

1. Title: Creating a Student-centred Communicative Classroom with Beginner Learners.

2. Context: 1st Grade Elementary School: (27 students) 2 classes of 6 students each, one class with seven and a fourth class with 8 students

Subject: EFL (two lessons a week, 45 minutes for each lesson)

Textbook: An in-house textbook created by JIEC entitled “Learning Through English 1”.

Problems:

1. How can I create a student-centred communicative class given the students low level of English ability?
2. How can I increase student-student interaction, and make those interactions more like “real-world” interactions?

3. Goal: To foster the student`s communicative competence in order to allow them to achieve a student-centred, English-speaking classroom which allows them to interact with each other naturally in English.

4. What I did:

1. I decided to redesign the layout of my 1st year students’ curriculum in order to make it student-centred and communicative. I used only three pages in the textbook of a total of 28 since September, and in each of those three pages I modified the activity from it`s original intent. The rest of the curriculum incorporated goals and materials that I designed. I tried to shape the curriculum to be more interesting and relevant to the students by providing them with opportunities to share their opinions and personal views with each other. I gave the students numerous tasks and communicative activities that allowed them to learn English in an active rather than a passive manner.
2. I placed an emphasis on student interaction by beginning each class with daily pair conversations and ending each class with an active, information-exchange task. I also encouraged student-student interaction whenever possible.
3. I helped the students become more independent and capable of participating in a variety of conversations relatively easily, by teaching communication strategies.
4. I monitored the percentage of class that was student-centered versus teacher-centred and looked for opportunities to place the students in the center of our activities.
5. Towards the end of the third term, I had students do our routines instead of doing them myself, to allow for more interaction and opportunities for negotiation of meaning between the students.

5. Results – What happened?

Chart 1: Comparison of Pairs Partnered With Same Student as September in Free Talk Ball Toss Activity. (Students must answer and then ask a question for each turn)

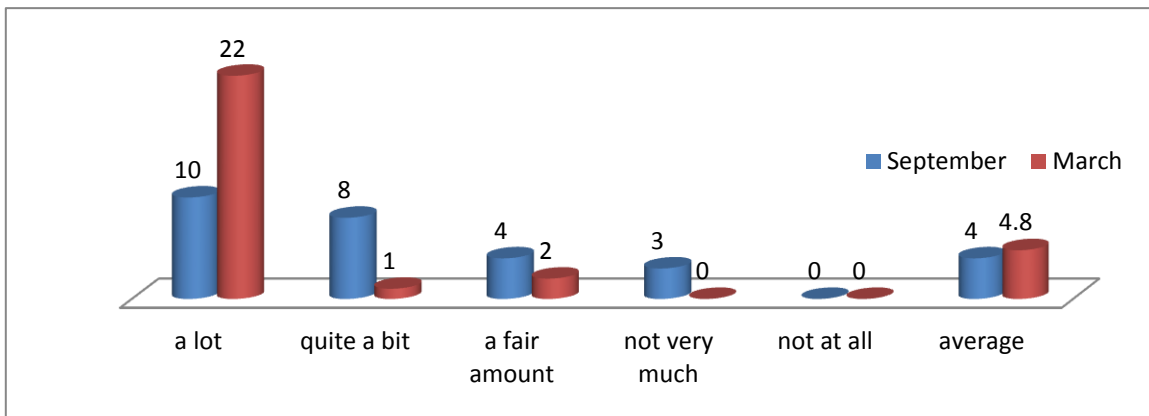
Pair	December	March	Differences
Hugo & Hannah	5	20<	+15 <
Calvin&Sally	10	20<	+10 <
Shane & Sergio	9	18	+9
Kenny & Zoe	6	14	+8
Kenny&May	3	8	+5
Rocky&Melissa	4	5	+1
Sonny & Terry	4	4	0
Andy&Wilma	4	3	-1
Samantha & Ken	6	4	-2
Total	51	96<	+45<

