

1. Introduction

There have been many kinds of methods and approaches in teaching English. Among them, grammar translation method has undoubtedly been most widespread in Japanese secondary schools. It is true that some people have acquired English in spite of the instruction; but I have also seen that many more people have failed to become competent English users even after many years of English learning. I was always looking for better ways to help students become able to communicate in English. Then I learned about communicative language teaching and started to implement it in my classes.

2. Theoretical Background

In the following parts, I will first explain what communicative competence is. Then I will explain communicative language teaching, skills integration, structured input and output, and finally multiple assessments.

i. Communicative Competence

It is important to know that to be able to communicate in English, learners need more than mere knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. They need to learn to communicate through actually using the language. Savignon (1997) defines communication as “a continuous process of *expression*, *interpretation*, and *negotiation* of *meaning* (p. 14). According to the diagram she developed, overall communicative competence includes grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence (p. 49). Teachers, therefore, should help students improve all these competences, and should not expect them to be a proficient English user by just teaching them grammar and vocabulary.

ii. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

According to Brown (2001), CLT has following characteristics.

- a. Classroom goals are focused on *all* of the components of communicative competence.
- b. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes;
- c. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques;
- d. Students ultimately have to *use* the language, productively and receptively, in *unrehearsed* contexts (p. 43)

Brown (2007) also mentioned importance of skills integration in CLT.

1. Production and reception are quite simply two sides of the same coin; one cannot split

the coin in two.

2. Interaction means sending *and* receiving messages.
3. Written and spoken language often (but not always!) bear a relationship to each other; to ignore that relationship is to ignore the richness of language.
4. For literate learners, the interrelationship of written and spoken languages is an intrinsically motivating reflection of language and culture and society.
5. By attending primarily to what learners can *do* with language, and only secondarily to the forms of language, we invite any or all of the four skills that are relevant into the classroom arena.
6. Often one skill will reinforce another; we learn to speak, for example, in part by modeling what we hear, and we learn to write by examining what we can read.
7. Proponents of the whole language approach... have shown us that in the real world of language use, most of our natural performance involves not only the integration of one or more skills, but connections between language and the way we think and feel and act. (p. 286)

ii. Structured Input and Output

To acquire a language, learners need sufficient amount of input that is comprehensible and meaningful. However, that is not enough. To increase accuracy, they need to learn to focus on form. Structured input makes it possible for learners to attend form while understanding meaning. According to Lee & VanPatten (1995), structured input has two major characteristics.

- The activity requires that the learner attend to the grammatical item in the input sentences while focused on meaning.
- Learners are asked not to produce the grammatical item, only to process it in the input. (p. 102)

Lee & VanPatten (1995) also said, “Maximum efficiency is achieved when one function and one form are the focus at any given time” (p. 104).

Output is also necessary to develop accuracy as well as fluency. It means both written and oral. According to Lee & VanPatten (1995), structured input has two major characteristics.

1. They involve the exchange of previously unknown information.
2. They require learners to access a particular form or structure in order to express meaning. (p. 121)

iv. Multiple Assessments

When we consider learning, we also need to look at assessment, because they are two sides of the same one coin. Hughes (1989), cited in Bachman (1996), discusses washback, which is “the effect of testing on teaching and learning” (p. 30). Washback could be beneficial

or detrimental. Positive washback occur when classroom goals, practice, and assessment are aligned. Implementing communicative teaching means I need to incorporate rather innovative assessment and not just use traditional discrete-point testing. Integrative language testing or communicative testing need to be included.

v. Research question

My research question for 2011 has been “How does communicative grammar teaching help students better understand grammar, improve their speaking ability, and affect their perception of English learning?”

