

FINAL REPORT

SCHOOL YEAR 2014-2015

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TITLE: Introducing Communication Strategies

CONTEXT: Level: Junior High, beginner and intermediate

Class size: 6 students

Time: 30 minutes, 1 class per week

PROBLEM: It was officially my very first year teaching in Japan to a majority of Japanese students. The school that I work with has its own teaching syllabus and putting their main focus on EIKEN test preparation. In other words, it was difficult for me to implement sufficient communicative activities due to the time constraints. The textbook provided by the school is less communicative and contains more mechanical drill structures.

Moreover, this school doesn't have a well design curriculum throughout the year. It was a big challenge to effectively modify the textbook and develop a good curriculum that will cater to the students needs. At first, the targeted group wasn't keen on using conversation strategy as they have no idea what it was all about. It was a difficult task to have them engage entirely to the activities planned.

The students have never been exposed to such communicative activities or conversation strategies. It was a big change for the entire class. They couldn't see the advantage of using conversation strategies in terms of improving their communicative competence. Their conversation flow was kind of awkward and not natural.

By the middle of the school, there were slight changes in the students in terms of the length, volume and attitude. However, students showed difficulty to interact in a more natural mode when using conversation strategies. Also, they would pause a couple of times during interaction showing uncertainty when to use the conversation strategies.

At the end of the school term, they began to notice improvement in their communicative competence and their interest in using conversation strategies deepen. The down side was, the students were too indulged into using conversation strategies learned that they failed to expend more in terms of providing real information exchange.

GOAL:

The goal was to facilitate learning by integrating communication strategies to the targeted group. In other words, assisting students to generate real information exchange and expend more during their conversation.

Also, to help the students increase their self-confidence and interaction with conversation strategies. With the sub goal of assisting the students to gain a positive attitude and develop better communication skills.

WHAT I DID:

- I shared the purpose and the goal to the targeted group giving them a clear picture of why and how we are going to have the lessons
- Initially, I carefully monitored their participation during lesson. I started to keep a journal to keep track of the students' progress and issues after each lesson was conducted. This journal also acted as a reflection to me on how well the lesson plan was in reality. I made simple notes of each research participant in a self made observation sheet.
- I implemented several small steps at first as it was the first time the students were introduced to such communication strategies. I included a step by step order to prepare the targeted group to the final goal. I started modifying the textbook turning the mechanical drills into more communicative drills. However, I could also say that mechanical drills did help the targeted group to recall the lesson learned.
- I began by introducing simple conversation strategies such as openers, partial- shadowing, complete shadowing and closers. I had set a fair amount of time for small talks in each lesson. I tried to provide the students with sufficient opportunities to practice the used of conversation strategies.
- In order to fix the students problems such as vocabulary, grammatical structure and etc. I designed my own lesson plan based on focus on form. It was a big challenge as I had limited skills how to design an effective activity. This also was meant to provide the students with meaningful input.
- I had the chance to conduct different game activity in class for the purpose of sufficient output. Activities such as target, timed game, 4 chairs and interview were conducted. These activities gave students opportunities to practice and recycle the Cs learned effortlessly. I make it a routine to have several small activities in one lesson. The small activities could have the students familiarize with the Cs learned without lengthy explanation.
- As a micro routine to help the students to recall the Cs learned, I would have a quick review with the students. Having them to tell me what we have learned and at the very beginning of each class
- Also, I had implemented numerous pair work for brainstorming and small talk purposes
- At the end of each lesson, I had the students evaluate themselves and students evaluating students

WHAT I LEARNED:

- It is important to share the goal with the students at the very beginning of the class. It helped them to acknowledge the reason we were doing it and the benefits of doing it at the end of the semesters. Also, it is helpful to have the students set their own goal from the start in order for them to see the changes in their communicative skills.