<denotes pairs were asked to stop due to time constraints

Source: Video Analysis December 2/3, 2013 and March 13/14

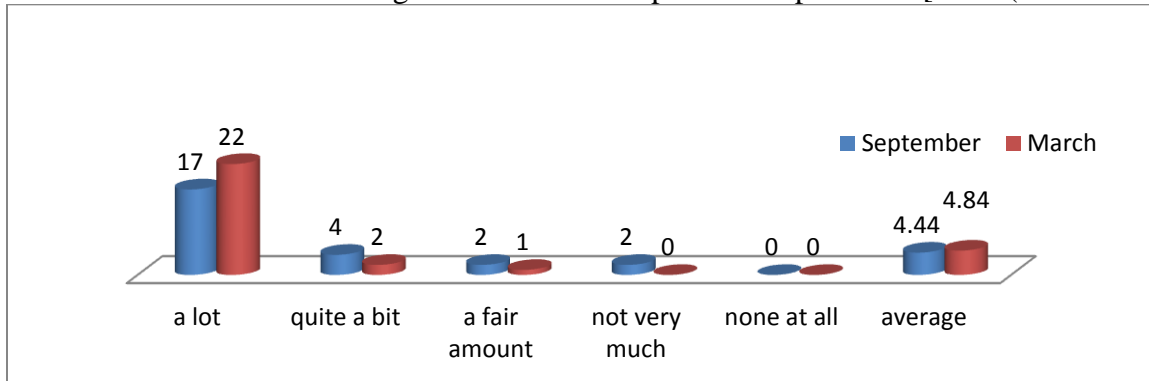
Grade 1 45 minute class

Chart 2: How much do you like English class now compared to September?
[n=25 (2 discounted)]



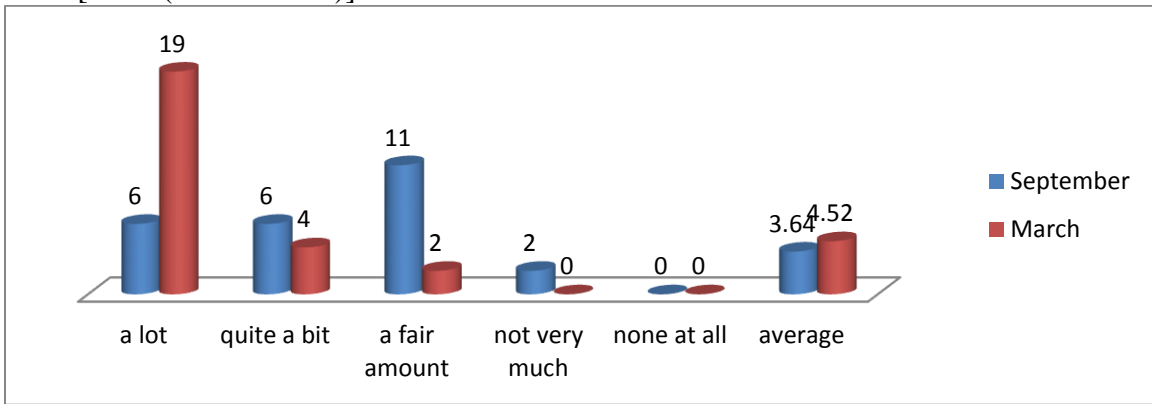
Source: Survey -question 1 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1: 45-minute class

Chart 3: How much fun is English class now compared to September? [n=25 (2 discounted)]



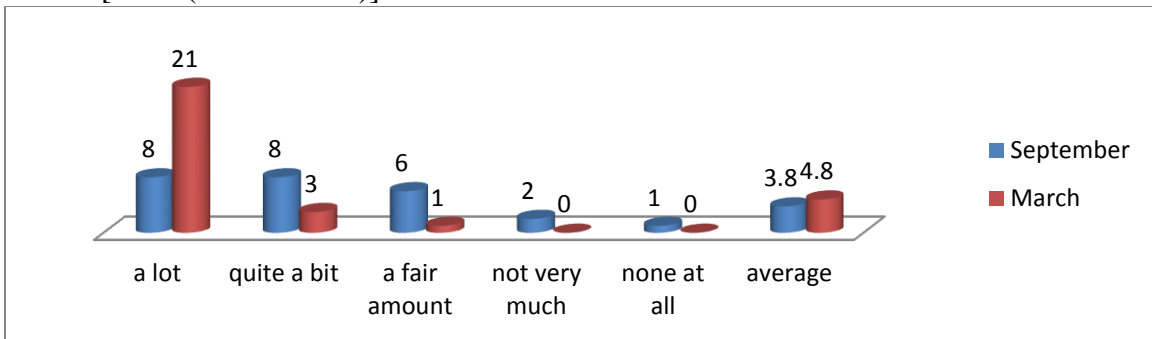
Source: Survey- question2 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1: 45-minute class

Chart 4: How much English do you usually speak in English class now compared to September? [n=25 (2 discounted)]



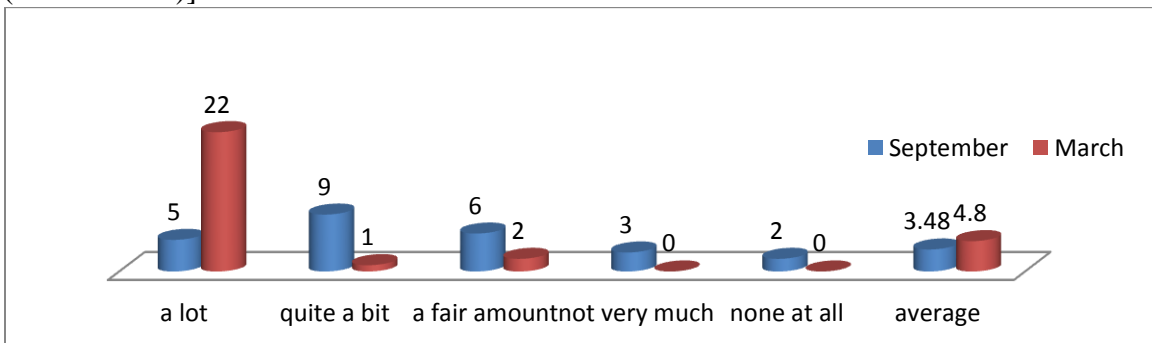
Source: Survey -question 3 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1: 45-minute class

