

Motivating Students to Build Communicative Abilities

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1. Context:

- 1) Level: Junior high school 2nd year students
- 2) Textbook: New Horizon 2(Tokyo Shoseki)
- 3) Problems:

The second-year students in my school looked less active in the class than when they were in the first year. It seemed that they were trying to look cool. In fact, junior high school second-year students are often described as having chu-ni-byo or the eighth grader syndrome; they are the most unmanageable age group of people. Unexceptionally, the students in my school were also about to enter this phase in the first term. However, it may not have been necessarily the reason when I thought about the fact that I often got the questions such as “How can I get better score at tests?” or “What should I do to understand better?” In the second year of junior high, grammar students learn gets harder and harder. One page of the textbook had obviously much more sentences compared to the previous year. Even students who said they liked English in April began feeling challenged to learn English. They actually could not be active in class because they were decreasing confidence.

However, I could see that students wanted to understand English. According to the questionnaire, many students felt that they could not enjoy when they did not understand. In other words, if they enjoy, they may understand better.

Especially after the third test was finished in September, I focused more on designing the communicative activities. The activities should be not too childish, not too challenging and should be attractive enough to have them think that the activity is useful to motivate students.

2. Goal:

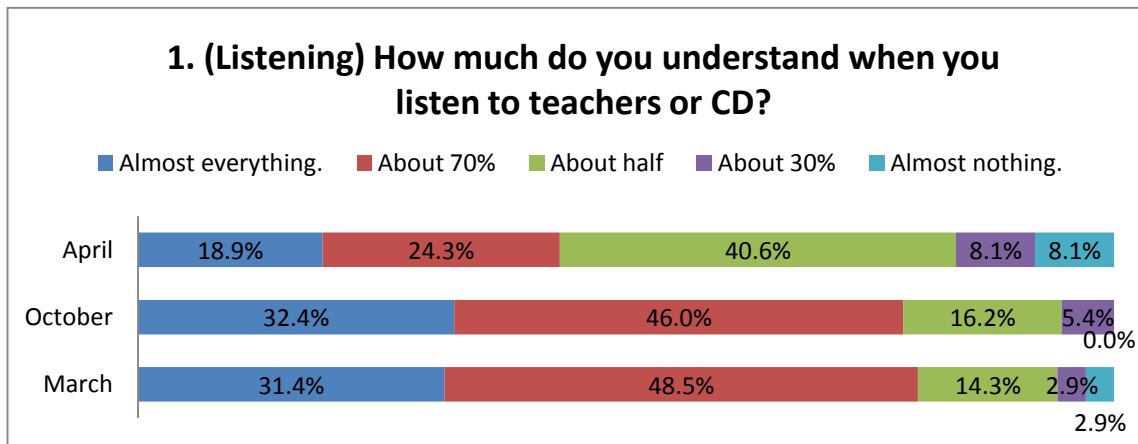
To sustain motivation, I needed to create positive learning atmosphere in class. Having the students engage in communicative activities, I would like to develop students' English proficiency steadily with less anxiety. I would like students to feel “I understand it!” and “It's not difficult!”

3. What I did:

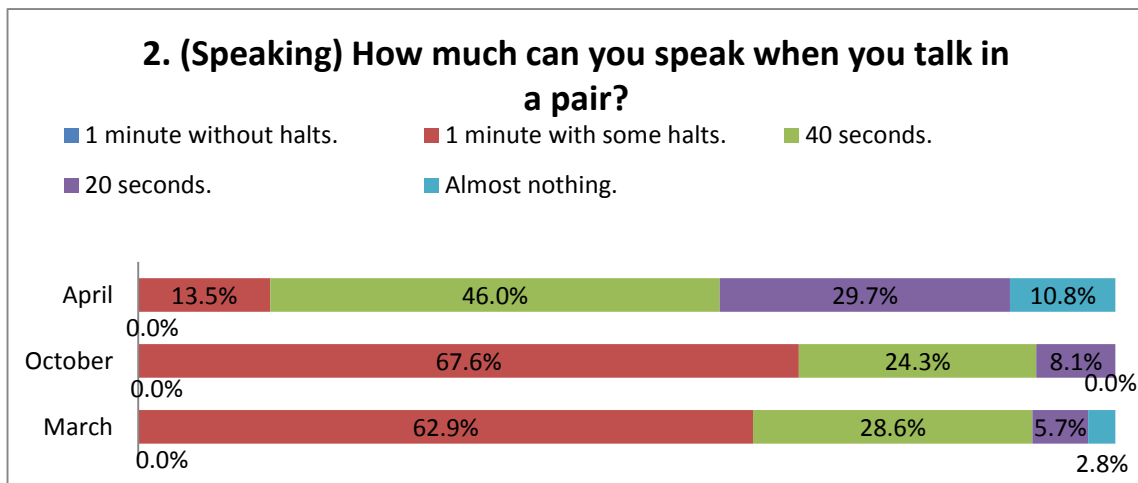
- 1) Communicative activities to introduce and review grammar
- 2) Introduce conversation strategies for timed-conversation using target grammar structure
- 3) Speaking test
- 4) Writing about themselves
- 5) Music to be familiar with sounds and rhythms of English