3. Methods

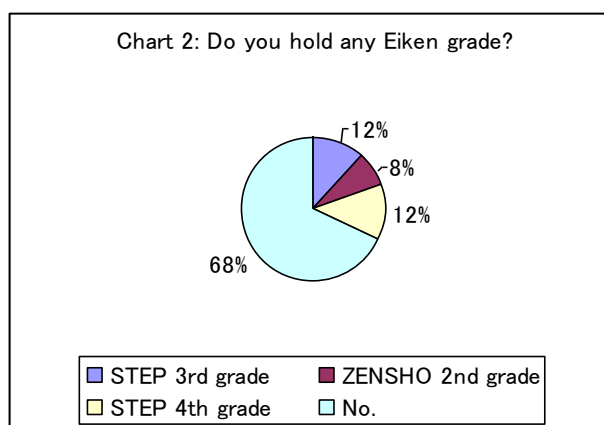
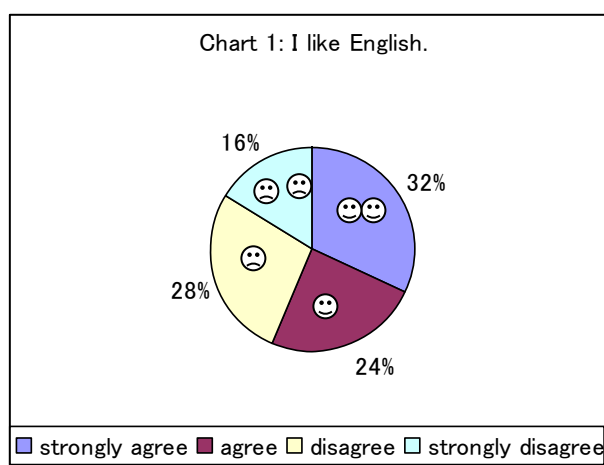
i. Research context and participants

I conducted the research at a private senior high school. The participants were 27 girls in 3rd years. They chose this course, *English Practice*, as an elective course.

I first assumed that they liked English because they had chosen the course. However, not necessarily everyone liked it. In April, only a little more than half the class said they liked English. (Chart 1)

Their level of English was not very high. Only about 1/3 of the class held Eiken grades. STEP 3rd and 4th grades are junior high school levels, and ZENSHO Eiken 2nd grade is said to be as challenging as STEP 3rd grade. (Chart 2)

The class met twice a week from April to July, and one period of class was 50 minutes. The goal of the class was for students to communicate in English. The goals of the class were ...



- Class goals:
1. The students can keep a conversation going for 2 minutes.
 2. They can better understand grammar.
 3. They can use conversation strategies.
 4. They like English better.

To achieve the goals, I tried including structured input and output activities as much

as possible in my lessons. To maximize opportunities for the students to interact each other, I often used pair/group work. In planning activities, *Communicative Grammar Teaching: Activities for Hungry English Teachers* (Center for EFL Teacher Development Nagoya University of Foreign Studies) offered me a great help. Usually after input activities, I had students come up with a target grammar point of the day. Then they would write it down in a certain part of the worksheet, and we moved onto structured output activities. The textbook *Harvest English Grammar Red Course in 20 Lessons* (Kirihara) was mainly used as homework. Assessments included their short writing works, 2 speaking tests, and 2 term tests.

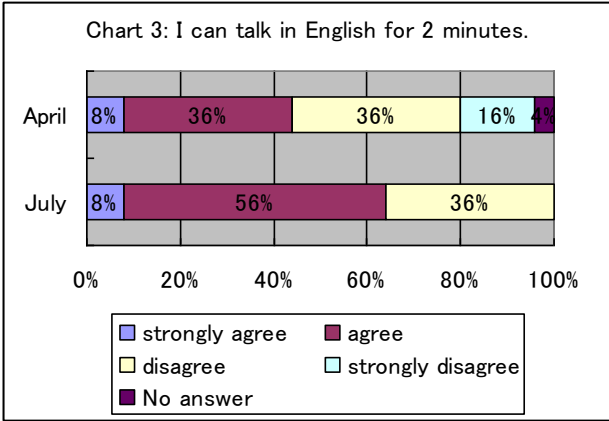
ii. Research Design

I gave survey in the last class in July and collected data from 25 students in the class. (2 students were absent from school on that day.) I asked them to answer several likert-scale questions. I also asked them to write some comments answering several open questions. Then, I calculated and summarized the data to show how the students have developed their English ability.

4. Results

i. Regarding class goal 1: The students can keep a conversation going for 2 minutes.

Compared with April, more students could talk in English for 2 minutes in July. The percent of the students who chose “strongly agree” to “I can talk in English for 2 minutes” has remained unchanged, but who chose “agree” has increased by 20%. The group of the students who answered “strongly disagree” in April has disappeared in July. However, more than 1/3 of the students have remained unable to talk for 2 minutes. (Chat 3)



23 students said their speaking ability had improved over the 4 months in one way or another. 2 said they had not improved very much. Here I describe improvements shared by 2 or more students in 3 categorizes that I came up with.

- Improvement in the area of linguistic competence:** I have come to ...
- Understand utterance of my partner better. (3)
 - Use more grammar patterns and sentences instead of using a few words. (3)
 - Know more words and expressions. (2)

Improvement in the strategic competence: I have come to ...

- Use conversation strategies. (8)
- Keep eye contact. (5)

Changes in their attitude: I have come to ...