Chart 5: How much English do you usually speak to your classmates now compared to September? [n=25 (2 discounted)]



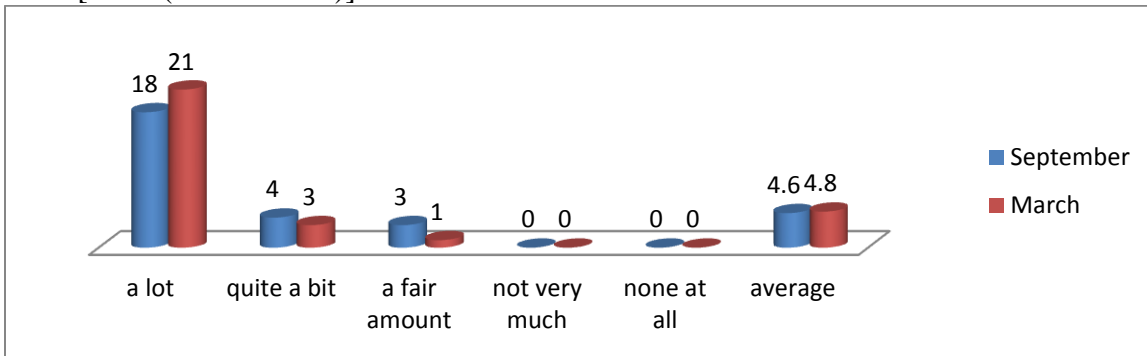
Source: Survey- question 4 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1: 45-minute class

Chart 6: How much English are you capable of speaking now compared to September? [n=25 (2 discounted)]



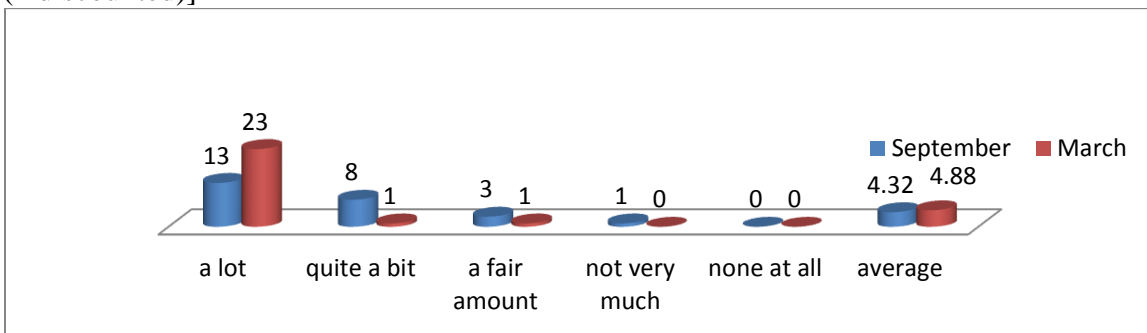
Source: Survey- question 5 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1:45-minute class

Chart 7: How much fun do you find the topics of our pair conversations now compared to September? [n=25 (2 discounted)]



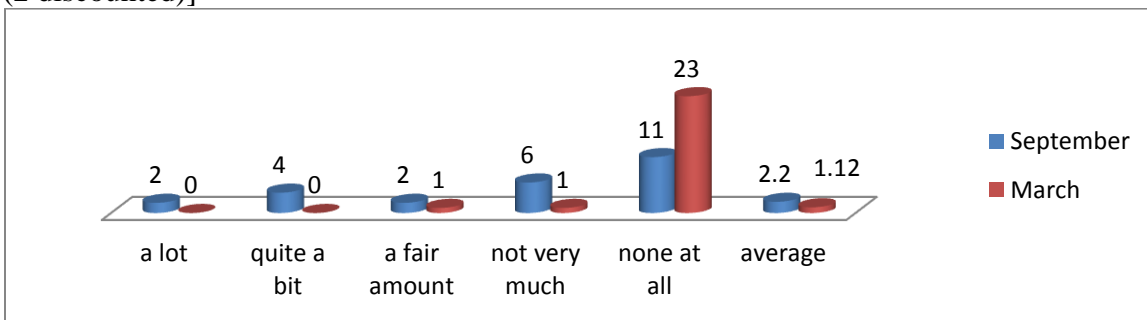
Source: Survey- question 6 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1: 45-minute class

