

Action Research Final Report 2011-2012

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1. Title: Teaching English communicatively and improving students' communicative competence

2. Context:

(1) Level: 3rd year students of junior high school

(2) Class size: 36 students

(3) Time: 45 or 50-minute-class, 4 classes per week

(4) Textbook: New Horizon English Course 3

(5) Problems:

a. My school is very big and there are nine third-grader classes. I came to the present school last year and taught two classes out of nine. Two other teachers taught the other 7 classes. Their teaching styles are different from mine and each other. Many students didn't have enough communicative activities last year.

b. Most students can speak English with scripts or recite them, but they have had few or no opportunities to speak without scripts. Therefore, they can't talk in real situation outside classes.

3. Goal: Students can communicate with classmates and AETs actively and improve their competence

I want my students to use English as means of communication and have competence to express their ideas in English. They have few chances to use English in daily life in Japan, but I want them to realize that it is fun and useful in the future to communicate in English.

4. What I did

(1) Communicative activities

I introduced target grammar in the textbook, showing some example sentences and gave students some activities to use the grammar, in which they listen to sentences including the grammar, write about students themselves and classmates etc, and talk in English.

(2) Poster Session

Students had two sessions in May and December. The topic in May was Japanese culture and that in December was their favorite famous person. They gave a speech in a group of four,

showing their poster. After the speech, the audience asked the speaker questions by turns, and the speaker answered the questions and tried to continue conversation in English after the questions. In December, I had them peer-edit in groups when they wrote and then I gave feedback. They wrote three drafts.

(3) Timed conversation and speaking test

Students had one-minute-and-a-half conversation in pairs. The topic in June was “What I like to do and go on doing now” and that in October was “My favorite place.” I added some procedures in the second term. I recorded a model conversation with Dr. Kint during summer vacation and had students listen to it. I gave an activity to practice follow-up questions and made a handout for students to refer to. After timed conversations, students wrote down follow-up questions they used. I collected them and gave feedback before the next timed conversation.

The partners and the order to take the speaking test were determined by lot. Two students had a conversation in front of the AET and were evaluated on the rubric which had been given to students before they started practicing the conversation.

(4) Writing

In November, students wrote opinions about cell phones. Starting with brainstorming, they wrote that they were for or against the opinion that junior high school students may use cell phones, using a Japanese-English dictionary. In February, they wrote about their future family rules. Their writings were evaluated on the rubric which had been given to students before they started writing.

5. Results

(1) Student survey

I conducted student surveys in April, July and February. Graph 1-16 show the results. The results were better in July than in April, but the results in February did not change largely, comparing to those in July. I think that it is because I changed my teaching only a little after the survey in July. Reflecting what I did after the survey in July, I tried to speak more English. I put more focus on reading with appropriate stress in the first term. I changed listening activities to quizzes like entrance examinations for public high schools. The last target sentence was taught in December and in the third term students had reading activities mainly. I think that I should have conducted a survey about activities about grammar because students might have forgotten what they felt. The questions in graph 17-21 were asked students just after the poster sessions (The graph was made

about the same 29 students because 7 students were absent of influenza). The results became better in December than in May except for graph 20. Graph 22 shows the average of speaking test scores in the first and second terms. Fluency and accuracy were improved though loudness and eye contact decreased by 0.08 points.

(2) Speaking tests and writings

I chose six students (2 advanced, 2 intermediate and 2 beginning-level) and analyzed their speaking and writing. In the second speaking test, all the six students spoke more fluently and could ask more follow-up questions than in the first test. Moreover, one advanced student could use gestures effectively and the other advanced student improved his pronunciation. The beginning-level students forgot what to say a few times, but they spoke more in the second test than in the first one.

Students wrote for a poster session in May and December, and wrote about cell phones in November and about their future family rules in February. One advanced student wrote about 50 words and the other wrote about 80 words in the first poster session, but they wrote over 100 or 150 words in the writings after the first one. The intermediate-level students wrote about 50 words in the first poster session, but they wrote about 60 words in November and from about 70 to 110 words in December and February. One beginning-level student did not write in May and November, but she wrote 50 words in December and 58 words in February. Though students made many errors, they got to use more complex structures.