In this final report, I will focus on reporting 1 and 2.

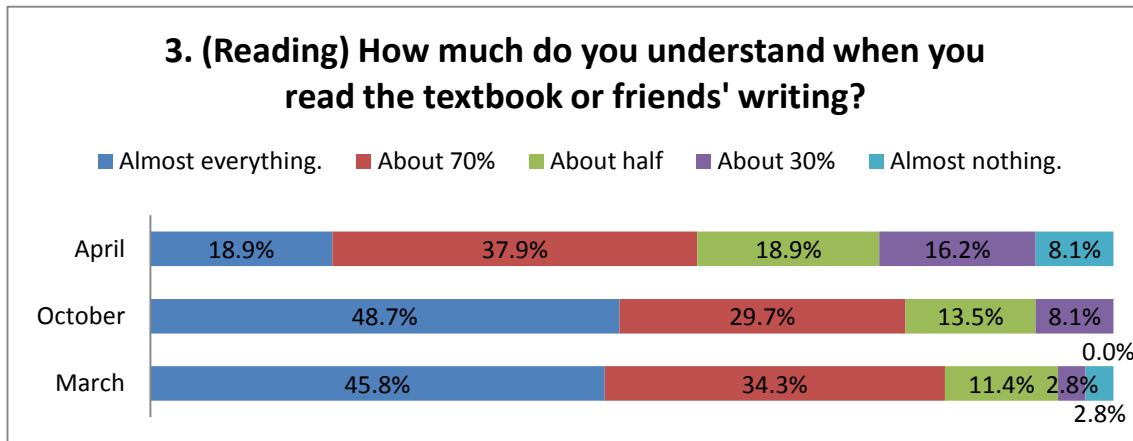
4. Result (n=35 students in 1 class)



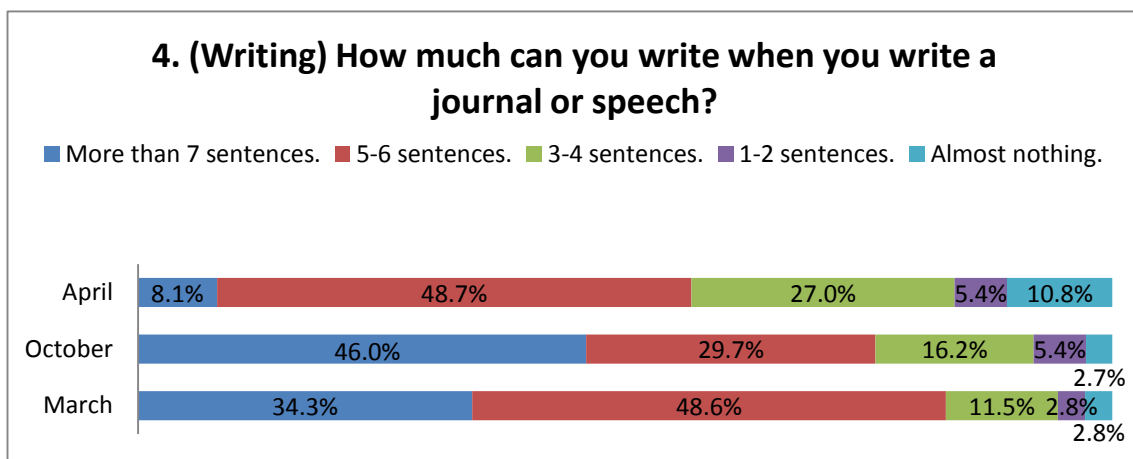
In March 80% of the students said they understand more than 70% of what they hear.



