

1. Title: Improving speaking skills by learning conversation strategies

2. Context

(1) Information about the class:

2-6 class (3 girls and 38 boys)

(2) Subject: English II (Three lessons a week, 50 minutes for each lesson)

(3) Textbook: Big Dipper English Course II (Suuken Shuppan)

(4) Level of the students: Low-intermediate level students of senior high school

(5) Problem

The class in which I conducted the action research was a science-orientated class. In short, the majority of the students are going to major in science or related field in universities. Generally speaking they are good at math and science such as physics, chemistry or genetics. In regard to English, some of them do not have basic grammar knowledge and English words, as a result, they are not motivated to study English, what is worse they said they do not know how to study English.

In the day of the first lesson, I found that they were very active. When I explained the importance of using English during the English lesson, they seemed to listen to me intensely. They smiled and said they wanted to speak English fluently. However when I said that I would implement a speaking test at the end of the term, they looked embarrassed and showed anxiety towards the test.

I found that there are two problems for introducing speaking activities for this action research. The level of students' English competence varies. For example, a few students passed pre-2 Step Test (Eiken), and they like English class very much, on the other hand, some students think that English is not important for them because their major will be science. Others said that they entered the science oriented class for they are not good at English.

Another one is that they are not familiar with pair work or group work. I found that they have been taught English through lecture- style. They seemed to be confident when they just listened to what teachers said and copied the black board. Considering their language learning experience, I needed to conduct the orientation about my English class. In the orientation, I told them the importance of interaction in language learning and evaluation of speaking ability.

3. Goal:

The goal of this project is to enable students to communicate with each other in English by learning conversation strategies. Based on the topic of the text book, the students write short essay (120 words). Using the essays, they communicate with

classmates in English and share their opinions. When learners feel that they use English, they would be motivated to learn more.

4. What I did:

The purpose of the project is to improve the students' speaking ability. From July, I tried to introduce a speaking activity at the beginning of the class for ten minutes. The procedure is as follows:

(1) Pre- speaking activity- Writing assignment

Before the class, I gave them homework to write an essay related to the lesson of the text. Using Q and A exercises about the content of the lesson, student had to write 120 words English essay.

(2) While speaking activity

First I introduced conversation strategies which they should use in the activity. Second, in pairs students practice speaking by using Q and A questions. At the first practice, they can refer their essay, however I asked them not to cheat by looking at the essay during the second and third practice. In the fourth practice, students should take their essay away and speak English without the essay. In each practice, the students had different partners.

5. Results

The result of the survey

Gender: Male 38 Female 3

Do you study English outside the classroom? (not including class assignment)

	July	December
➤ Yes	34%	34%
➤ No	66%	66%

Have you ever been to any foreign countries? (If yes, which country? and how long?)

	July	December
➤ Yes	31%	31%
➤ No	69%	69%

Have you ever learned a foreign language besides English? (If yes, what language? and how long?)

	July	December
Yes	0%	0%
No	100%	100%

Q1. Is Timed Conversation (TC) appropriate for Students speaking level?

[Choose one]

1. Do you enjoy Timed Conversation activities?

	July	December
Yes always	4%	4%

yes mostly	12%	12%
sometimes	54%	46%
rarely	20%	21%
never	10%	10%

2. Are you nervous in Timed Conversation?

	July	December
very much	4%	17%
yes	40%	40 %
not so much	41%	31%
no	12%	7%
No answer	3%	5%

3. Are you comfortable in pair work?

	July	December
Yes always	7%	7%
yes mostly	22%	34%
sometimes	46%	52%
rarely	7%	2%
never	12%	2%
No answer	6%	4%

4. Is TC difficult for you?

	July	December
extremely difficult	22%	31%
difficult	68%	51%
easy	2%	14%
extremely easy	2%	0%
No answer	6%	4%

5. Do you think TC is effective for improving your speaking competence?

	July	December
very positively	7%	13%
positively	73%	58%
negatively	20%	27%
very negatively	0%	2%

6. What topic did you enjoy the most in TC so far? (Rank 3)

	July	December
1. Greeting	20 %	1. Greeting 12%
2. Talking about yourself	9%	2. Talking about yourself 12%
3. My life	32%	3. My life 16%
4. My summer vacation	39%	4. My summer vacation 15%
		5. What color do you like? 19%
		6. Living with animals 26%

7. What is something you like about TC?

<July>

- English pronunciation is cool.
- I can try various kinds of grammar. knowledge.
- I am relax when I speak English in TC.
- I can communicate with other classmates.
- I have many opportunities to speak English.
- I just enjoy speaking English with my classmates.
- I can talk with other classmates who are not familiar with.
- When I make myself understood in English, I am happy.
- I can not do TC alone.
- I can practice speaking.
- I can express myself in English.