6. What I learned

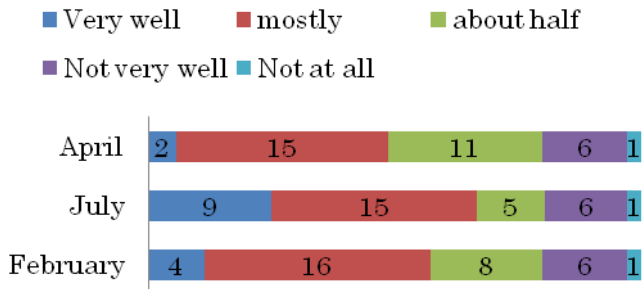
I kept copies of students' writings and compared the old ones with the new ones for the first time. Also I compared the two speaking tests, watching the video. The copies and the video showed their great progress. I do not realize students' change very often because I observe students every day. I think that students will be highly motivated by knowing their own progress.

7. Future issues

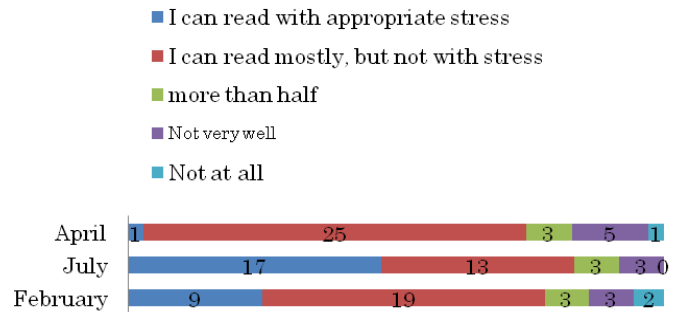
I tried to speak as much English as possible, but I could not do sometimes because the levels of the third-year students were various. I will use more English to give comprehensible input by using gestures and visual aids next year.

I am still not sure what questions to ask in the survey and how to analyze students' comments. I will think of appropriate questions to my research next year.

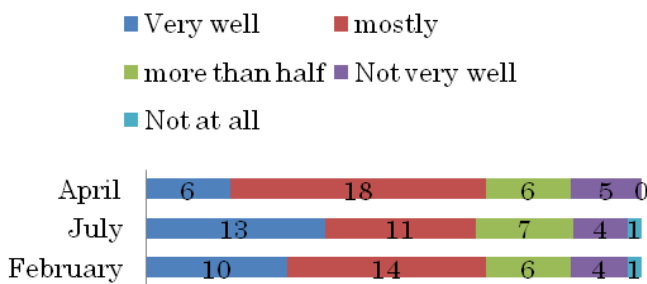
Graph 1: Can you understand English spoken by your teacher?



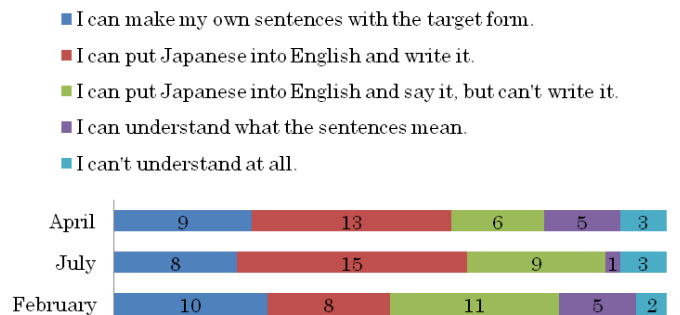
Graph 2: Can you read texts in the coursebook?



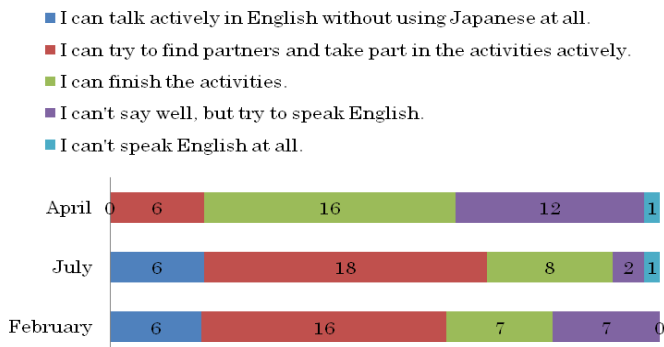
Graph 3: Do you understand texts in the coursebook?