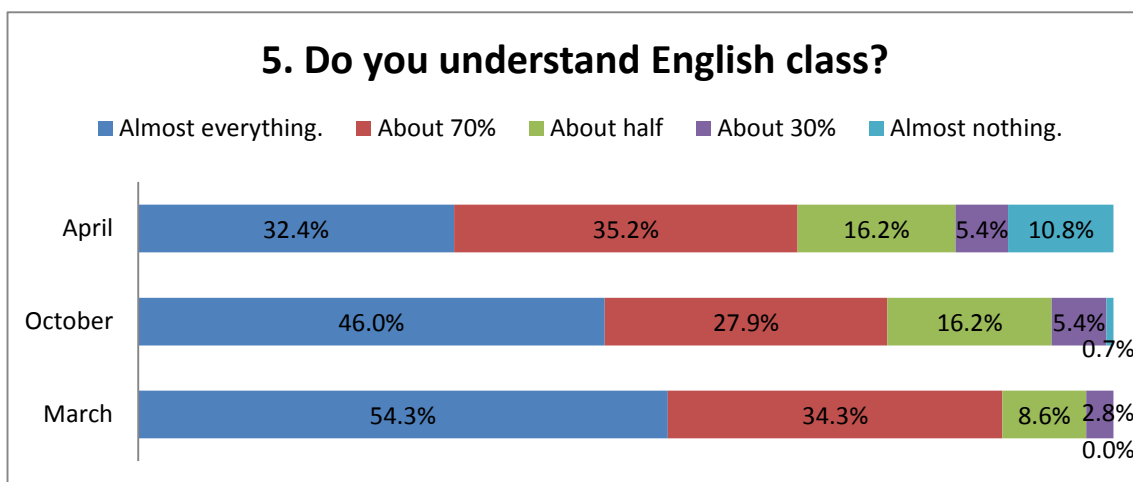
Students who can speak for one minute became five times as many as in April.

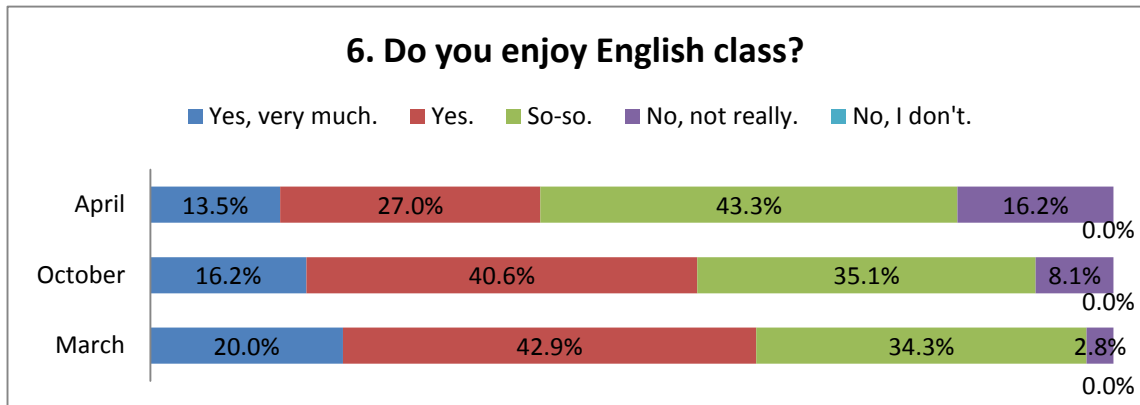


Students show stronger confidence in reading than in listening even though class was focused on speaking and listening throughout the year.