- The students' overall interest in English is very positive. They are very interested to participate more in classroom activities such as small talks. Students showed eagerness to share and exchange real information with their respective partners during interaction.
- Having several small activities in one lesson is fairly important as the students' concentration span is very short and tend to get bored engaging in one activity for too long. Several activities in one lesson helped to boost their energy and opportunity to practice effortlessly.
- Students' involvement is very important. They needed to be aware that their participation is the main point to move a step nearer to the goal. It made a big difference when they started to participate seriously in class. The purpose and the goal seem clearer as time goes by.
- Taking a step by step approach is essential. Focusing at one Cs at a time is needed as the students felt overwhelmed with too much information. They tend to get confused and couldn't use the Cs accurately when given too much information at one go.
- Class mood is a major factor to boost their interest in speaking. From my observation throughout the year, when the class mood is good especially for this group, they were able to be more engaged and kept going in the activities producing better output. The only downside was it wasn't easy to keep the students' mood up. Activities planned needed to be very interactive and effective.
- The survey showed the students felt that their communication skills increased over the course of the lessons. Their communication skills showed not significant but gradual improvements in terms of length, volume and attitude. Their use of L1 in class decreased even when they had difficulty expressing or communicating. They seemed to have self-refrain from using L1 instead they tried to help each other to in other way to express.
- The students are getting more familiarize with the usage of Conversation Strategies. The students are taking conversation strategies more seriously and not for fun. The higher level students spoke more and the lower level students showed more motivated to speak based on the Cs learned.
- Pair work is an important approach. Students seemed to be more comfortable and generated more information during pair work. Having them to switch partners will help them to explore for themselves different vocabulary and grammatical structures.
- A good balance of input and output activity is very important as they minimum opportunity to be exposed and use Cs outside the classroom.

What Happened

- The students are getting more familiarize with the usage of Conversation Strategies.
- As their interest in using conversation strategies increased, the quality of their interaction gradually improved.
- They began to realize the importance of nonverbal interaction. Students' attitude during conversation changed. They were making more eye contacts than expected.

- Students were less self conscious compared to the very beginning. They understood now that it was fine to make mistakes during the lesson. Some even made gestures to help their respective partners to express what they wanted to say.
- As they were eager to speak more but they are losing out on their vocabulary and grammatical structures.
- The students' answers were rather simple and short, for longer answers there seemed to be struggles.
- They needed more vocabulary and grammar input. The pauses during their interactions showed that they were lack on input in terms of vocabulary and grammatical structures.
- Students could follow and participate in the activities as long as they are clear and well organized.
- Observing three pairs while they are engage in pair work activities at the same time was difficult. It was not an easy task to stay focus to each conversation which was taking place.
- The overall result of the last lesson was rather convincing. The targeted group showed eagerness to participate and they were more serious about making their self evaluation.

FURTHER ISSUES:

- I would like to equip myself with sufficient knowledge or skills to design more communicative exercises.
- I would like to take necessary measures to make more fun yet effective activities cater to the students needs.
- I would like to make a well organized yearly plan which will benefit the students and encourage them to progress further.
- I wish to provide the students with more opportunities to generate real information in class.
- I wish to deepen their Cs especially follow up questions with more functions based on their everyday lives.
- I would like to conduct a 'Speaking Test' at any appropriate time given.
- I would like to learn how to conduct the test using different skills and ways to analyze the results.

PROCEDURES:

DAY 1- Greetings

-**Review** on the conversation strategies learned

-**Textbook**; vocabulary and grammar points, focusing on ' **I've eaten, I've never eaten**'

-**What see**; look at the chart and tell as many food names shown on the picture chart

-**Target game**, hit the picture chart with a ball, tell about the food with the targeted

sentence, 'I've eaten__ but I've never eaten___' and get a point, group with most point

wins

-**In pairs, brainstorm** about Japanese food in 1:30s, timed activity, pair with most food

wins

-**'Draw and tell'**, in pairs pick from cup, seasons , talk about food suitable for the season,

Focusing on shadowing and showing interest, switching pairs twice,

Eg, A: I've eaten **strawberries**.