- Enjoy talking in English. (3)
- Have more positive attitude toward speaking in English. (6)

Here is a comment from one of the students. All names in the report are fictitious.

When I did not know how to say something in English, I tended to be silent before. But now, I open my mouth trying to keep our conversation going somehow. I have come to use conversation strategies a little, even though I still have to try to do so consciously. (Yumi)

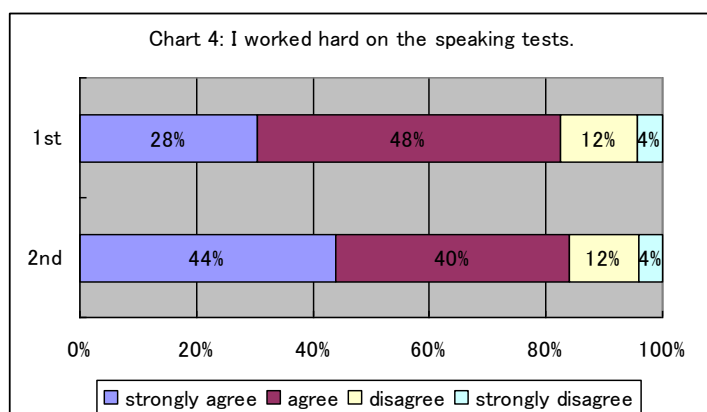


Chart 4 shows how hard the students worked on the speaking tests. It seems that many students put a lot of effort into the 1st test, and more students tried even harder for the 2nd one. One student who chose “strongly disagree” did not take either speaking test because she was absent from school on both dates.

I asked the students to reflecting on the 2 speaking tests. 4 students said they did better in the second speaking tests. To be familiar with the procedure of the test seems essential.

I was not sure how the first speaking test would go, and I could not ask questions to my partner. But when it was time for the second speaking test, I knew how to go about it, and I could ask many questions to my partner. (Miki)

4 students have come to enjoy the speaking tests. Here are comments from 2 of them.

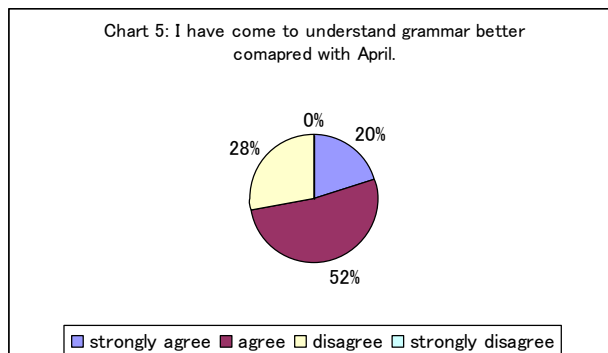
I was tense in the first speaking test, trying not to forget English sentences to say. In the second speaking test, I was more concentrated in our conversation rather than grammar. I was thinking of questions to ask my partner... and I enjoyed talking. (Rie)

It was really difficult for me to talk in English without looking at anything written, because I usually do not use English in daily life. I put my first priority in keeping eye contact and enjoying conversations with my partner, and I did. I do not know exactly how much I improved my speaking ability, but I am sure I can speak better than in April. (Yumi)

I found the idea of enjoying tests unusual. It is just something I do not hear in the case of traditional term tests.

ii. Regarding class goal 2: They can better understand grammar.

72% of the students have come to understand grammar better compared with April. 20% of the students chose “strongly agree” and 52% chose “agree” to “I have come to understand grammar better compared with April.” Yet more than 1/4 of the students chose “disagree.” (Chart 5)



I asked them to explain how pair/group work helped them understand grammar. 6 students said that **using grammar** in pair/group work had helped them understand grammar better than just reading or writing down grammar explanations. Here are comments from 2 of them.

I could remember grammar through actually using it with my classmates, through my ears. I write and understand grammar also in other English classes, but this is the only class I can understand it through communication. It was easy to understand. I have learned not just what it means but also how to use it. (Yumi)

If I just read explanations of grammar patterns in the textbook, I am likely to forget them soon. But when I talked in pairs, I could learn and use it naturally. (Nonoka)

2 students said they had **enjoyed working together** in pairs/groups and that had helped them enjoy learning grammar. 3 said pair/group work were helpful because they had **cooperated and helped each other** when they had questions. 3 students liked **changing partners/groups**. Here is a comment from one of them.