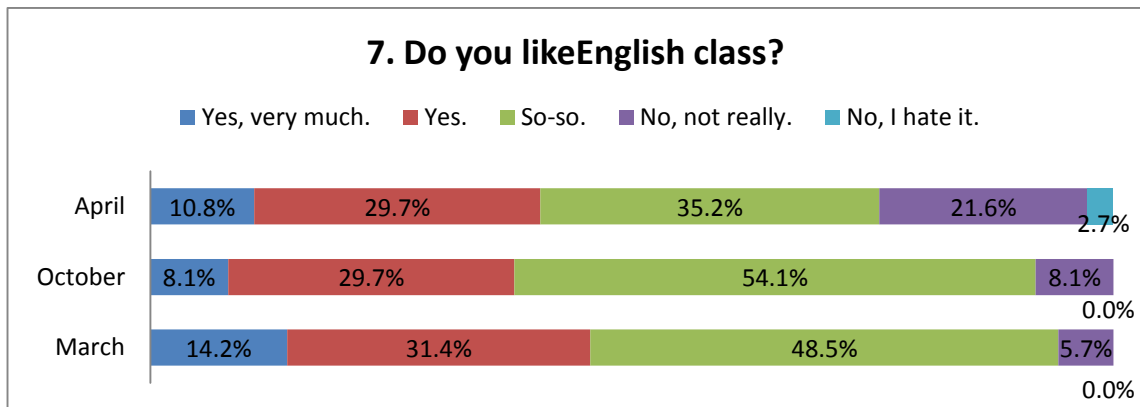


Students' confidence in writing decreased in March. It may be due to more challenging assignment from the teacher.





90% students understood English class, however, only 60% of the students said “Yes” or “Yes, very much” to the question “Do you enjoy English class?” What does it mean?



Only 45% students liked English class ⊗ Half students said “so-so.”

9) Comments (March)

- I learned speaking. / I can speak longer now. / I learned conversation strategies. (21)
- I could learn grammar better with communicative actives. (11)
- I enjoyed learning English. / I enjoyed communicative activities. (15)
- I was happy to be able to learn many songs./ It is a good way to use songs for learning English. / I learned pronunciation with songs. (9)
- I like group work with four people.(2)
- I didn't like to work with boys and girls. (4)

I enjoyed the English classes very much. I especially enjoyed asking questions each other in English. Through communication, we could smile and know each other better.

I know this year's textbook was more difficult than last year's, however, I actually enjoyed English class learning more than last year.

5. What I learned:

Not only the fact that the students increased confidence in all four skills in the survey results as the graphs 1-5 show above, but most of the students also got higher scores at the term tests recently. However, the positive answers in the graphs 6 “Do you enjoy English class?” and 7 “Do you like English class?” are not as significant as 1-5. What does it mean?

Seeing the classroom atmospheres, I did not think it is difficult to do pair or group work with second year students especially in the third term. The ways students engaged in timed-conversation and communicative activities were active enough and it seemed that they got used to work with other students. Therefore, I was surprised to read not many but some girls wrote “I don’t like to do pair work with boys, so please don’t let us do that” and boys wrote “I wanted to work with boys.” I would hardly expect this kind of comments from the third year students. My students were well-behaved and they didn’t freak out on the spot even though they were actually unhappy to do something. In their minds, however, they had reluctances and hesitations.

Reflecting on how hard students tried to work on what they were assigned, I feel sorry for those honest comments from several students. I could have maximized their learning by reducing the student’s affective filter (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.37). In fact, most of the students wrote positive comments when they did an activity with only girls or boys, and they understood the focused grammar point well. I learned that it is crucial to match the students’ mental maturity and the activities design.

6. Future issues:

I am going to see the third-year students in school year of 2012. I will expect their mental growth this year so that they can create more positive learning environment. Of course, I will work on developing more effective communicative activities. I would like to solve the question why students did say that they liked English class while they said they understood or enjoyed English class.

Reference

Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2006). *How languages are learned* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lesson Plan

1. Text book: New Horizon English Course 2 (Tokyo Shoseki) Unit 6

2. Objectives

- To learn:
- There is ~. There are ~.
 - Gerunds (~ing)

3. Procedure of Unit 6

Day 1 Introduction of "There is" "There are."