B: **Strawberries. Oh really!**

-Small talk

DAY2- Greetings

-**Textbook**; the vocabulary and grammar points

-**Review** on the conversation strategies learned

-**Brainstorming** on international food, timed activity, in groups of two again students

brainstorm about international food, the group with most food wins

-**Draw & Tell**, students pick from cup one by one, country name

Then they draw the international food they've picked from the cup (teacher assist),

After that, they talk about the food, focusing on the targeted sentence

Partners should respond focusing on shadowing and showing interest

-Small talk

-Homework, worksheet given by teacher, find pictures of food you have eaten

(international/ Japanese)

DAY3- Greeting

- **Review** on the conversation strategies learned

-**Textbook**, review on vocabulary and grammar points,

-**Hot potato** activity, focusing on 'Have you ever?', Shadowing , Follow up questions,

Eg. A: Have you ever eaten **durian**?

B: **Durian! No I haven't. It is good?**

A: Yes it is.

B: Have you ever eaten.....?

-**Sharing** , one student talk about food they have eaten, the others try to use rejoinders and follow up questions

-**Pairwork**, interview your partner based on your homework, focusing on 'Have you ever eaten___?' fillers, showing interest, and follow up questions

-**Small Talk** on best food they have ever tried

TODAY'S LESSON:

(1) **REVIEW** - Conversation Strategies learned

(2) **WARM UP ACTIVITY**- Timed activity, Othello game, In groups of two, guess the place or country from the food chart

(3) **BRAINSTORM**- A place you have been to, food you have eaten and things you have seen

(4) **HOT POTATO** – Pair work

-In turns students say where they have been, what kind of food they have eaten, and what they have seen

-Eg. 'I have been to Paris. **How bout you?**'

-The partner needs to reply focusing on shadowing and showing interest

-Eg. '**Paris. Oh really!**' 'I have been to Australia'

(5) **Show & Tell**-Pair work, students show and share the information on the worksheet that they have produced from brainstorming activity

-In pairs, tell their partner their experiences focusing on -'I have been to___'

-'I have eaten___' 'I have seen____' 'Have you ever___?'

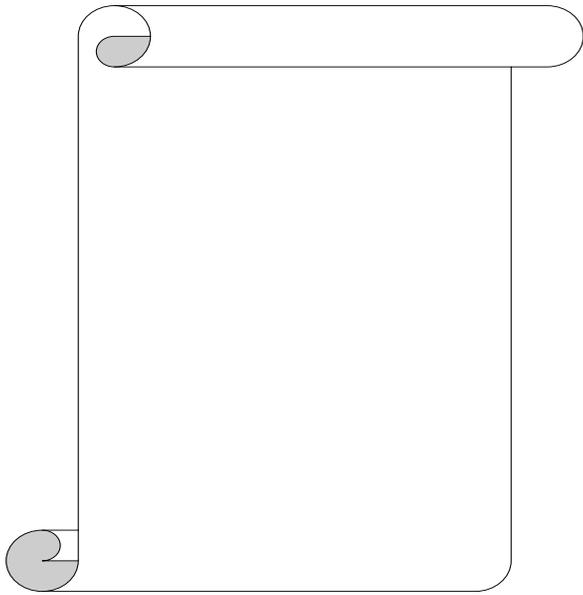
-The partner should try to respond by using Cs, focusing on follow up

-questions

(6) **Small Talk** – Choosing another partner, students have a small talk, they try to use as much Cs as possible without teacher’s guidance.