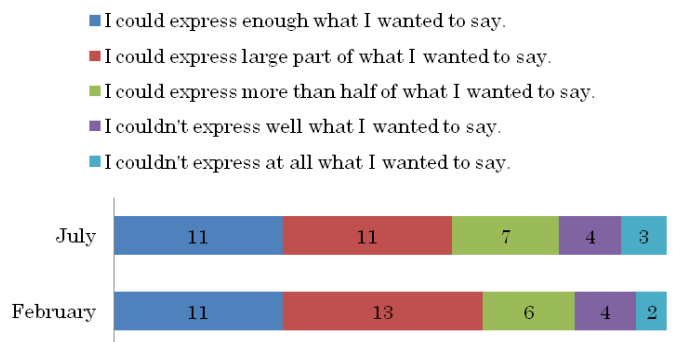
Graph 4: About the target sentences in the coursebook



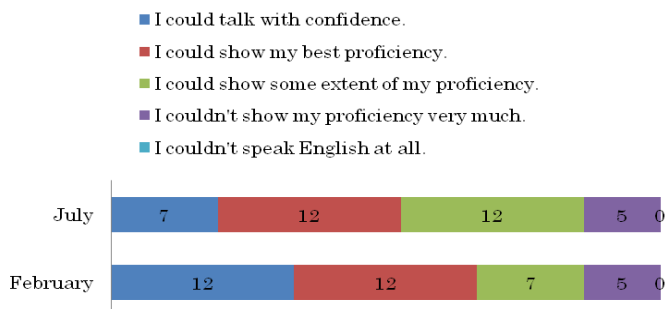
Graph 5: In speaking activity



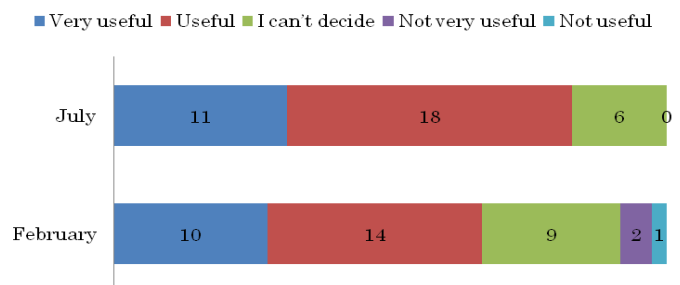
Graph 6: In writing the speech for Poster Session



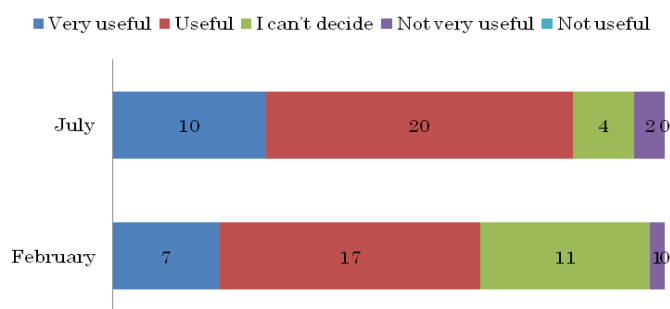
Graph 7: In the speaking test



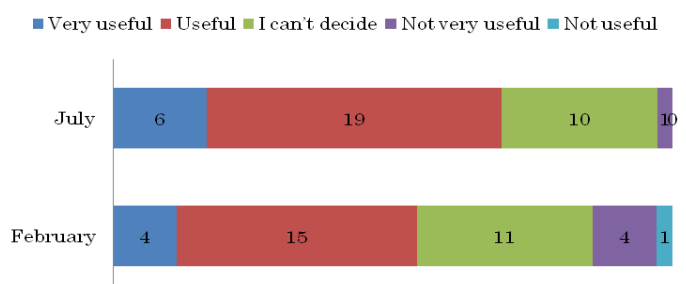
Graph 8: Are activities to practice target sentences useful to improve your English?



Graph 9: Is Q&A useful to improve your English?

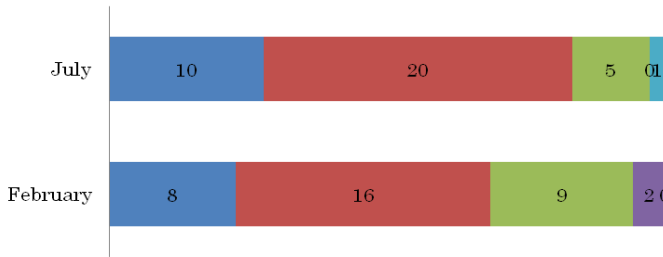


Graph 10: Is Poster Session useful to improve your English?