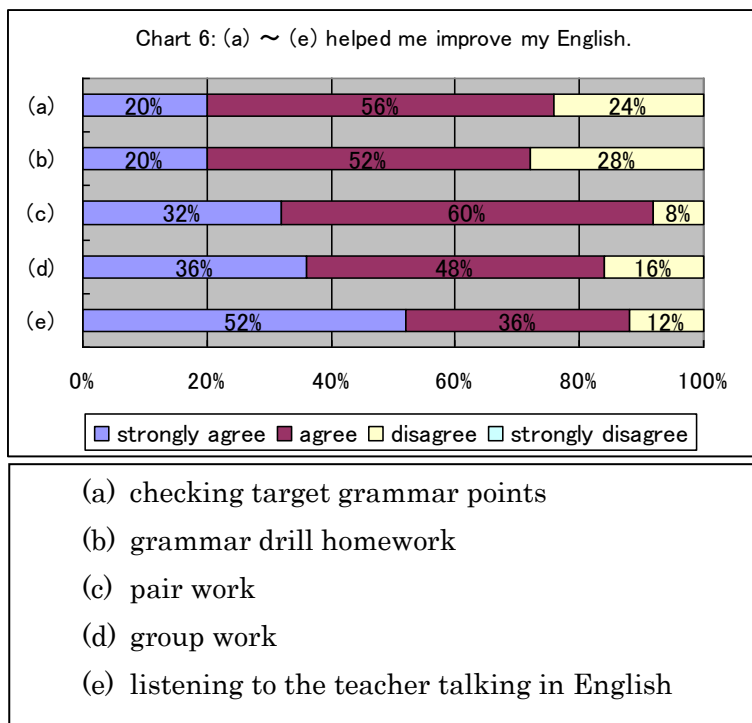
Depending on a partner, who each has a different idea and style of talking, I enjoyed various conversations. It was better than working with the one same person all the time. (Rina)

2 students said they had understood grammar but still been **unable to use grammar** in conversation well. 1 student said pair/group work **did not help** her.

Pair/group work were not very helpful. I was tense and could do little work. (Kaori)

Next, Chart 6 shows what helped the students improve their overall English ability.

It seems that (c) pair work and (d) group work helped the students improve their



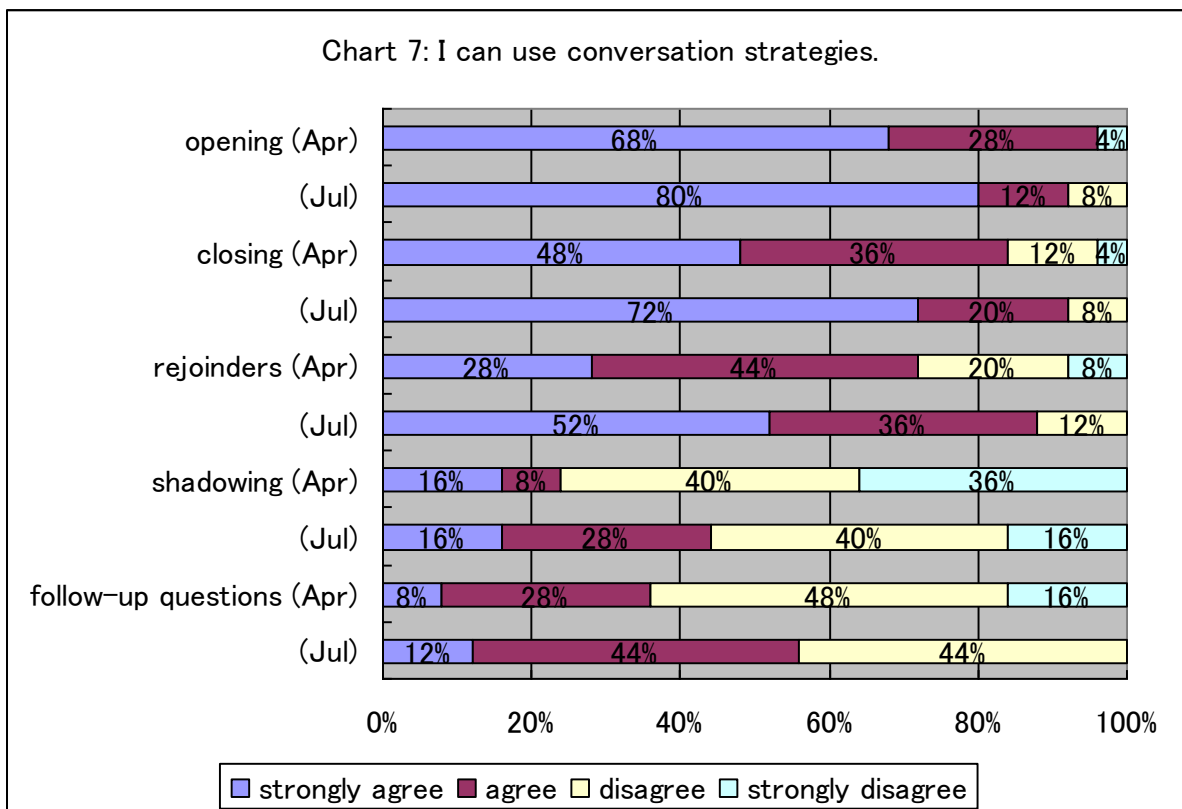
English better than (a) checking target grammar points and (b) grammar drill homework. Communicative grammar teaching seems to work better for more students than to explicit grammar teaching.