<December>

- I can improve my speaking ability.
- I can communicate with other classmates.
- It is fun to speak English with my friends,
- I feel I am improving my speaking skill.
- I can realize my speaking ability is not good.
- When I read English, I can understand the content.
- I can speak English.
- I learn from my classmates, for example how to answer or respond in English.
- I have opportunities to use important phrases.
- When I understand what my classmates is saying, I am happy.
- When I speak English, I can memories more intensively than writing.
- I feel as if I were a native speaker of English.

Q2. Do learning conversational strategies facilitate students' practice for speaking?

1. Can you use conversational strategies appropriately in TC?

	July	December
Yes very much	4%	0%
yes mostly	12%	29%
not really	74%	61%
Not at all	10%	5%
No answer	0%	5%

2. Is it difficult to use conversational strategies in TC?

	July	December
extremely difficult	31%	12%
difficult	63%	76%
easy	4%	10%
extremely easy	2%	2%

3. Do you enjoy using conversational strategies in TC?

	July	December
Yes very much	7%	4%
yes mostly	32%	43%
Not really	56%	51%
Not at all	5%	2%

4. How often do you use Conversational strategies in TC?

	July	December
None	10%	5%
once- twice	68%	63%
three-four times	20%	27%
more than five times	2%	5%

5. Do you think it useful to learn conversational strategies for improving your speaking ability?

	July	December
Very useful	13%	5%
Useful	68%	76%
not so much	12%	12%
Not useful	4%	2%
No answer	3%	5%

6. Which conversation strategies use most in TC? (Ranking 3)

	July	December
1. Pardon me.	4%	7%
2. Great./ Nice/ Good/ Awesome/That's cool/ Wow	24%	15%
3. How about you?	20%	12%
4. Really?	10%	40%
5. Me, too.	34%	12%
6. Sound interesting.	2%	2%
7. Excuse me.	2%	2%
8. How interesting!	2%	2%
9. Let me see	NA	2%
10. Shadowing	NA	5%
11. Others	2%	1%

7. What is something you like about Conversation Strategies?

<July>

I can be more flexible when I speak English.

There is no pause or silence when I use CS.

I can keep talking.

My speaking is improving.

I feel my partner is listening to me.

<December>

By using "By the way", I can change the topic.

It is easy to express what I am thinking.

Sometimes I cannot stop talking.

I can develop my conversation.

I feel my partner understand what I am saying.

I can recover my utterance.

I can keep on talking.

I feel as if I were an native speaker of English.

I can find that my partner and I communicate with each other.

I can use English appropriately.

6. What I learned:

Although my action research was a short-term project (from July to December), I learned several things which are very interesting.

First, the students seemed to enjoy cooperative learning and notice the positive affect for improving language learning. The result of the questionnaires shows that they feel the speaking activity is challenging for them, however the majority say that group or pair work help them improve their speaking competence. Some English teachers do not introduce cooperate learning because the classroom might become noisy or out of control. Or these teachers insist that grammar knowledge is more important than other skills for students must get the score on grammar section in the National Center Test and it is difficult for students to improve their reading and writing skills. However, the result tells that the students like speaking activity with other classmates recognizing their improvement though cooperate learning.

Second, it takes long for students to acquire conversation strategies. The survey tells that the students do not use conversation strategies appropriately. In each lesson, I introduced different conversation strategies and asked the students to use them as well as other conversation strategies they have learned during previous lessons. I found that this request was so demanding for my students.

Third, writing practice scaffolds speaking activities. I joined the seminar held in Kakamihara High School last November. I observed one teacher taught speaking by combining writing assignment. Referring to their own writing, the students engaged in speaking activity. As my students are not used to speak English on the spot, I found that the writing essay for speaking activities may help the students to communicate in English. Since some of them said they became nervous in using English in class.

Fourth, it is important for teachers to demonstrate how to do in speaking activities. As they are exposed to teacher-fronted teaching style, they do not know how to act during the activities. I tried to produce the atmosphere which facilitated students to make mistakes. So I deliberately showed how to recover the mistakes. For

example, I should say " I got up at seven every morning", however I said," I get up, oh,no I **got** up at seven every morning." I told the students to make a lot of mistakes when they speak and they monitor their utterance by themselves, which improves their accuracy.

Fifth, the evaluation is essential to promote learners motivation as well as their speaking competence. Unfortunately, in terms of this action research, I implemented only one speaking test at the end of the second term. When I told them that they would have speaking test, they were so excited. Probably this must be the first experience for them. They can't prepare for the test before hand, because they would be paired up by a lottery on the spot.

7 .Future Issues

When I started this project, I suppose my students hesitated to speak English with their classmates. However, they really enjoyed communicating in English what is more, the classroom atmosphere became very positive.