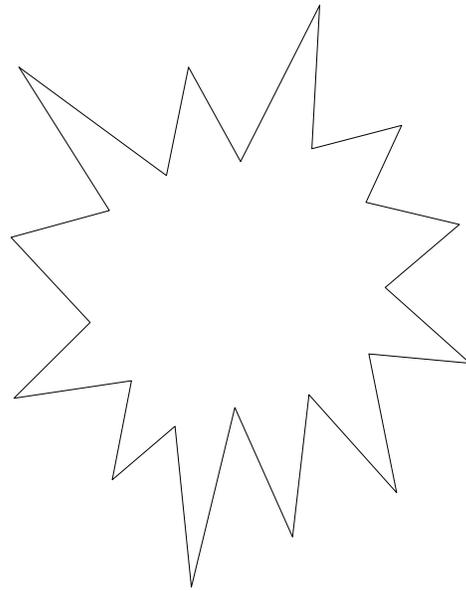
(7) **Self evaluation & Partner’s reflection**- This is to enable the students to reflect on their progress and their communication skills. Also, the partners evaluation helped them to compare their own evaluation and others evaluation which could be a good way to motivate them to work on some areas.

Brainstorming.....! It’s fun...

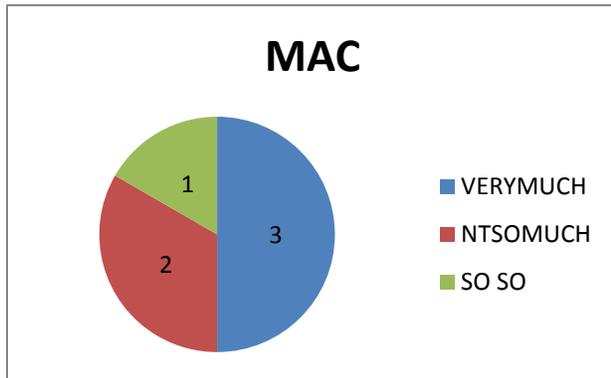


They're yummy..... ©

DRAW & TELL.....©

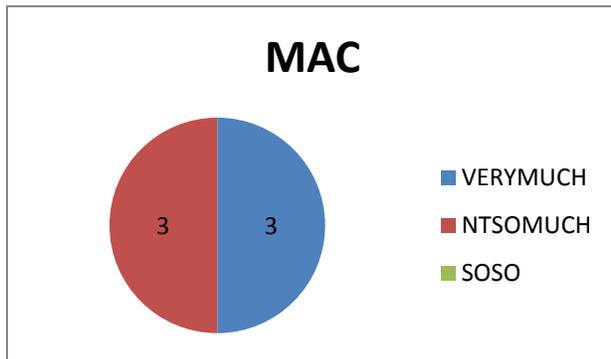


Self - Evaluation Data March 2015 Communication Strategies
I USED CONVERSATION STRATEGIES



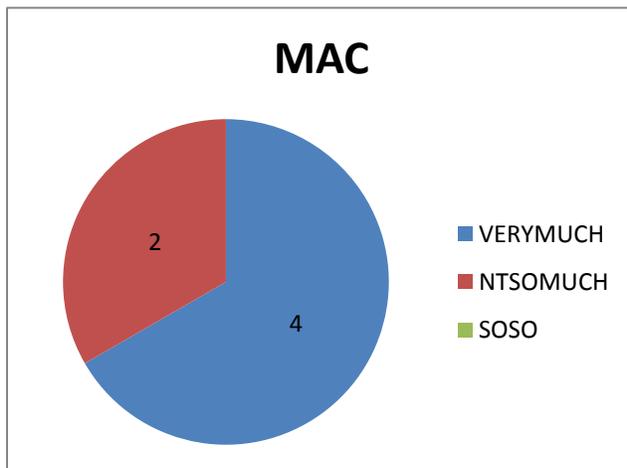
For I used conversation strategies, **3** students circled **very much**, **2** student circled **not so much** and **1** student circled **so so** . Based on data, the students managed to maintain average usage of Cs during interaction. However, **1** student was changed to another class for a month and he seemed to have forgotten some of the Cs.