Chart 8: How much do you enjoy speaking with your classmates now compared to September? [n=25 (2 discounted)]



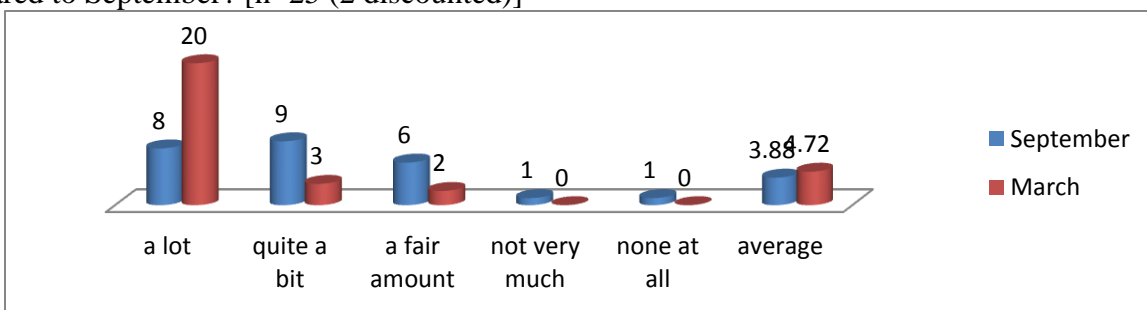
Source: Survey- question 7 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1:45-minute class

Chart 9: How nervous are you when speaking to your classmates now compared to September? [n=25 (2 discounted)]



Source Survey- question 8 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1: 45-minute class

Chart 10: How much do you understand when your classmates speak to you in English now compared to September? [n=25 (2 discounted)]



Source: Survey -question 9 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1: 45-minute class

Chart 11: What do you do when you don't understand your classmate's English?
(multiple answers possible)

July	March
Ask Sean (11, 46%)	Say "pardon" to my friend (8, 32%)
Think about it myself (5, 20%)	Ask the homeroom teacher in Japanese (5, 20%)
Ask the classmate (2, 8%)	Say "pardon" to Sean (4, 16%)
Ask the homeroom teacher in Japanese (2, 8%)	Ask my friend in Japanese (3, 12%)
Ask my mother (1, 4%)	Raise my hand and call Sean (2, 8%)
Ask the person who said it in Japanese (1, 4%)	I understand everything (1, 4%)
Don't do anything (1, 4%)	Use a "checking question" (1, 4%)
Ask my juku teacher (1, 4%)	Ask Sean in Japanese (1, 4%)

Blue statements represent those directed to their partner

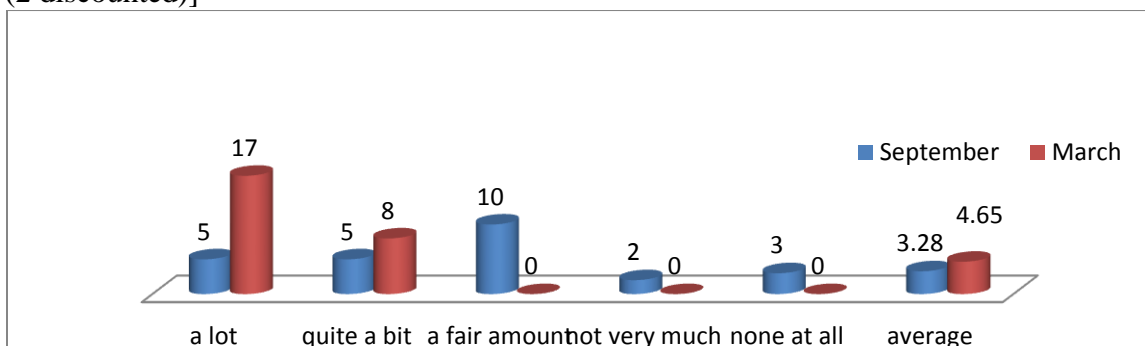
Source: Survey- question 9 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1: 45-minute class

-12% refer to asking their friend in July, whereas 48% do in March

-0% reference "pardon" or "checking questions" in July, but 52% make specific reference to it in March

Chart 12: How much of Sean's English can you understand now compared to September?