I conducted the speaking test only once for this project, however the students made the best effort and got excited to be evaluated. This might be the first time for them to know how much they use English.

Fortunately, from April I will be a homeroom teacher of this science oriented class. I can continue this project and seek out how their speaking skill develops.

Lesson Plan: Lesson 4 Living With Animals

1. Level : Senior high school second year students
2. Class size: 2-6 class (3 girls and 38 boys)
3. Textbook: Big Dipper English Course II (Suuken Shuppan)
4. Goal: To express their own opinions about wildlife by using conversation strategies
5. Objectives:
 - (1) They can learn what the zoo's purpose is and why it is needed or not.
 - (2) They can think problems about the environment for wildlife.
 - (3) They can get used to past conditions.
6. Procedures
 - (1) Day 1 Introduction listening & Writing assignment
 - (2) Day 2 Part 1 New Word and Reading
 - (3) Day 3 Part 1 Timed Conversation ,and Q and A (Today's lesson)
 - (4) Day 4 Part 2 Timed Conversation and New words and Reading
 - (5) Day 5 Part 2 Times Conversation and Q and A
 - (6) Day 4 Part 3 Timed Conversation and New words and Reading
 - (7)Day 5 Part 3 Times Conversation and Q and A
 - (8) Speaking test

Living with Animals

☆First Writing

Class () No. () Name ()

● Answer the following questions, and write a passage in about 120 words

Preparation for First writing

1 What kind of animals do you like?

I like _____.

2 Why do you like it (them)?

Because _____.

3 Do you like going to a zoo?

Yes, I _____./ No, I _____.

4 Why do you like it?

Because _____.

5 If you were an animal, what animal would you like to become?

I would like to become _____.

6 Why?

Because _____.

7 If there were no zoos, what would happen? (もし動物園がなかったら、どうなると思いますか)

8 If you were an animal in the zoo, would you be happy or unhappy?

I would be _____, if I were an animal in the zoo.

Because _____.

Conversation Strategies [Shadowing]

1. Shadowing is repeating the important words that someone says. It is easy to do, and it will help you to speak more English quickly.

<Complete shadowing>

Example:

A: My name is Masami Maeda.

B: *Oh, your name is Masami Maeda.*

A: I like traveling and dancing.

B: *I see. You like traveling and reading.*

<Partial Shadowing>

Example:

A: My name is Masami Maeda.

B: *Oh, Masami Maeda*

A: I like traveling and dancing.

B: *I see. Traveling and dancing.*

<Let's practice with your partner>

A: My name is.....:

B: _____ (shadowing)

A: I like......

B: _____ (shadowing)

Class No. Name _____

2012年 スピーキングテストについて (2年英語II)

4期テスト明けにスピーキングテストを実施します。Living with Animals で書いた英作文や Conversation Strategies のプリントを見直して勉強しておきましょう。当日のスピーキングテストは、全員ビデオ撮影をします。

1. 実施日： _____ 月 _____ 日

2. 実施方法：当日、くじを引いて会話のパートナーが誰であるかを決めます。そして、1分間の会話をします。会話はじゃんけんで勝った方から始めます。

3. Topic: Living with Animals

4. 評価基準(20点満点=10点×2)

1. Fluency (流ちょうさ)

4点 なめらかに1分以上、英語だけで会話を続けた。

Starter で始まり、話の途中で自然に数回 rejoinder、 shadowing を入れ Closer で終わることができた。

3点 途切れ流れも1分間、英語だけで会話を続けた。

2点 会話は、1分もつか、もたないかであった。

1点 1分ももたない。長い沈黙が入る。あるいは、途中で日本語になってしまった。

Starter、 rejoinder、 shadowing、 Closer が全く使えなかった。

2. Accuracy (正確さ)

4点 文法事項(未来形・仮定法現在など)を正確に会話の中で使えていた。

3点 1~2個の文法事項が正確に使えていた。

2点 文法事項に使えなかったが、なんとか意味は通じさせることができた。

1点 文法事項がまったく使えておらず、発話もほとんど受け答えのみだった。

3. Delivery (声の大きさ・アイコンタクト)

2点 大きな声ではっきりと話すことができた。話す時にアイコンタクトをしながら、相手が理解していることが理解できた。

1点 ときどきできた。どちらかができた。

0点 両方ほとんどできなかった。

心がけておこう

- ・質問事項・英作文を何度も読んで覚えてください。1人で声に出して話す・友達と練習するなどして実際に何度も声に出しておくこと。
- ・沈黙を作らないようにするためには、もし相手が、英語が出てこなくて困っていたら、いつまでもっていないで、とにかく自分から話すことです。英作文で書いたトピックについて書いたことを、何でもいいから話してしまうことを心がけてください。