Another significance I found was regarding (e). Listening to the teacher talking in English seemed to help most of the students. Here is a comment from a student. It seems listening to English in context helped her.

I read English and study grammar in Reading class. But, before this course, I had never listened to English in a natural conversational setting or spoke English as my own words. Listening to the teacher who always talks in English and doing pair speaking activities were useful. (Rie)

iii. Regarding class goal 3: They can use conversation strategies.

Chart 7 shows how students have improved their use of conversation strategies over the 4 months.



Many students used opening, closing, and rejoinders, but not as much students used shadowing and follow-up question. They had adequate time to practice using the former three strategies, while they did not have much time to practice shadowing and follow-up questions. They were introduced in July. However, several students were seen to be using them in the first speaking test without being taught by the teacher. Besides, after they were introduced, several other students quickly picked them up. The percents of students who chose “agree” to “I can use shadowing” went up from 8% to 28%. Shadowing seems to be the next conversation strategies the students should work on.

I asked the students to comment on how they improved their use of conversation strategies and how that helped them improve their speaking ability. 7 students said that using conversation strategies helped them reduce awkward silence and/or helped them continue their conversations. Here are some comments from 4 students.

I can use conversation strategies more. In April, whether I could talk for 2 minutes clearly depended on a partner. But now I can hold a natural conversation using conversation strategies even when my partner does not speak very much. (Aira)

I have learned to use many types of conversation strategies. They are very useful when I reply to my partner or when I am thinking of what to say next. I was never run out of what to say. (Rina)

2 students mentioned how using conversation strategies made them feel familiar with speaking English.

Conversation strategies such as “I see” and “Well ...” were very useful. It was probably when I could use them easily that I started enjoying speaking English. It made me feel English familiar. (Nene)

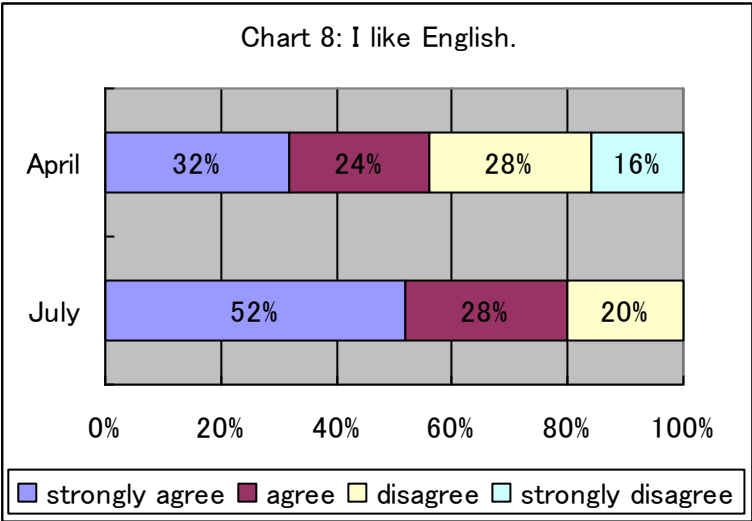
I have come to use conversation strategies adequately between lines. I learned expression like “by the way” “I see” and “How about you?” in class and used them as a joke in daily Japanese conversations. (Aya)

3 students said that they tended to use fewer conversation strategies when they were tense. On the other hand, 1 student said,

I have learned to use conversation strategies in my own way. Even when my head is empty, they come out from my mouth. I could connect words by using them. (Kaori)