Day 2 Textbook (pp. 58-59) Starting Out, Dialog

Day 3 Activity "I begin ~ing"

Day 4 Textbook (p. 60) Reading for Communication①

Day 5 Textbook (p. 61) Reading for Communication②

Day 6 Textbook (pp.62-63) Listening Plus

Day 7 Communicative activity "Housing"

4. Communicative activity "Housing" (Day 7)

1) Goal: To engage in group work to decide a house to moving in using "there is" "there are."

2) Procedure of the activity Students...

Step 1: Have a handout. (Appendix A) Listen to T's English and write down what they heard

Step 2: Make pairs. Talk in pairs and decide the priority for housing.

Step 3: Make a group of four. Two Ss take roles of people who look for a place to move

in [AB]. The other two Ss take the role of people living in the place and look for roommates[CD]. AB show the Picture Card (Appendix B) of their house and explain about the house using Information Card. (Appendix C) (e.g. We have three bedrooms. / There is a McDonald's near our house.) CD ask questions about the house according to their priority for housing. (e.g. Is there a supermarket near your house? / Are there any bus stops near your house?) CD take notes the information they get with this interview. Pairs rotate the seat and interview three pairs. And then switch roles of AB and CD.

Step 4: Each pair decide the place they want to move in according to the results of interview.

Step 5: Write sentences about the place they decide to move in with some reasons using "There is" "There are." (e.g. We want to move in Takeshi's house because there is a park...)

Step 6: Each pair makes a presentation. Reads out the composition written in Step 5.

There is ~
There are ~

Housing

部屋探し Activity!

Step 1

石飛先生の Honolulu の部屋はどんな部屋でしたか？聞き取れたことをメモしよう。



Step 2

あなたたち2人（3人）は、Honolulu で留学生活を送るための、住む部屋を探しています。相談して、部屋を決める時の周辺環境の優先順位上位3位に○をつけましょう。

スーパーマーケット 銀行 病院 交番 バス停 公園

Step 3

Now let's meet people who are looking for roommates!

ルームメイトを探している人を学校の Housing で紹介してもらいました。実際に会って部屋のことをいろいろ聞きましょう！

[対話の例]

A/B: Hi, my name is _____. / My name is _____.

C: Hi, my name is _____. / My name is _____.

まずは自己紹介。明るくね！

A: So, here's our house. (と、ここで写真を見せる)

C/D: (何か部屋を見た感想)

How ~. / Looks ~. などなど

A/B: We have five bedrooms. We have three bathrooms. We have an Internet access.

We don't have an AC. But we have a pool.

I see. / U-huh. などなど

C/D: (あいづち・シャドウィング など使って聞きましょう)

B: Do you have any questions?

C/D: (周辺環境について、Step 2 で選んだものについて聞きましょう)

Is there a supermarket near your house?

Are there any bus stops? などなど

But there is a McDonald's! と、

「その他」をアピールを。

A/B: Yes, there is. / No, there isn't. / Yes, there are. / No, there aren't.

A: We hope you like our house.

B: We are waiting for your call.

C/D: Thank you so much. We'll think and call you later.

《家の中》

	物件A	物件B	物件C	物件D	物件E
名前					
bedroom(s)	数	数	数	数	数
bathroom(s)	数	数	数	数	数
an Internet access					
an AC					
その他					

《周辺環境》

	物件A	物件B	物件C	物件D	物件E
a supermarket					
a bank					
a hospital					
a police station					
a bus stop					
a park					
その他					

Step 4



Let's decide the house you want to move in! 引っ越したい家を決めましょう。

A: So, what do you think? B: I think _____'s house is good because _____.

A: I agree. / I don't agree. I think _____'s house is good because _____.

Step 5

We want to move in _____'s house because _____

Step 6

Now let's make a presentation!

Appendix B

A



[Example of Picture Card]

Appendix C

《家の中》

	物件A
bedrooms	数 5
bathrooms	数 2
an Internet access	○
an AC	×
その他	fans

《周辺環境》

	物件A
a supermarket	×
a bank	○
a hospital	○
a police station	○
a bus stop	○
a park	×
その他	a McDonald's

《家の中》

	物件B
bedrooms	数 4
bathrooms	数 2
an Internet access	×
an AC	○
その他	a big TV

《周辺環境》

	物件B
a supermarket	○
a bank	×
a hospital	×
a police station	×
a bus stop	○
a park	○
その他	a book store

[Example of Information Card]