[n=25 (2 discounted)]



Source: Survey -question 11 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1:45-minute class

Chart 13: What do you do when you don't understand what Sean is saying?
(multiple answers possible)

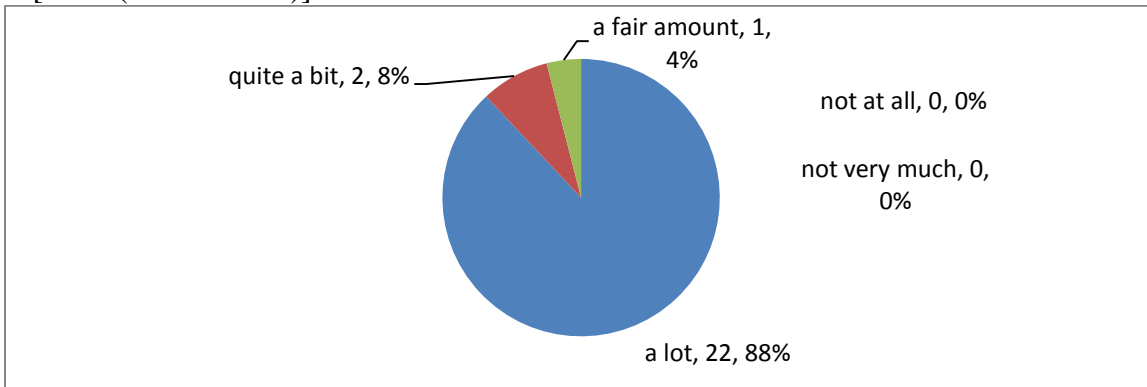
July	March
Ask Sean in Japanese (8, 33%)	Say Pardon to Sean 9 (9, 36%)
Ask my homeroom teacher (5, 21%)	Ask Sean in Japanese (3, 12%)
Think about it myself (6, 25%)	Ask my friend in Japanese (3, 12%)
Look at what others are doing (1, 4%)	Think about it myself (2, 8%)
Ask a classmate in Japanese (1, 4%)	Use a checking question (1, 4%)
I don't do anything (1, 4%)	Raise my hand and say "here" in English (1, 4%)
	Ask my friend in English (1, 4%)

Blue statements represent those directed towards me

Source Survey- question 12 March 13/14 2014 Grade 1:45-minute class

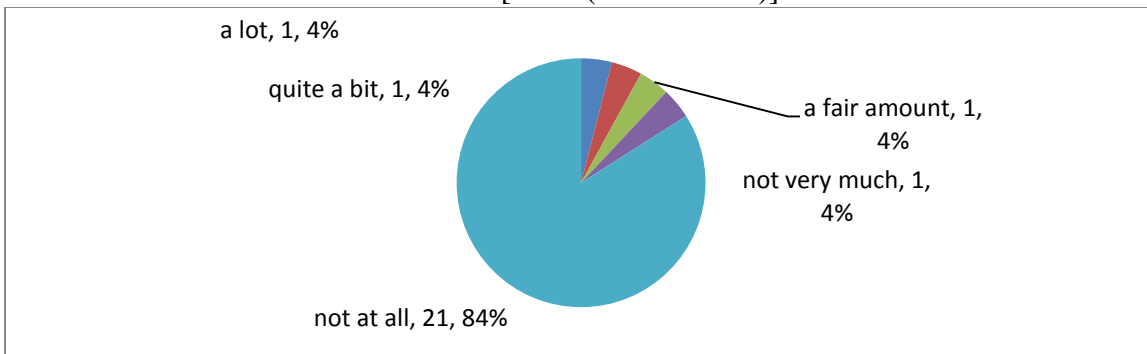
-The number of students asking Sean in Japanese drops from 33% in July to 12% in March, while the number of students asking Sean in English rises from 0% in July to 44% in March.

Chart 14: How much do you enjoy speaking with your classmates when it's your turn to be the teacher? [n=25 (2 discounted)]



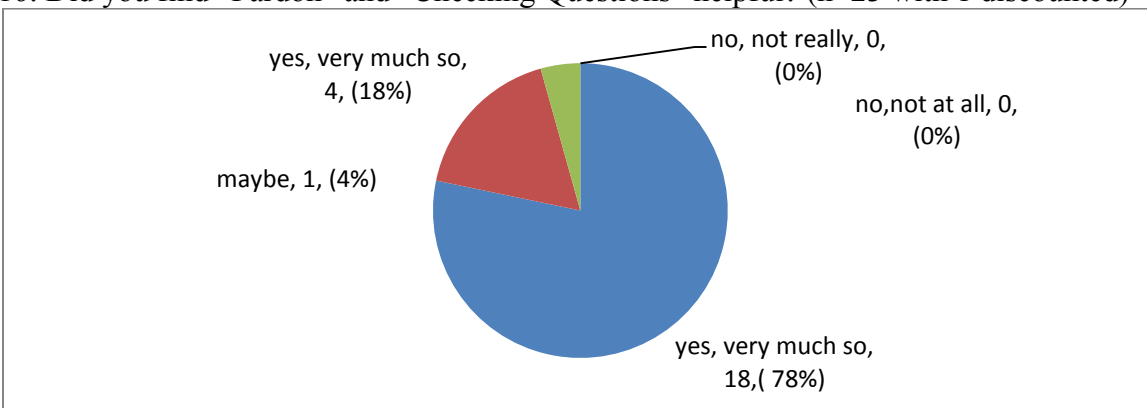
Source: Survey- question 13a March 13/14 2014 Grade 1: 45-minute class

Chart 15: How nervous are you when speaking with your classmates when it's your turn to be the teacher? [n=25 (2 discounted)]



Source Survey question 13b March 13/14 2014 Grade 1:45-minute class

Chart 16: Did you find "Pardon" and "Checking Questions" helpful? (n=23 with 1 discounted)



Source: Survey question 5 February 18/19 2014 [Grade 1 45 –minute class]

Conversation 1: 1-2A Feb 17 (n=4 Grade 1 45-minute class)

Andy and Sergio

Sergio: Do you like sandwich?