I UNDERSTOOD THE USAGE OF CONVERSATION STRATEGIES WELL



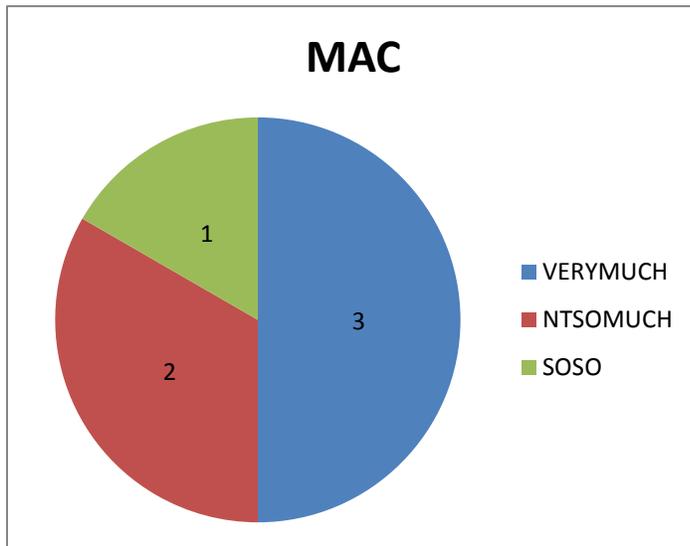
For I understood the usage of conversation strategies well, **3** students circle **very much**, **3** students circled **not so much** and **no students** circled **so so**. This is showed significant progress in terms of understanding the usage of Cs compared to the very beginning.

I UNDERSTOOD MY PARTNER



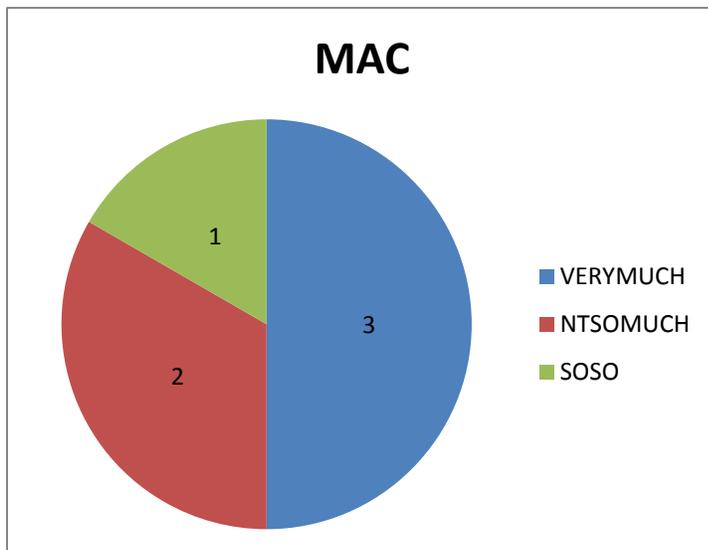
For I understood my partner, **4** students circled **very much**, **2** students circled **not so much** and **none** for **so so**. During pair interaction students have shown that their understanding deepened and they used negotiation of meaning among themselves in various ways. All in all, the students' understanding towards the conversation content improved.

I MADE GOOD EYE CONTACT



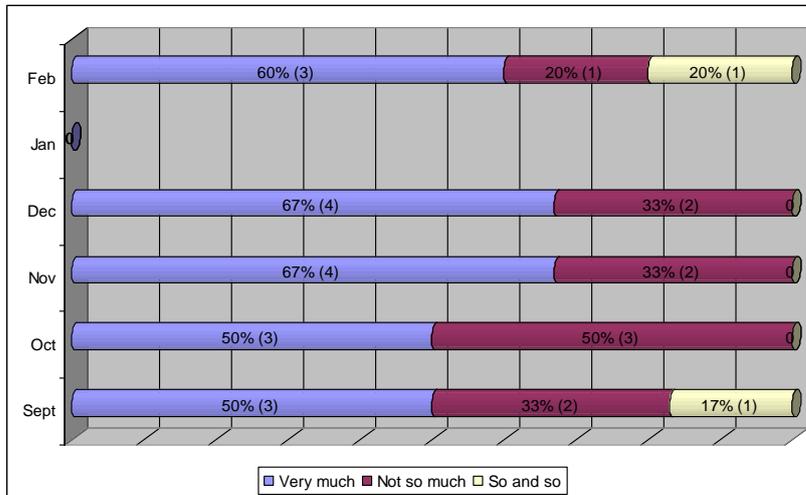
I made good eye contact, **3** students circled **very much**, **2** student circled **not so much**, and **1** circled **so so**. This indicates that the students are improving in terms of attitude during conversation and are aware of the importance of non verbal interaction except for one bitterly shy student.

