covino designed a new program, with *Interchange* at its base, in direct opposition to the way English is typically taught in Brazil. She wanted to know whether her new program was successful and whether *Interchange* was an effective tool for language learning.

METHOD

In 2012 and again in 2013, she used the *Interchange* placement test to assess student learning at the end of lower secondary and at the end of the 3rd year of upper secondary. A total of 140 lower secondary students and a total of 790 upper secondary students were tested.

The lower secondary students had been using *Interchange* level 1 for longer when the tests were administered. The upper secondary students had been using *Interchange* level 2, but they had not started with *Interchange* level 1. Their instruction prior to using *Interchange* level 2 was the more traditional type that Covino wanted to replace.

RESULTS

The lower secondary students reached an A2 level of English. This is exactly what is expected from having completed *Interchange* level 1. As with the study in Japan, we see that students did not simply receive passing grades. Rather, their level of English improved. See *Chart 2*.

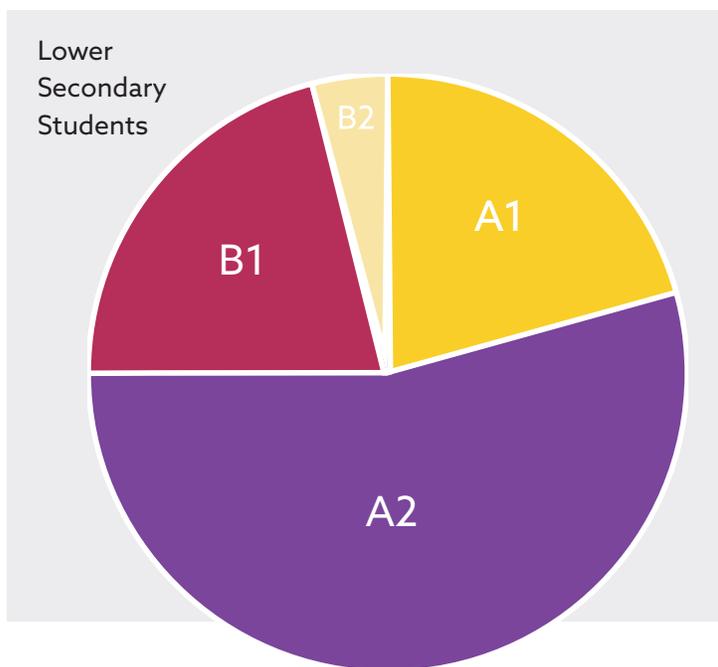


Chart 2. Level achieved after beginning English studies with Interchange Level 1.

The upper secondary students had a variety of results, with many also reaching an A2 level of English. Students who complete *Interchange* level 2 should reach a B1 level. Covino points out that these students had not completed *Interchange* level 1, which could indicate that their English was not yet at an A2 level when they began using *Interchange* level 2. If this is true, then their progressing to A2 is an impressive feat in and of itself. See *Chart 3*.

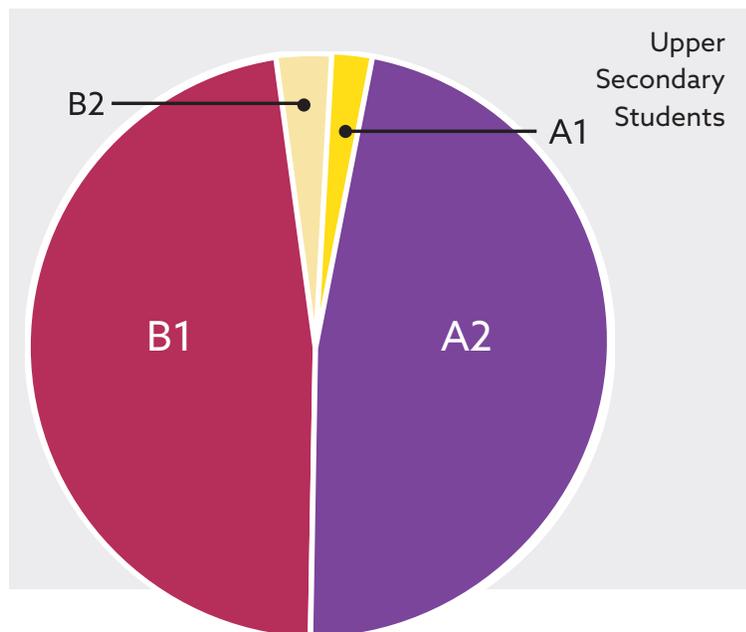


Chart 3. In Covino's study, it appears that, if students begin using *Interchange* early, they can confidently reach A2 by the end of *Interchange* level 1. Future research will show whether these same students also reach B1 after completing *Interchange* level 2.

CONCLUSIONS

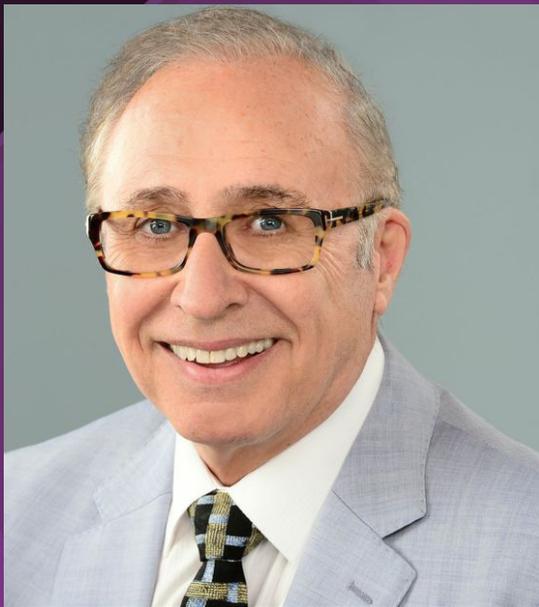
Each of these studies was conducted independently of Cambridge University Press. In each case, the results indicate that *Interchange* is an effective course. Students who study with *Interchange* do not simply pass their classes. They learn and improve their level of English.

To put it another way: *Interchange* works.

REFERENCES

- Hadley, G. (2013). Global Textbooks in Local Contexts: An Empirical Investigation of Effectiveness. In Harwood, N. (ed.) *English Language Teaching Textbooks: Content, Consumption, Production*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Covino, L. (2014). O ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira: Desenvolvendo competência comunicativa no ensino regular. *Augusto Guzzo Revista Acadêmica*, 13, 104-113

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