Andy: Yes, I do.

Andy: Sergio?

Sergio: Do you like Sandwich?

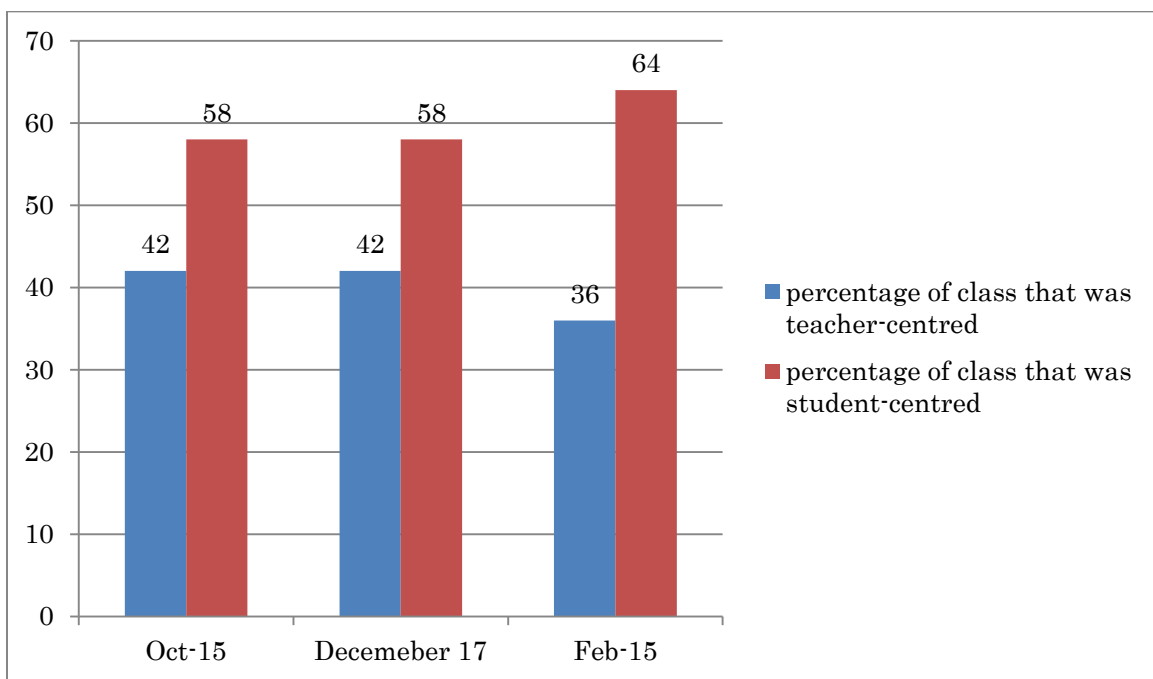
Andy: No...chocolate...it tastes good, it tastes bad?

Sergio: It tastes... it tastes good.

Source: Video of Feb. 17, 2014 Class 1-2A 2:36-2:53

Chart 17: Breakdown of student-centred versus teacher-centred activities this term

[n=8 Grade 1 45-minute class]



Source: Video of October 15 2013, December 17 2013 and Feb. 17, 2014 1-1A Class

1. As the year progressed, the amount of output by the students increased remarkably. The students' daily conversations expanded to more complex, genuine questions and follow-up questions. Students used the communication strategy "me too" to spontaneously interject themselves into group discussions. The amount of spontaneous interaction between students increased from none at the beginning to much more frequently towards the end of the year.
2. Students became more aware of how to apply the conversation strategies that they learned as evidenced by their responses on the surveys (chart 11 and 13). The students were able to apply the communication strategies that they learned, and use them to complete more complex information gap activities with their partners. The students stated in their surveys that they found

these strategies to very important in enhancing their ability to complete the information exchange tasks. (Chart 16). The students also reported that they really enjoyed these activities and that for the most part; they did not feel nervous when doing them (Charts 14 and 15).