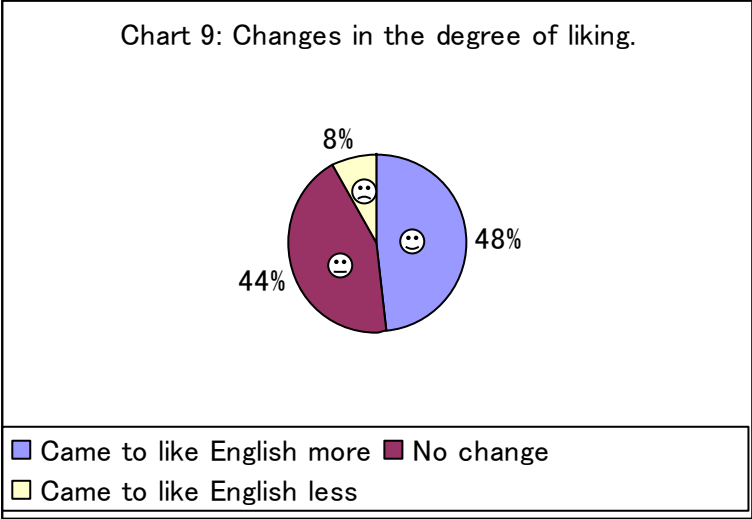
iv. Regarding class goal 4: They like English better.

The data on which Chart 8 is based on was also collected in likert-scale style: 4 (= strongly agree), 3 (= agree), 2 (= disagree), and (1 = strongly disagree).



Overall, the % of students who like English has increased from 56% to 80%.

To see changes in each individual student, please have a look at Chart 9. 48% scored higher in July, meaning their degree of liking of English had increased. 44% scored just the same in April and July, meaning they liked English as much. Actually, 33%,



who scored 4 (= strongly agree) in both April and July, is included in here. Their comments show that even though their score did not change, they have come to like English better and want to improve their English more. Finally, 8% scored lower in July, meaning they had come to like English less. One of the 2 students in this group explained the reason.

I don't like English as much as before. The style of the lessons required me to be cooperative with my classmates, but I wish we had more work to do individually.
(Kaori)

However, reflecting on pair work, she also said,

I have gradually got used to talking in pairs. Then I got to know my classmates, and became friends while I was not aware of it. My shyness has gone away a little.
(Kaori)

Describing how they had come to feel about English, 17 students said they had come to want to study English more. 7 of them specifically wanted to improve their speaking skill. 2 of them got interested in foreign countries.

5 students said they had come to enjoy English.

In April, I really hated English. But I have come to enjoyed English a little by little. Now I am willing to talk to people in English. Compared with the first class, the degree I like English is completely different now. I am glad I did this course. (Yuri)

3 said that they had come to like English after they had understood it better.

Because I did not understand English, it was not fun. I did not try to listen to the teacher when she was explaining something in English. However, I came to think, "I should listen carefully, and it is OK if I do not understand." Then, gradually, I began to understand a little by little. I have come to like English a little and want to understand it. (Yumi)

2 students, on the other hand, came to enjoy English even though they had not improved much.

I have come to think that it is OK to try even if I cannot speak English well. We can sometimes laugh together when we are talking in English. That is the best moment.
(Seiko)

5. Discussion

i. Regarding class goal 1: The students can keep a conversation going for 2 minutes.

Even though some students achieved the goal, 1/3 students still remained unable to have conversation for 2 minutes. More time and communicative activities are needed to build their speaking ability.

ii. Regarding class goal 2: They can better understand grammar.

Communicative language teaching seems to have worked with the students. But 2

students have come to like English less. And one of them specifically said that she did not like interacting with other students because it made her nervous. Even though she eventually got used to it, I should remember that some students may need more time to feel comfortable with communicating with others in English. Also, I would note here that explicit grammar explanation seems to have helped some students at some extent. My guess is that it works nicely when it is part of the lesson, and not the all of what we do in class.

iii. Regarding class goal 3: They can use conversation strategies.

Many students have learned to use opening, closing, and rejoinders. Shadowing and follow-up questions have not been used by many students, since they were introduced at the last minutes and the students did not have many chances to actually try using them. Conversation strategies seem to have had positive effect on improving the students' speaking ability.

iv. Regarding class goal 4: They like English better.

More students said they liked English in July than in April. Overall, communicative language teaching motivated the students to learn English more. Some students came to like English because they could see their improvements, but others had come to like it because they could communicate with each other even though their English ability was limited. I think having students enjoy the learning process itself is a key to help their learning.

6. Conclusion

As the result of the survey shows that communicative grammar teaching seems to have worked with this particular group of students. However, this research was conducted only over 4 months and it is too early to make a firm conclusion. In order to further investigate how communicative language teaching helps students better understand grammar, improve their speaking ability, and affect their perception of English learning, a longitudinal research is needed. Also, to see how a particular structured input/output activity is actually effective, I need to give them pre-test and post-test. Finally, the students' language samples should be analyzed in detailed analysis. Due to the unfortunate accident with my laptop, I could not do so this time, but I do think it is necessary in the future.