I SPOKE IN A LOUD VOICE



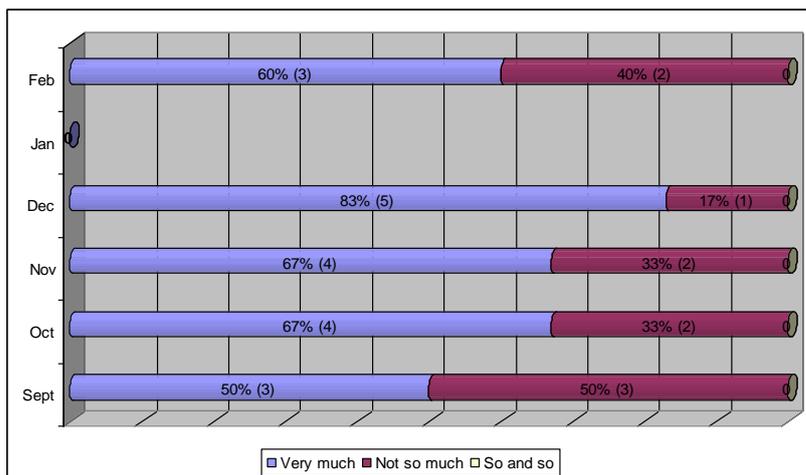
For I spoke in a loud voice, **3** students circled **very much**, **2** circled **not so much**, **1** circled **so so**. From the data collected, it had clearly shown that their self confidence increased and they could speak in a louder volume with less self consciousness. All except one students who is extremely shy and maybe the lowest level in the class spoke in a small voice.