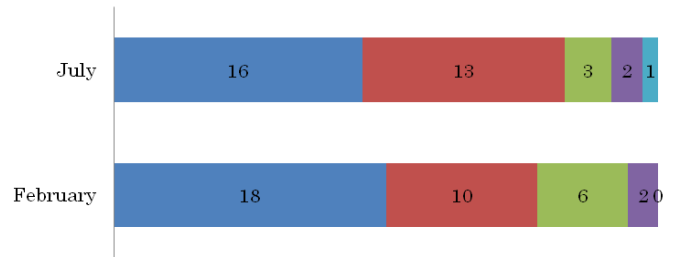
Graph 11: Is Speaking Test useful to improve your English?

■ Very useful ■ Useful ■ I can't decide ■ Not very useful ■ Not useful



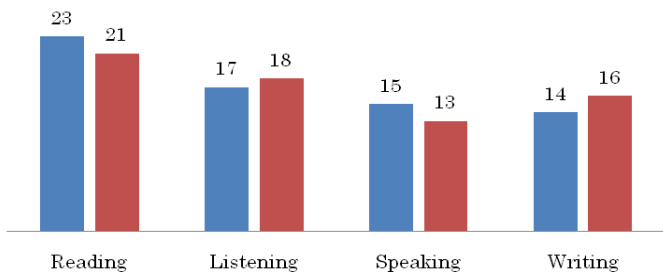
Graph 12: Are tests about the drill book useful to improve your English?

■ Very useful ■ Useful ■ I can't decide ■ Not very useful ■ Not useful



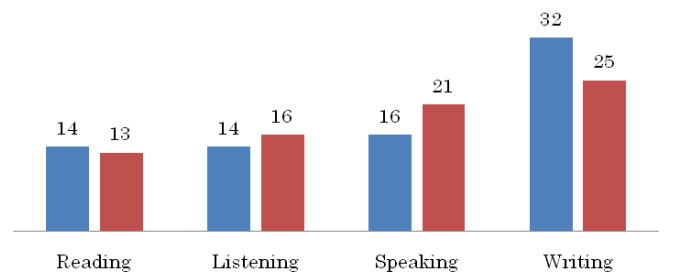
Graph 13: What kind of English proficiency could you improve, comparing that in April?

■ July ■ February



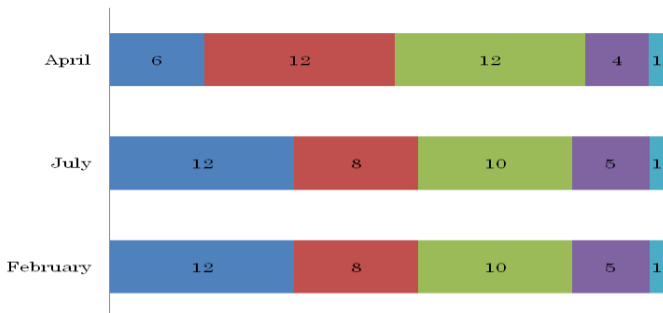
Graph 14: What kind of English proficiency do you want to improve in future?

■ July ■ February



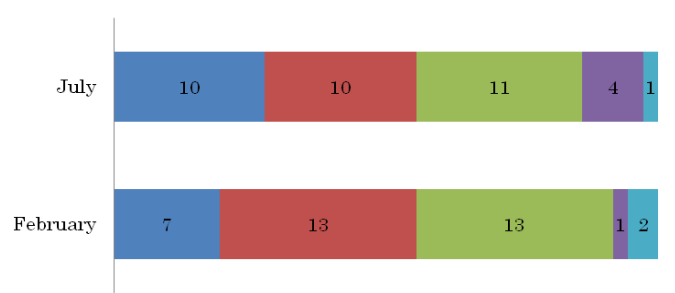
Graph 15: Do you like English?