7. References

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8. Appendices

i. Lesson plan to prepare the students for Speaking Test 1

1. Level: SHS 3rd year
2. Class size: 27 girls
3. Textbook: Harvest English Grammar Red Course in 20 Lessons
4. Goal & Objectives:
 - 1) Students can talk with their partners for 2 minutes.
 - 2) They can introduce themselves using present perfect.
 - 3) They can give advice to their partners using auxiliary verbs.
 - 4) They can use conversation strategies to keep their conversation going.
 - 5) They can keep good eye contact with their partners.
5. Procedure:
 - 1) Before day one: The students did several listening, reading, speaking, and writing activities in which they used present perfect, auxiliary verbs, and conversation strategies. I adopted and revised activities from "Communicative Grammar Teaching Activities for Hungry Teachers." They use the textbook mainly as homework.
 - 2) Day one: (This class) First, I gave them a quiz. Then, I gave them instruction on Speaking Test 1. They practiced for the speaking test.
 - 3) Day two: Speaking Test 1. First, I announced who were going to be partners for the
 - 4) speaking test. I videotaped their performance. Each pair talked for two minutes, introducing themselves and giving advice to each other's situations. They were not allowed to look at any notes. After the test, they evaluated themselves using the rubric.
6. Today's lesson plan:
 - 1) I gave the students a quiz.
 - 2) I gave them brief instruction on Speaking Test 1.
 - 3) I went over the rubric for the speaking test.
 - 4) I provided them with a list of useful expressions and conversation strategies.
 - 5) They wrote down what they would like to say in speaking test on a piece of paper.
 - 6) They practiced talking in pairs for two minutes. They changed their partners and did it again.
 - 7) They added more sentences to their notes.
 - 8) I did demonstration with one of the students.
 - 9) They added more sentences to their notes.
 - 10) They practiced talking once again with new partners.

ii. Handouts and rubrics for the speaking tests (next page)

9. お悩み相談 Class No. Name

Step 1 1~5の会話を聴き、Aさんが欲しがっているアドバイスが書いてある本を探してみよう。

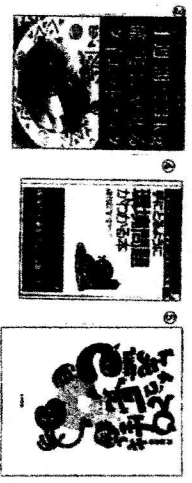
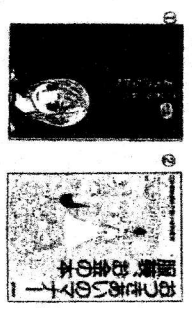
1. A: I want to live a long, happy life.
B: You should read Book No. _____

2. A: I want to learn about the global warming.
B: You ought to read Book No. _____

3. A: I am going to my friend's wedding. What should I wear?
B: You had better read Book No. _____

4. A: I want many good friends.
B: You ought to read Book No. _____

5. A: I want to be slim.
B: You should read Book No. _____



Step 2 Check the answers with your partner.

Step 3 文法のポイントをまとめよう

① should, ought to, had better は、() するときに使う。
② had better は強い意味なので、() の人には使わない。

Step 4 以下の文章は、どの本の中に書いてあるアドバイスだと思いますか?

Advice	Book No.
1. You <u>had better</u> watch "Mechalike" on TV.	
2. You <u>should</u> not always be kind to your friends.	
3. You <u>ought</u> to bring your eco bag to a supermarket.	
4. You <u>should</u> eat a lot of vegetables.	
5. You <u>have better</u> not wear a white dress at someone's wedding.	
6. You <u>ought</u> not to often get angry.	

Step 5 Check the answers with your partner.

A: 1の英文読み上げ。Where is this advice?

B: I think it is in Book No. _____ What do you think?

A: I think so, too. (I don't think so. I think it is in Book No. _____)

10. お悩み相談 Class No. Name

Step 6 以下の5つの問題について、適切だと思うアドバイスを選ぼう。

1. When I go to McDonald's with my friend, he doesn't have money. What should I do?
a) I read him. (read: 読む)
b) give up going to McDonald's.
c) lend him money. (lend: 貸す)
d) not lend him money.

2. I am very shy when I meet people. What should I do? (shy: 気取った)
a) to wear good clothes. (clothes: 服)
b) to drink alcohol. (alcohol: アルコール)
c) to have a lot of money.
d) not to meet people.

3. I have a job interview of McDonald's tomorrow. What should I do? (job interview: (仕事)面接)
a) smile a lot.
b) have a hair cut.
c) sleep well tonight.
d) not wear make-up.