I used conversation strategies



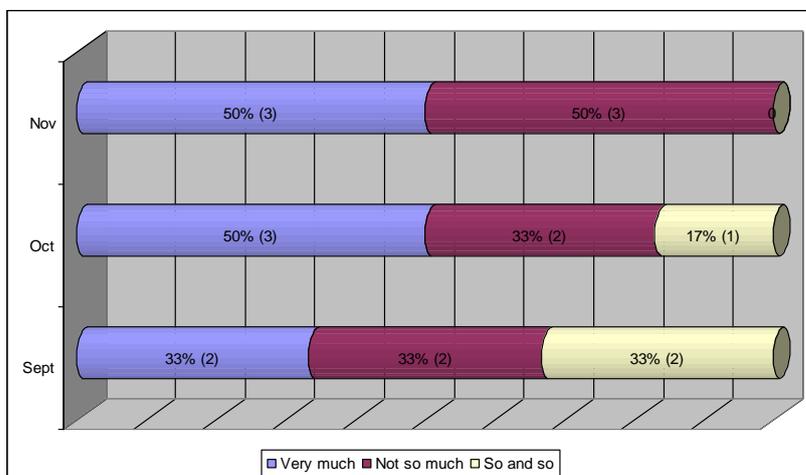
Average
2.4
NIL
2.66
2.66
2.5
2.33

I understood my partner



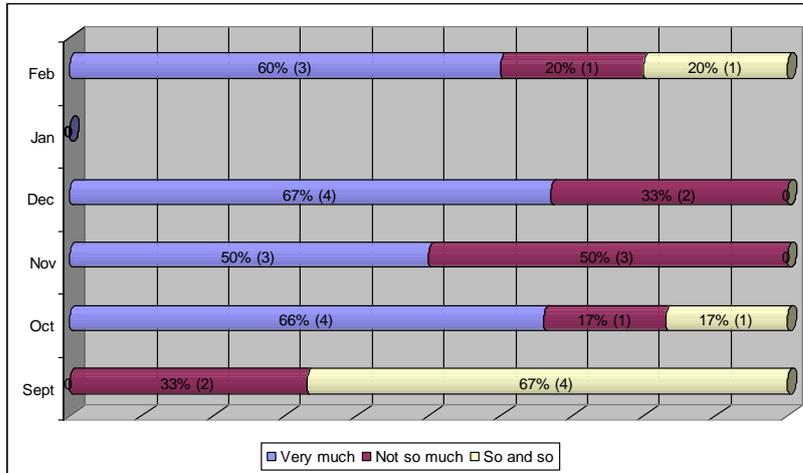
Average
2.6
NIL
2.83
2.66
2.66
2.5

I tried hard to speak



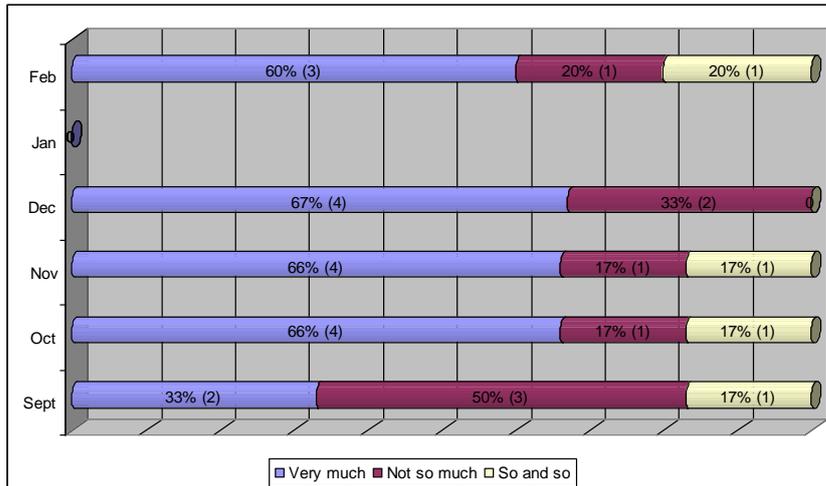
Average
2.5
2.33
2

I made good eye contact



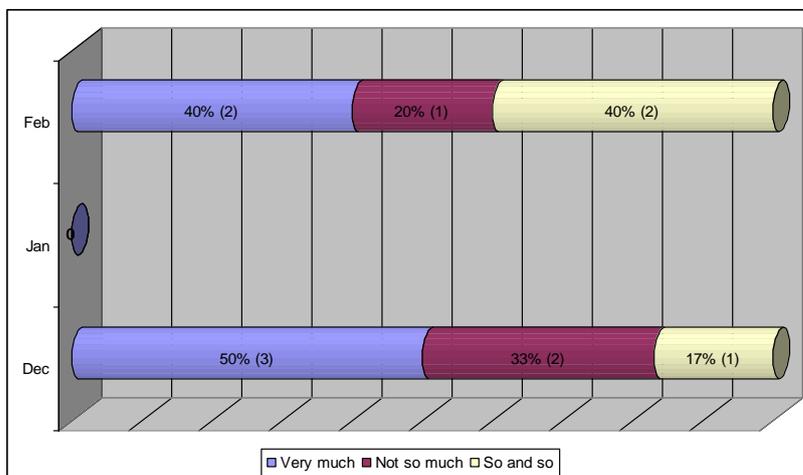
Average
2.4
NIL
2.66
2.5
2.5
2.33

I spoke in a loud voice



Average
2.4
NIL
2.66
2.5
2.5
2.16

I understood the usage of conversation strategies



Average
2
NIL
2.33

The results of students' previous self evaluation showed not significant but gradual increase in all categories. Students think that they have change and improved especially more on understanding their partner and tried hard to speak. These are important factors which indicated they were adapting well towards using Cs and their understanding got much better after engaging themselves in a course of lessons.