■ Yes, very much ■ Yes, I do ■ I can't decide ■ I don't like it ■ I hate it



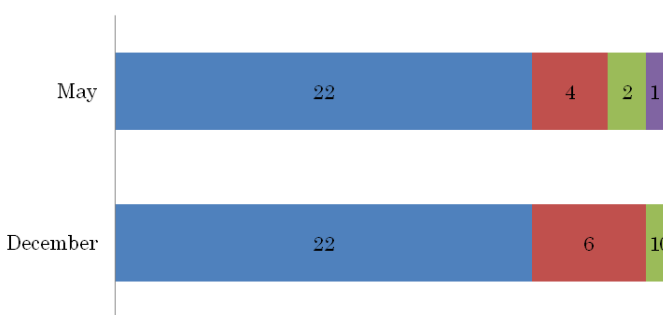
Graph 16: Do you like English class?

■ Yes, very much ■ Yes, I do ■ I can't decide ■ I don't like it ■ I hate it



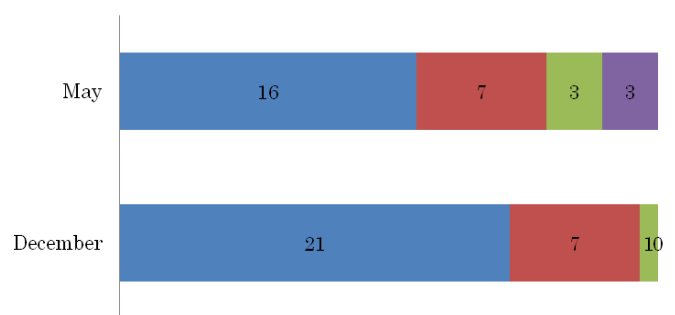
Graph 17: Did you try to tell only in English?

■ I could do well. ■ Yes. ■ No, I couldn't do very well. ■ Not at all.



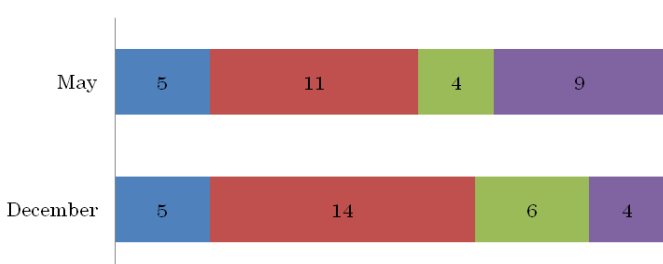
Graph 18: Could you use your poster effectively?

■ Yes, very well. ■ Yes. ■ Not very well. ■ Not at all.



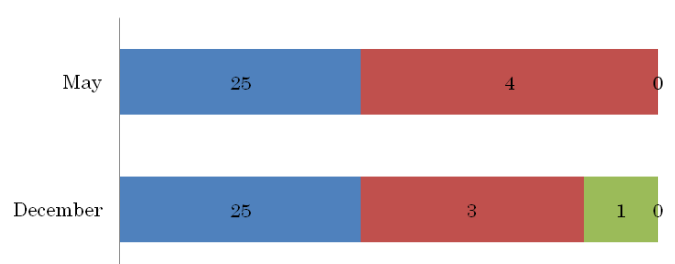
Graph 19: Could you give a speech without looking at the manuscript?

■ Yes, very well. ■ Yes. ■ Not very well. ■ Not at all.



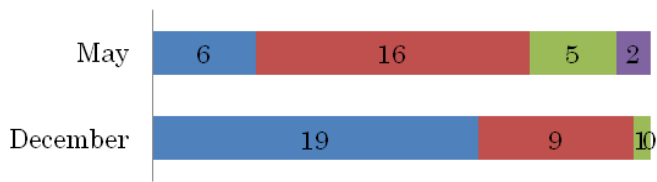
Graph 20: Could you answer the three questions rightly?

■ Yes, very well. ■ Yes. ■ Not very well. ■ Not at all.



Graph 21: Did you try to continue talking till the presentation time finished?

■ Yes, very well. ■ Yes. ■ Not very well. ■ Not at all.



Graph 22: The average of speaking test scores

■ June ■ October



Students' comments (The students wrote comments in Japanese and I translated them into English.)

Student A:

You gave us many useful activities which helped me. I could understand target sentences and grammar easily. I enjoyed games in AET's class and poster sessions very much. Writings gave me good opportunities to practice making sentences. It was very difficult to express myself and write in English, but I was very glad to be able to talk in English.