4. I'm going to meet my friend's family. What gift should I take?
a) fruit.
b) beer.
c) sweets. (sweets: お菓子)
d) no gift.

5. I want to be able to speak English well.
a) You ought _____
b) to go to America or Australia.
c) to go to ECC or EON English school.
d) not to study in Japan.

Step 7 Share your opinion with your partner. (opinion: 意見)

A: 1の英文を読み上げ。

B: a~dから選んだものを読み上げ。What do you think of that?

A: 同じものを選んでいたら→That's a good idea. I'll do that.
違うものを選んでいたら→I don't think it's a good idea. I will a~dから選んだもの。

Step 8 Self-evaluation (授業でわかったことや活動の感想・反省を、自分の言葉で書こう！)

Speaking Test 1: 自己紹介&相談しよう

No. Name

Self-evaluation Sheet (自己評価シート)

観点	4	3	2	1
積極的に会話に <i>silence</i> 積極態度 <i>attitude</i>	積極的に2分間英語で会話を続けることができた	積極的に英語で会話したが、途中沈黙があった	不自然な沈黙があったまたは、日本語を使った	あまり積極的に会話できなかった
姿勢 アイコンタクト <i>eye contact</i>	常に相手の方をしっかりと向き、アイコンタクトをとることができた	だいたい相手の方を向き、アイコンタクトをとることができた	ときどき相手の方を向き、アイコンタクトもたまにできた	相手の方を向いたり、アイコンタクトができなかった
自己紹介 <i>self-introduction</i> 現在完了 <i>present perfect</i> (have+過去分詞)	正確な表現を使って自分のことについて話し、相手のことについて質問できた	少しの間違いがあつたが、自分のことについて話し、相手のことについて質問できた	少しの間違いがあつたが、自分のことについて話すか、相手のことについて質問できた	間違いが多く、内容が伝わらなかったか、表現を使えなかった
悩み事相談& アドバイス <i>giving advice</i> (should, ought to, had betterなど)	正確な表現を使って自分の悩みを相談し、相手の悩みにアドバイスすることができた	少しの間違いがあつたが、自分の悩みを相談し、相手の悩みにアドバイスすることができた	少しの間違いがあつたが、自分の悩みを相談するか、相手の悩みにアドバイスすることができた	間違いが多く、内容が伝わらなかったか、表現を使えなかった
conversation strategies の使用	conversation strategies を4回以上使って、会話が続くように努力した	conversation strategies を3回使って、会話が続くように努力した	conversation strategies を2回使って、会話が続くように努力した	conversation strategies を1回使った、または1回も使わなかった

Comments

合計 /20

Speaking Test ②の評価シート

3- No. Name

Self-evaluation (自己評価)

	5	4	3	2	1
content 内容	内容が詳しく、言いたいことがよく表現できる	内容がやや詳しく、言いたいことがだいたい表現できる	内容があまり詳しくないが、言いたいことはだいたい表現できる	内容が詳しくなく、言いたいことは時々表現できる	内容が不十分で、言いたいことが表現できない
accuracy 正確さ	正確に表現でき、よく意味が伝わる	ほぼ正確に表現でき、よく意味が伝わる	やや間違っているが、意味が伝わる	重要な間違っているが、なんとか意味は伝わる	間違いが多く、意味が伝わりにくい
fluency 流暢さ	スムーズに話せる。CSを常に使える	ほぼスムーズに話せる。CSを頻繁に使える	半分ぐらいの場合、スムーズに話せる。CSを時折使える	時には、スムーズに話せる。CSはあまり使えない	スムーズに話せない。CSは全く使えない
comments 感想・反省					

Teacher-evaluation (先生の評価)

	5	4	3	2	1
content 内容	内容が詳しく、言いたいことがよく表現できる	内容がやや詳しく、言いたいことがだいたい表現できる	内容があまり詳しくないが、言いたいことはだいたい表現できる	内容が詳しくなく、言いたいことは時々表現できる	内容が不十分で、言いたいことが表現できない
accuracy 正確さ	正確に表現でき、よく意味が伝わる	ほぼ正確に表現でき、よく意味が伝わる	やや間違っているが、意味が伝わる	重要な間違っているが、なんとか意味は伝わる	間違いが多く、意味が伝わりにくい
fluency 流暢さ	スムーズに話せる。CSを常に使える	ほぼスムーズに話せる。CSを頻繁に使える	半分ぐらいの場合、スムーズに話せる。CSを時折使える	時には、スムーズに話せる。CSはあまり使えない	スムーズに話せない。CSは全く使えない