3. In addition, as the students' abilities to negotiate for meaning and repair communication breakdowns in class increased, I was able to turn more of our routine activities over to the students, who appeared to enjoy being the teacher for a day. Over the course of the year, the monitoring of teacher-centred vs. students centred activities increased to the point where student centred activities made up the large majority of the lessons. Once again, this would not have been possible without the students learning and practicing techniques for repairing breakdowns in communication. In addition, I found that monitoring the ratio of student-centred vs. teacher-centred activities had a great impact on me as a teacher. It made me consciously look for opportunities to turn activities over to the students.

6. What I learned:

1. I learned that it is possible to achieve a student-centred classroom with beginner learners in their first year, and that doing so increases the students' opportunities to interact, and overall student output and engagement without being a source of anxiety for the students.
2. I learned the importance of providing students with techniques for repairing breakdowns in communication in addition to linguistic structures in order to allow them to complete information gap activities at the beginner level.
3. I learned that students don't have to feel nervous or apprehensive about speaking English with their classmates at this particular age level and that they can enjoy talking with each other in English.
5. I learned that the students are very happy with the themes and topics that I have implemented this year.
6. I learned that simple phrases such as "Me too." and "Good job" are very effective in increasing interaction between the students.
7. I noticed that "Checking questions" and "Pardon" when applied in different ways seem to be sufficient in repairing all of the communication breakdowns that occurred in our information exchange activities.
8. I noticed that students who were placed in the role of teacher seemed to become more engaged in all parts of that particular lesson.

7. Future issues:

1. In the future, I would like to investigate the extent to which providing students with communication strategies serves to reduce their anxiety for communicative tasks.
2. I would like to learn why it takes such a long period of time for students to become aware of how to apply the conversations strategies that they have learned, namely, "pardon" and "checking questions".

3. I would also like to investigate the reasons for the students being much less nervous than they were in September. Is it because their ability to understand their partner increased, because they got used to the concept of speaking with their classmates in English, or a combination of both?
4. I would like to investigate the effects of increasing responsibility on students' engagement/attentiveness and explore other ways of increasing their responsibility to the class.
5. I would like to continue to monitor the ratio of student-centred to teacher-centred activities and search for more opportunities to turn the classroom over to the students.

Lesson Plan

Day One: Introduction to Food? *Subgoal: Students are introduced to food vocabulary and are able to ask and answer whether or not someone likes a particular food*

1. Read the story the Hungry Caterpillar eliciting the vocabulary that the students are familiar with. Ask them to guess what the next theme is.
2. Introduce students to the easier half of the Food flashcards. Review the "Do you like?" "Yes I do." and "No I don't." structures and ask the students whether or not they like the different kinds of food.
3. Have students work in pairs. Get one student to select a card, ask their partner whether or not they like it, and then place the food card along with their partners name card on one of the two chairs labeled "Yes, I do"/ "No I don't."

Day Two: Me Too! *Subgoal: To teach students how to express agreement regarding which foods they like.*

1. Read the hungry Caterpillar again this time eliciting the vocab that was covered last class.
2. Model a conversation with another teacher in which we ask each other whether we like certain foods and answer "me too" when appropriate. See if the students can understand. If the students are confused model the same structure again with a different vocab set such as colors or weather.
3. Review last class's vocabulary and introduce the new food vocabulary. Ask one student at a time if they like a particular food and encourage the other students that like it to use the "me too" structure.
4. Introduce students to the "Me Too" game. In this game students are each given a food card, with the same card being given out to sets of two students. The students circulate the room asking whether or not other people like the food corresponding to the flash card that they have. When they find someone who answers yes, they say "Me too!" link arms with the person and rush to sit down on the mat. When everyone is finished, confirm that the students have found the correct partner and have used the target structure, "Me too."

Day Three: How About You? *Subgoal: Students are introduced to the structure, "How about you?"*

1. Begin by reading the Hungry Caterpillar.
2. Next, have students use flash cards and work in pairs. They ask each other if they like a particular food and if so, put the card in the "Like" pile with their partner's name card attached to it. If they also like the food, they can use the "ME too!" structure allowing them to pin their name card on at the same time and subsequently finish faster. Ask students who finished the fastest why they were able to finish so quickly to reinforce this point.
3. Model the same activity again with a teacher, but this time using the "How about you?" structure. See if the students notice and if they are able to understand what, "How about you?" means. Do a question chain where the teacher asks one student if they like a particular food and then the students

subsequently use the “How about you?” structure to gather information from the rest of the class. Take a survey about which foods are the most and least popular.

4. Play the “Me too!” game again. This time add an extra step where students ask “How about you?” to their partner who will then respond, “Me too!” or “Yes, I do” depending on whether or not their answers match.