Student B:

I experienced for the first time that I could get good results by studying hard and I was very happy to get better and better test scores. I enjoyed shadowing and poster sessions and I think my English proficiency has improved. English is difficult but fun. I will study English hard without giving up in high school.

Lesson Plan: Unit 4

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Takinomizu Junior High School

1. Level: 3rd graders of junior high school
2. Class size: 3 classes with 36 students
3. Textbook: New Horizon (Tokyo Shoseki)
4. Goal: Students can talk about their favorite place for one and a half minutes.
5. Objectives:
 - (1) Students can use two structures of infinitive (how to... / It ...for...to...).
 - (2) Students understand the stories told by Bill Crowley, an American Rakugo-ka.
 - (3) Students can talk about their favorite place for one and a half minutes.
6. Procedure
 - Day one: Starting Out
 - (1) Target Sentence (Input and communicative activity)
 - (2) Target Sentence (Explicit explanation)
 - (3) Oral introduction
 - (4) Listening to the text and answering questions
 - (5) New words & phrases
 - (6) Reading the text and checking the content
 - (7) Practice reading the text aloud
 - Day two: Dialog
 - (1) Target Sentence (Input and communicative activity) [Handout 1]
 - (2) Target Sentence (Explicit explanation)
 - (3) Oral introduction
 - (4) Listening to the text and answering questions
 - (5) New words & phrases
 - (6) Reading the text and checking the content
 - (7) Practice reading the text aloud
 - Day three: Timed Conversation
 - (1) Listening to the model dialog
 - (2) Step 1 [Handout 2]
 - (3) Follow-up questions
 - Day four: Timed Conversation & Reading for Communication (1) (p.42)

- (1) Listening to the model dialog
 - (2) Timed conversation [Handout 3, Handout 4]
 - (3) Oral introduction
 - (4) Listening to the text and checking answers in pairs
- Day five: Timed Conversation & Reading for Communication (2) (p.42)
- (1) Timed conversation
 - (2) Oral interaction
 - (3) New words & phrases
 - (4) Q&A
 - (5) Reading the text and checking the content
 - (6) Phrase reading
- Day six: Timed Conversation & Reading for Communication (3) (p.43)
- (1) Timed conversation
 - (2) Oral introduction
 - (3) Listening to the text and checking answers in pairs
 - (4) New words & phrases
 - (5) Q&A
- Day seven: Timed Conversation & Reading for Communication (4) (p.43&44)
- (1) Timed conversation
 - (2) Oral interaction
 - (3) Reading the text and checking the content
 - (4) Phrase reading
 - (5) Gesture
- Day eight: Timed Conversation, Listening Plus 4 (p.45) & Review of Grammar (p.46)
- (1) Timed conversation
 - (2) Listening Plus: Step 1
 - (3) Listening Plus: Step 2
 - (4) Listening Plus: Step 3
 - (5) Review of Grammar
- Day nine: Speaking Test

Plans of timed conversation and speaking test

- Day three: (1) Listening to the model dialog
- Students listen to the recorded model dialog and answer some comprehension questions.
- (2) Step 1 [Handout 1]
- Students write their answers in the handout.
- (3) Follow-up questions

Group activity: The first student says, “My favorite place is” The other students draw a dice, ask the first student a question including the interrogative the dice shows. Students can refer to a handout, but they can also make their own questions and add them to the list on the handout. Students take turns and submit the handout to the teacher at the end of the lesson.

Day four: (1) Listening to the model dialog

Students listen to the recorded model dialog again, looking at the script and highlight follow-up questions in the dialog.

(2) Timed conversation [Handout 1, Handout 3, Rubric, Handout 4]

Students get Handout 3 to which the teacher adds more follow-up questions students made in the last lesson. The teacher explains about the rubric and the procedures of the speaking test. Students practice timed conversations like Step 2 in Handout 2. After the conversations, they write follow-up questions they asked in Handout 4 and submit it.

Day five to eight: Timed conversation

Students get Handout 4 in which the teacher gives feedback. They practice timed conversations in different pairs, write follow-up questions in Handout 4 and submit it.

Day nine: Speaking Test

Two students are told to take the test in the hallway. They have a conversation for one and a half minutes in front of the AET. After taking the test they fill in a self-evaluation sheet.