Day Four: Because It Tastes Good Subgoal: *Students ask and answer follow up questions about why their friends like or don't like a particular food.*

1. Begin by reviewing the Food flash cards and doing a question chain practicing “How about you?” Next tell the students that today we are going to discuss the reasons for liking a certain food using the follow up question, “Why?”
2. Introduce the structures “It tastes good.” And “It tastes bad”. Categorize some of the foods under the two headings according to how the students vote. Then do a model dialogue with another teacher demonstrating how to add “because” to the new structures to answer the follow up question, “Why?”
3. Give students a chance to practice in pairs, by drawing a card, asking their partner if they like it and why or why not, listening to their partner's answer and placing the food card with their partner's name clipped to it on the chair with the appropriate heading. Discuss as a class using the structures we have learned so far, such as “Me too,” “How about you?” etc.

Day Five: Because It's Healthy Subgoal: *Students learn to categorize foods under the headings, healthy and unhealthy, and in doing so learn two more reasons that they can use to answer follow up questions.*

1. After reviewing the food vocabulary with flash cards, have students ask their partner whether or not they like a certain food and why, and then place the food card clipped to their partner's name card under the appropriate heading. Encourage students to use “Me too!” and “How about you?” when appropriate.
2. Ask students why they don't eat things that taste good such as chocolate everyday. They will no doubt answer that it is not good for them. Introduce the topics of healthy and unhealthy foods. Categorize some of the vocabulary cards under the appropriate headings.
3. Play a more advanced variation of the “Me Too” game in which the students must ask everyone else in the class instead of just finding one partner. If someone has the same food as them, they link arms and proceed to ask the rest of the class. The students may have anywhere from one to seven partners, so the only way for them to know for sure how many other people have the same food is to ask everyone else in the class.

Day Six: Input for Putting It All Together Subgoal: *Students receive input for the necessary structures they will need in order to complete an information gap exercise in which they can't see their partner.*

1. After reviewing the relevant structures and vocabulary, have the students work in pairs and ask their partner if they like a particular food and why? Have them listen to their partner's answer, clip their name card onto the food card and place it under the heading of the appropriate reason for why they do or do not like it. Point out to the students situations in which they could use “Me too!” or “How about you?” to expedite their conversations.
2. Give students a copy of worksheet 1 A and demonstrate how they should fill it out according to their personal preferences. At the same time the teacher fills out a copy of the same sheet.
3. Next, handout Worksheet 1B and proceed to exchange information with the students modeling ways of repairing breakdowns in conversation such as using “Pardon” and “Checking Questions”. When all the information has been exchanged, solicit answers from everyone in the class as you confirm them by slowly revealing your answers on the screen. At the same time encourage the students to ask you for the information that they require. Tell the students that they will do this exercise next class with their friends all in English.

Day Seven: Putting It All Together *Subgoal: This is the final information exchange activity.*

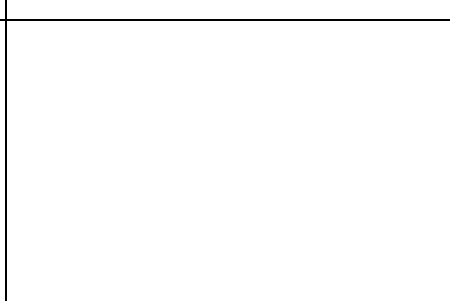
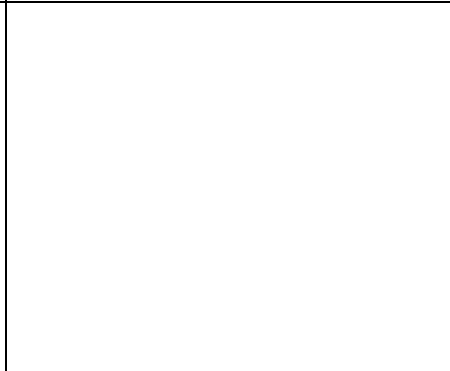
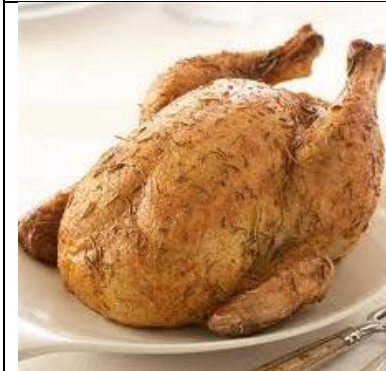
Evaluate the students and offer advice. At the same time make notes on how to improve this unit in the future.

1. Have students work in pairs. One food will be chosen and each person will ask that partner whether or not they like that food and why. Have students race to complete that dialogue.
2. Ask the pairs who finished the fastest to account for why they were able to do it so fast. They should explain that they used communication strategies such as “Me too!” and “How about you?” to communicate their desired meaning more easily.
3. Model the pair activity by talking with the other teacher using your pencil case as a phone and standing back to back.
4. Have students turn their desks away from their partners and fill out Worksheet 2A. Next Pass out worksheet 2B and have them begin the activity. After each group finishes put their paper beside their partner`s and let them check it together. Give the students who used all English a “Good Job” stamp. Pass out a survey to find out how the students felt during the activity.

What?



Why?



Name:
Partner: