Developing Young Learners' English Language Proficiency Through the Teaching of Conversation Strategies
(March 2024 Final AR Report)
By Amy Braun

1. Introduction

During the 2023-24 school year, I was a teacher for a class of twenty-six first-graders at a private elementary school. Two students left at the end of December due to moving overseas while two new students joined at the beginning of January. The school is still new, and the English curriculum is being developed. Initially, the primary focus was using an audio-linguistic drill program called Metrolearning to promote speaking skills and reading through phonics. Teachers used the Metrolearning program for two-thirds of their weekly lessons. However, as of the time of writing this report, the school has shifted its focus to test scores based on the TOEFL Primary testing system. The students will be divided into three groups based on their English proficiency: lower, intermediate, and advanced from April (grades 3-6) and October (grade 2).

The students used the *Our World* Starter textbook by National Geographic Learning, which was supplemented by the Jolly Phonics app and workbooks to help them develop their phonics skills. The *Our World* Starter textbook was chosen as it was assumed that most first-graders had a basic or zero level of English proficiency. However, the class was a mix of students with varying levels of English language experience. Some students had graduated from an English immersion preschool, some were attending eikaiwa or Kumon, some had weekly English lessons at their kindergartens or daycares, and some had no experience with English before entering first grade. As of March 2024, my class's average TOEFL Primary score is 207.88, with a median CEFR level for listening of A2 and reading of A1.

When I started teaching this class in April, I wanted to focus more on communication skills, particularly speaking. I wanted to explore how communicative strategies could be used to build students' strategic competence (Savignon, 1983) in communication with their classmates. I also wanted to see how Near Peer Role Models (NPRMs) could help improve the students' English proficiency through group and peer activities, as well as student-centered learning. The use of NPRMs was supported by the concepts of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Zone of Proximal Adjusting (ZPA, Murphey, 2013). Although my colleagues were

not inclined to adopt these practices in their classrooms, they supported my research by helping me conduct surveys, supporting my class during speaking tests, and supporting my teaching in the classroom.

2. Goals

I want to enhance my students' English proficiency and communicative competence through the use of NPRMs, ZPD, and ZPA, in various group and pair activities by using communicative strategies (CSs) while receiving feedback from both students and teachers.

3. Research Questions

These are questions I hope to answer through my research:

i. What impact, if any, does teaching conversation strategies have on students' communicative competence?

ii. What impact, if any, does teaching conversation strategies have on the group cohesion of students with various levels of English ability?

iii. What impact, if any, does the teaching of conversation strategies have on students' performance in timed conversations?

4. Literature Review

Communicative Language Teaching

According to Brown (2007), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is defined as "an approach to language teaching methodology that emphasizes authenticity, interaction, student-centered learning, task-based activities, and communication for the real world, meaningful purposes". Brown came up with these characteristics of CLT:

1. Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence and are not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.

2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes. Hinkel wrote in his 2006 article for *TESOL Quarterly* that "in the age of globalization, the pragmatic objective of language learning places an increased value on integrated and dynamic multiskilled instructional models with a focus on meaningful communication and the development of learners' communicative competence". (p. 113)

3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy to

keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.

4. `In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.  (Brown (2015), pp. 31-32)`

5. Integration of the four skills within a communicative approach as real language use involves the integration of one or more skills and connection between language and the way we think, feel, and act. (Brown (2007), p. 286).

Lee and VanPatten (2003) mentioned that "[c]ommunicative language teaching involves letting go of certain roles that both teachers and students bring to the classroom as part of their implicit socialization in the educational process. Teachers often assume too much responsibility in language teaching, and students often assume too little."

Communicative Competence

According to Savignon (1998), communication involves expressing, interpreting, and negotiating meaning, and one can become better at it by practicing speaking. Hymes (1972) introduced the term "communicative competence," referring to the ability to understand social norms and contexts without necessarily having complete knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. But, Savignon (1998) cautioned teachers in a 1998 issue of *The Language Teacher* that incorporating "social context" in the classroom doesn't merely mean creating a lesson plan, but rather "reflecting on the content as well as the method of English language teaching." Moreover, Savignon (1983) divided communicative competence into four components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

Figure 1: *The four components of communicative competence Savignon (1983)*
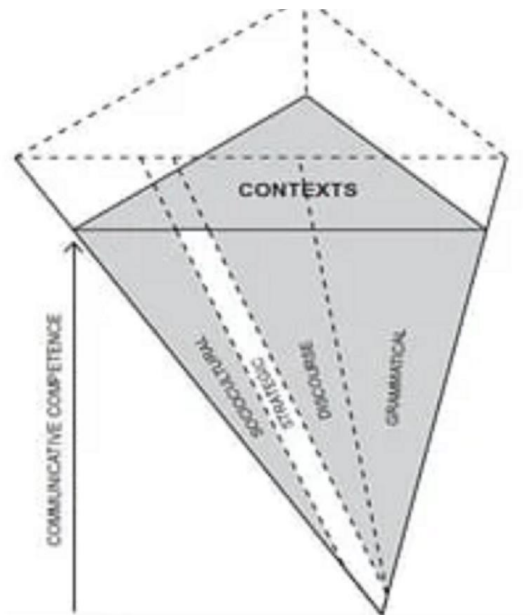
CSs are techniques used by speakers to express their meaning when encountering communication difficulties. According to Corder (1981), They are "a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his (or her) meaning when faced with some difficulty" (p. 103). These strategies offer the ability to develop strategic competence, an important aspect of communicative competence and CLT (Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1983). Savignon (2002) defines CSs as "coping strategies used in unfamiliar contexts, where constraints arise from imperfect knowledge of rules, fatigue or distraction. The goal of using communicative strategies in the classroom is not to perfect them or the language itself, but to overcome communication breakdown, solve performance problems, and compensate for deficits that the speaker may have". There are different totals of CSs listed by various researchers and teachers. Kindt has listed 39 CSs on his website, while Kehe and Kehe have listed 26 in their 2022 book *Conversation Strategies: Pair and group activities for developing communicative competence*.

Group Cohesion

In recent years, researchers have suggested that small groups are beneficial for activities in the second language classroom. Some researchers have argued that using small groups has a positive impact on language learning from a pedagogical perspective, while others have claimed that it is beneficial from a psycholinguistic point of view. The idea of pair and group tasks was first embraced by language teachers in the 1980s. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) stated in their book *Group Dynamics in the Classroom* that group cohesiveness promotes acceptance among students, public commitment to the group, a

system of development within learner groups, and that group tasks align with the basis of CLT. Moreover, Guk and Kellogg (2007) have mentioned that student-student interaction can lead to vigorous development of ZPD.

Long and Porter (1985) researched how group work relates to second language acquisition (SLA) and interlanguage. Their study revealed that students received more opportunities to practice language skills in group work settings. The researchers also observed that there were more instances of correction during group activities compared to teacher-centered ones, and the students achieved the same level of accuracy in a group setting. Long and Porter found "that students of mixed [second language] (SL) proficiencies tend to obtain more practice in negotiation than same proficiency dyads suggesting that teachers of mixed ability classes would do well to opt for heterogeneous (over homogeneous) ability grouping".

According to Murphey and Arao (2001), NPRMs are individuals who share similarities with us in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, interests, past or present experiences, and also in proximity and frequency of social contact. Moreover, Murphey and Murakami (1998) state that NPRMs "at a similar, or even at a slightly lower overall linguistic level can positively affect change in learner beliefs".This is because peers can act as role models and demonstrate the "next step" in language learning, which is related to the concepts of ZPD and ZPA.

5. What Did I Do

This year, I had the opportunity to teach at an elementary school for the first time. My focus was on CLT and CSs for my students. It was a learning adventure for both my students and me. Since I was new to teaching communicatively, I had to learn through trial and error. From April to August, my students learned how to use rejoinders for small talk and participated in an easy information exchange activity in June. They also took a pair speaking test in the same month. The students were able to take the speaking test with ease and were able to use rejoinders. However, I conducted the test wrongly as the students were not supposed to know their partner's information beforehand.

Starting in September, I started doing more communicative activities using pairs and groups. I used activities conducted in group settings like 50/50 (true or false) and three hints. I also used pair activities like describe and draw, where students describe what they see on the TV to a friend who can't see the picture and then draw it. I had fewer teacher-focused activities and more student-focused activities that gave students ample amounts of time to speak.

I changed my approach to introducing new vocabulary to my students and stopped using flashcards. The drill activity of "flash the flashcard and say the word" wasn't giving them enough meaningful input. Instead, I used various activities to introduce new words. For instance, we created Keynote presentations on the different food groups, using thinking tools like thinking maps and T charts. The students weren't shown any food items beforehand, but they worked in groups to teach each other about 50 fruits and vegetables. We also did a listening and color activity with clothing to introduce that unit. For the Family unit, I showed them a family tree of my family, explained each person, and then played a true or false game to test their understanding. Finally, the students presented their families with pictures on their iPads and played the game in their groups.

I modified my lesson approach by implementing a notice-discuss-implement cycle. At the beginning of each lesson, I introduced the topic through a song or a video. Next, I directed the students' attention to specific vocabulary related to the topic. This involved activities such as finding hidden fruits or vegetables in pictures, coloring clothing while listening, or explaining my family tree to my family. The discussion part of the cycle involved group activities such as using thinking tools or playing true-or-false games to ensure understanding of the lesson. The students would then present what they had learned to others in their group, which helped to reinforce the new vocabulary in their minds. By using this cycle, I aimed to minimize whole-class activities and give students more time to work in pairs or groups. However, whole-class activities were still important for modeling and noticing.

I conducted three more speaking tests: one about what kind of food they wanted to eat for Christmas, one about their favorite piece of clothing, and one about who their favorite family member was. The students used four CSs for the two-minute speaking test: rejoinders, partial shadowing, asking questions, and something else. They also made conversation cards by drawing pictures, writing words, or making a Keynote on their iPads. They were allowed to use their conversation cards in the speaking test because they were not mature enough to speak without using prompts.

The students also worked on how to tell a simple story like *Momotaro* and *The Three Little Pigs*. The students retold the stories using puppets, Total Physical Response (TPR) actions, and picture cards. The TPR actions were successful as the students could listen, speak, and do the actions. The puppets were successful as it was a group effort to put on a puppet show, and it meant that everyone had to cooperate and be on-task to complete the story. The unit was rushed due to bad timing, and I didn't plan to have the students make their endings;

hence they didn't make their original endings so they could communicate to their friends.

Starting in November, I began creating a monthly newsletter presented at the end of each unit or the beginning of a new one. The newsletter contained feedback from students, taken from post-test surveys or class surveys from each quarter. It also included any questions the students had asked in the survey, along with my responses. Lastly, there was a section where students could "feedforward" by expanding their knowledge and horizons. For first-graders, this was in the form of videos, songs, and books that related to the topic or CSs.

During our class, we allocated about half a period to activities that were related to the newsletter. The activities ranged from reflecting on what was mentioned in the newsletter to figuring out which question they made or liked. The students also reflected on their speaking test by watching their videos, thinking about which items they did well in, and which items they needed to work on. They shared that reflection with friends and added more to their dialogue script (that was typed by the teacher), whether it was rejoinders, shadowing, or more questions. They also used puppets to act out the dialogue.

In the final week of the year, the students did a writing assignment. Because they were first graders, I provided three questions about their favorite family members: Who is your favorite family member? What is their name? And why do you like them? They wrote their answers and then plugged them into a template. Afterward, they wrote these three sentences into their English notebook and drew a picture to accompany it. Then, the students read their composition to two friends, with the friends asking a question related to what was written. The students wrote their answers as complete sentences in their notebooks, thus adding two more sentences to their composition.

6. What Happened

The students found group or pair activities with their friends to help improve their English skills. During a focus group discussion at the end of the year, one student remarked "*Tomodachi ga inai nara, dekinai*" (I can't do it if my friend isn't there) and another student said,"*Tomodachi ga tetsudattekureta kara, imi ga wakatta*" (Because my friend helped me, I could understand the meaning). Another student mentioned in their focus group that "[g]roup activity is good because we can help each other". One more student mentioned "*Small Talk no toki ni watashi ni nanka zutto komattara otomodachi ga tasuketteageru*" (If I am always in trouble during Small Talk, my friend could help). Many students have expressed that they enjoyed helping their friends and thought the activities were fun because they were able to do them with their friends.

When asked the question, "Working in group/pair activities has made me confident in speaking English. (*Guruupu ya futari de renshuu shite eigo ga jyouzu ni natta to kanjimasu ka*)", around 47% of students felt that working in group or pair activities helped them become more confident in speaking English (o*mou*, 1). This is an improvement from the previous surveys conducted in November (30%) and July (35%). In July 2023, about 25% of students responded that they did not feel the same way (*omowanai*, 5). This changed to 40% in November as choice four and five were combined on a four-point Likert scale to represent "I don't think so." (*omowanai*). Yet, the number of students who picked I don't think so." (*omowanai*) decreased to 20% in the March 2024 survey.

Figure 2: *Working in group/pair activities has made me confident in speaking English.*
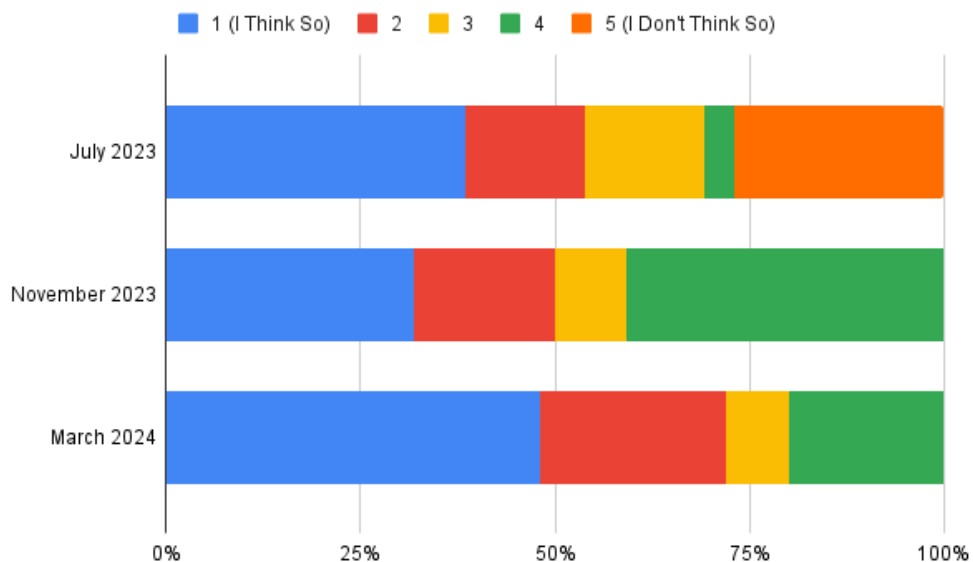
Students believed that they could learn English better from their peers than from their teachers. Out of the 11 students who were asked about their opinion on the statement "I can learn more English from my friends than from the teacher (*Watashi ha sensei yori mo tomodachi kara eigo wo manabu koto ga yoku arimasu*)", one student disagreed (*omowanai*, 0) and the remaining 10 students agreed (*omou*, 1). This means that 60% of the students viewed this statement positively.

Figure 3: *I can learn more English from my friends than from the teacher.*
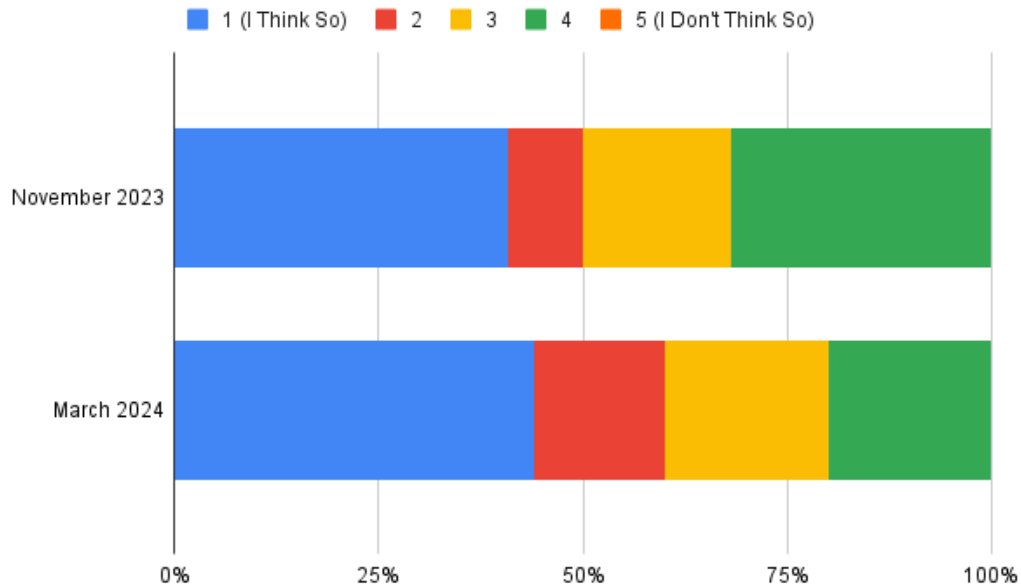
In the classroom, I have witnessed several instances where students have used various techniques from the Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) instrument (Walsh, 2011) to help their peers improve. For example, I once saw a student help a newer student express themselves in English by using interactional features like extended wait time, scaffolding, referential questions, and teacher echo. In another instance, a student with immediate English proficiency scaffolded a question during a speaking test to a student who had lower English proficiency. This relates to the ZPA as the student was trying to scaffold the question for their peer, not only to help them ask it to them but also to others in the future.

 Here is an excerpt of their conversation:

```
01  Kenta  what=s what is your favor- | uh: [0:15]
02  Yuto                              | ba:: [0:20]
03  Kenta  what is your favoba:: [favorite] [0:21]
04  Teacher  piece of [0:24]
05  Kenta  piece of- [0:24]
06  Teacher  clothing. [0:25]
07  Kenta  c-c-clothing. [0:26]
08  Yuto  I like ... cap. >i like cap.< [0:28]
09  Kenta  oh its so good. [0:34]
10  Yuto  its [0:39]
11  Kenta  "whats | whats" [[whispering]] [0:41]
12  Yuto         | whats [0:42]
13  Kenta "is" [[whispering]] [0:43]
14  Yuto  is- [0:44]
15  Kenta "your" [[whispering]] [0:45]
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```
16  Yuto  your favoba::: [0:46]
17  Kenta "piece" [[whispering]] [0:48]
18  Yuto  pi:: [0:48]
19  Kenta  "of" [[whispering]] [0:49]
20  Yuto  of [0:50]
21  Kenta  "closing?" [clothing] [[whispering]] [0:50]
22  Yuto  closing? [clothing] [0:51]
23  Kenta i . closing is >Ohtani Shohei uniform.< [0:53]
24  Yuto  oh::::::, thats cool. [1:00]
```

In another instance, a student named Setsuna asked her partner Riku about the English translation of the word *kami no ke*. Translanaguing happened at this moment when Riku adjusted down to Setsuna's current language level and used English to translate and answer the question. Setsuna was able to understand the meaning of the word and improve her language development. It is important to note (and something I learned) how the students used short, incomplete sentences to communicate with each other. This type of interaction is similar to a study done by Taguchi (2914), where students adopted a more naturalistic way of speech by using incomplete sentences as interactional devices.

This is an excerpt from the conversation between Setsuna and Riku:

```
14 Setsuna 髪の毛  どうやって  (kami no ke douyatte?, what is their hair like?)
[2:07]
15  Riku  >I don't know.< [2:08]
16 Setsuna 髪の毛 髪の毛 髪の毛 (kami no ke kami no ke kami no ke, hair hair hair)
[2:20]
17 Setsuna  髪の毛 英語でどうようの (kami no ke eigo de douyou no?, how do you say
"kami no ke" in English) [2:24]
18  Riku  hair [2:28]
19  Setsuna  hair is long? [2:30]
20  Riku  yes [2:31]
```

The students learned four CSs which include rejoinders, follow-up questions, partial shadowing, and getting time to think. "Getting time to think" was introduced in the last month due to a real-life situation that occurred between two students during a speaking activity. However, during speaking tests, students did not use this CS as they were still new to it. Nonetheless, they used the other three CSs sporadically in their conversations. In the excerpt between Aoto and Minato, Aoto was able to use all three CSs in line 06 but used only two in

line 09. While most students know how to use these CSs and where to use them in a conversation, it is uncertain whether they forgot or chose certain CSs based on their mood or thinking.

```
03  Aoto  | what is- who is your favorite family
>MEMBER?< [0:06]
04        | (((looks at the iPad for the question)))
05  Minato  my family member is dad. [0:11]
06  Aoto  oh dad? (.) oh your dad? >thats cool.< (..)
[0:15]
07  Aoto  what can- (...) mm. what | what? what is he.
 his name? [0:25]
07                                | (((touches the "what?" flashcard on
the table)))
08  Minato  mm. hes name is hideki. [0:29]
09  Aoto  hideki? (..) how | how old- (..) how old are he? [0:39]
10                          | (((touches the "how?" flashcard on the
table)))
11  Minato mm. (.) he is (.) forty two years old.[0:46]
```

In March, after the final speaking test, the students watched their speaking test videos in pairs and reflected on their performance. They were asked to evaluate eight aspects of their performance, including eye contact, volume, smile, speaking, rejoinders, shadowing, making questions, and helping. They were given three options to grade themselves: good, ok, and I can do better. To make it easy for them, as they are first graders, they circled each item with a different color that indicates the grade. Good was marked with orange, ok with purple, and I can do better with green. They also gave themselves an overall grade of S (95%-100%), A (90-94%), and B (80%-89%).

Figure 4 shows that 42% of the students thought they did a good job with rejoinders, 30% said they did an ok job with partial shadowing, and 42% admitted they could have done better with making questions. Unfortunately, 26% of the students' opinions were not recorded as they failed to grade themselves by not circling the three mentioned items below.

Figure 4: *Students' opinions on using rejoinders, shadowing, and making questions*
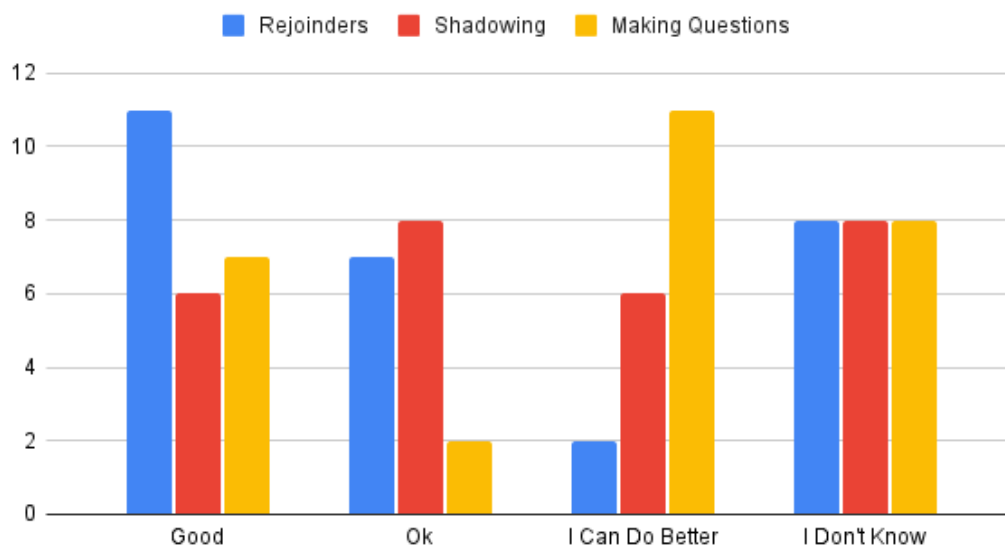
Many students enjoyed participating in activities that utilized communication skills such as Small Talk, Information Exchange (also known as Interview), and Speaking Tests as they enjoyed conversing with their peers. They also enjoyed Show and Tell, which solely focused on presentation skills and inquiring and responding to questions. March's student surveys indicated that the average score for Small Talk was 2.34, or "I like it". This score was higher than in July when the average score was 2.38 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: *Students' Opinions on Small Talk*
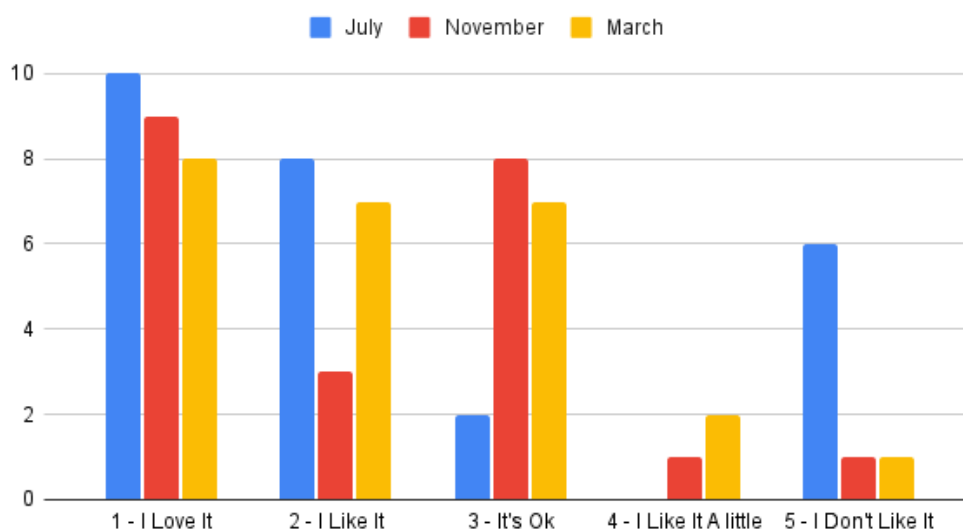
Conversely, the students had a lower opinion of Information Exchange activities as the average survey score for March was 2.48, compared to 2.1 in July (**Figure 6**). The average score for asking and answering questions was slightly higher at 2.5 for March, compared to 3 in July. Although I did not inquire about the students' qualitative opinions of

the speaking tests, they generally expressed in the focus groups that they enjoyed the speaking tests as they allowed them to converse with their friends. They also mentioned that the two-minute timed speaking test was too short, as they wished they had more time to speak.

Figure 6: *Students' Opinions on Interview/Information Exchange*
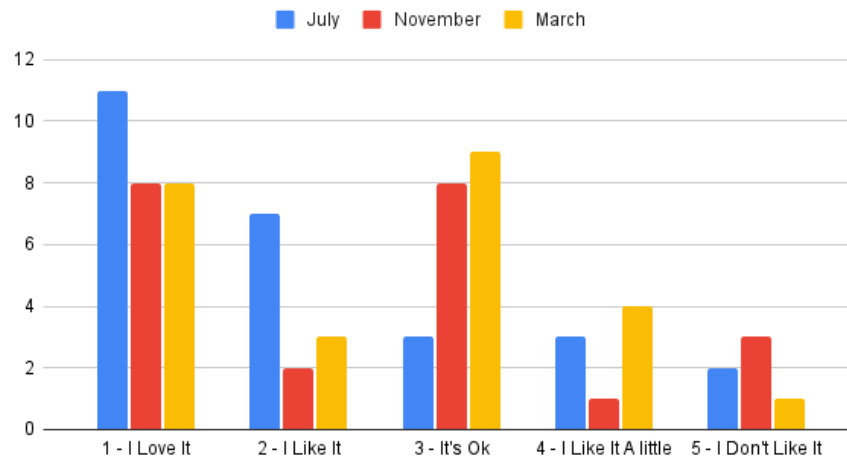
If we compare the transcription of dialogues from speaking tests administered in May 2023 and March 2024, we can observe a significant improvement in conversation skills, particularly in the use of CSs and the reliance on partners rather than teachers during conversations. In the speaking test from May 2023 (see below), Mika would ask "What's this?" (lines 01 and 07) and depend on the teacher to guide her through the next steps of the task (line 06), followed by a rejoinder, "Oh, I see" (lines 04 and 10). On the other hand, Yuri would simply answer Mika's question (lines 03 and 09). The students had a monotonous turn-taking routine during their conversation because there was a lack of variety in the questions being asked. One student would ask the questions while the other would answer, and the roles were fixed throughout the conversation. There was no switching of roles to add variety to the conversation.

(Dialogue from May 2023 Speaking Test)
```
01  Mika  whats this? [0:27]
02  (((Mika points to a drawing on a paper))) [0:27]
03  Yuri  its a:: >pencil case.< [0:32]
04  Mika oh:: i:: see. [0:32]
05  (((Mika looks down at the paper to ask another question))) [0:38]
06  ((Mika looks up at the teacher as the teacher gestures how to ask the
    next question) [0:40]
```

```
07  Mika  whats:: this? [0:41]
08  (((Mika points to another drawing on a paper))) [0:41]
09  (((Yuri looks at the drawing for confirmation)))) [0:43]
09  Yuri  its an eraser. [0:44]
10  Mika  oh:: i:: see. [0:45]
```

In the March 2024 Speaking Test, Yuri demonstrated his ability to ask questions via abrupt turn-taking. She also used follow-up questions (Line 03), partial shadowing (Line 12), and rejoinders (Line 12) to engage in a longer conversation with Himari, where the two students switched roles of asking the question or answering. Overall, Yuri and Himari's performance showcased a variety of CSs and turn-taking techniques that made their conversation more engaging and dynamic.

(Dialogue from March 2024)
```
01  Himari  >what is your favorite family member?< [0:11]
02  Yuri  i like my mom. [0:14]
03  Himari  why? [0:15]
04  Yuri  because its- [0:17]
05  (((Yuri takes a quick glance at her iPad to confirm her thought)))
    [0:17]
06  Yuri  my mom is beautiful. [0:20]
07  Himari  beauti?- [0:22]
08  Yuri  how about you? [0:22]
09  Himari  i:: like:: mom::. [0:27]
10  Yuri  wh:::y:::? [0:29]
11  Himari because i- she iz cute. [0:33]
12  ((Yuri and Himari looks around the room, waiting for someone to say
    something)) [0:38]
12  Yuri  cute:::? thats coo::l.[0:43]
```

7. What I Learned

Since this was my first time teaching at a private, partially immersion elementary school with students who had mixed levels of English, I learned a lot through my students and my action research. Ever since I took the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) course, my perception of language teaching has changed as I have gained new insights into language learning. Contrary to popular belief, there is no "critical period" for it. Instead, language learning shows a gradual decline over time. I have also learned about how individuals learn

their first and second languages, the power of peer-to-peer learning, intrinsic motivation, and the fact that students possess a wealth of knowledge about the second language that teachers may not expect. In my teaching experience, I have found that students can learn certain aspects of language, such as grammar, vocabulary, and language patterns, incidentally. Furthermore, comprehensive input and noticing are key skills that facilitate my students' language learning, as opposed to using flashcards and trying to make language learning purely "fun". It was a delight to see how easily students could use a CSs that was newly introduced but also reflect on their own or their friends' conversations by saying if their friends didn't use a CS or not: "No rejoinders" or "Good shadowing!".

In the book *How Languages Are Learned* by Lightbown and Spada, there is a quote that made me reflect on how to improve my lessons and action reports. The quote states that "classroom activities are designed to prepare students to continue learning outside the classroom, giving them experience language uses that are like those they will encounter" (p. 230, Lightbown & Spada, 2022). Through various activities, such as the three hints game and newsletters including student feedback, I aimed to provide my language learners with autonomy over their learning and encourage them to continue learning outside the classroom. These activities helped them to reflect and grow on their learning, not just memorize vocabulary and grammar rules. Ultimately, my goal was to help them communicate effectively through the negotiation of meaning, expression, and interpretation.

In my Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and Materials Development and Classroom Dynamics (MDCDs) classes, I learned that language learning classrooms cannot be viewed as linear progressions. Instead, they should be viewed from different angles, much like a sculpture that can have different meanings based on one's perspective. Even though my studies introduced me to concepts such as Non-Participation, Classroom Dynamics, and NPRMs, it wasn't until I saw them in action with my students that I fully grasped their importance. Witnessing my students use teaching techniques like scaffolding and echo to assist their classmates who were struggling to communicate their thoughts in English was a wonderful experience. Previously, I believed that it was best to segregate students by their levels. However, after completing my action report, I now understand the significance of group and peer cohesion through NPRMs in enhancing students' English proficiency.

Finally, I generally assumed before taking on my action report that the classroom follows a top-down approach where the teacher teaches and the students listen and learn. However, I now know that isn't the case as the students can also teach the language to the

whole class or through pair activities. But, most importantly, students are also involved with every aspect of language teaching as their opinions are just as important as the teachers'. By conducting interviews, surveys, and focus group interviews, it was apparent that these students, who were just 6-7 years old, knew what they were learning and how important it was to learn English. They provided such mature views on their language learning experience in my classroom that many don't expect first graders to have. They reflected on their language learning journey in first grade by really thinking deeply about their journey before joining English class, beginning English class, what was it like now, and what would expect in the future.

The excerpt below is about a young student who took an introspective look at her language-learning journey and shared her insights during a focus group discussion. Although most teachers might not expect a seven-year-old to engage in such reflection, this student's thoughtful contributions shed light on her experiences with language learning and offered valuable perspectives that could help teachers improve their classroom environment and teaching methods. This is what the student said:

> *Dandan eigo wo shaberaru you ni natte...saisho wa nanka eigo wo jibun shaberanai kara chotto mon nka tsumannai. "Tsumanai naa" to zutto omttan keredo dan dan ingurisshu kurasu nanka tomodachi to shabetari shite...mochiron nihongo no kurasu ga suki dakeredo ingurisshu no jyuugyou mo eigo no sensei mo sore wa onajikurai suki. Eigo no kurasu wo motto yaritai na to omou.*

> Gradually, I have been able to speak English... At first, because I couldn't speak English, English was boring. I always thought "Well, this is boring", but I was able to do things like speaking to friends during English class... Most definitely, I like the Japanese class, but I like the English class and the English teacher just the same. I want to do more English!

8. Future Issues

Recently, an issue has been raised regarding the effectiveness of NPRMs in language learning. Most students have expressed that they learn the language more effectively when their friends help them. However, a student's mother, who is also a stakeholder in the language learning classroom, shared that her child felt embarrassed when friends helped her in English class because she felt that her friends had better language skills than her. Dr. Daniel Hooper conducted a study that suggested that NPRMs don't always lead to competency because of the

social comparison with someone better. One suggestion is to have students write their language learning history. However, this isn't appropriate for grade 1 students since they still need to develop their metacognition functions. Dr. Hooper further suggested that activities should center around building language solidarity and focus on the journey rather than the destination.

Another issue regards the use of CSs in students' conversations. Although they are allowed to use up to three CSs at different points in their conversations, I noticed that they tend to mix and match one or two CSs within one line of their conversations. Ideally, I want them to use all three CSs at once and use them in speaking activities, but they only use them for information exchange tasks or small tasks. I also want the students to understand the importance of using CSs and how to use them effectively. To achieve this, I have provided them with various activities such as using puppets to model an ideal conversation, using certain CSs to fill in the blanks, listening and speaking practice activities, and a post-speaking test reflection. However, I still noticed that the students are not using CSs frequently in their conversations or other speaking activities.

Starting in April, I will be teaching Grade 2. However, due to the school's practice of shuffling students each year, I will only be able to teach about five or six of the students who were in my Grade 1 class. In Grade 1, only a few students used CSs in their English classes, and they focused mainly on learning rejoinders. Therefore, I will need to start by reviewing the basics of using rejoinders, follow-up questions, and partial shadowing to ensure that everyone is on the same page. The students who were in my Grade 1 class will benefit from this review and might be able to use CSs more effectively. However, I am not sure how many new CSs the students in my Grade 2 English class will be able to learn.

One challenge that my Grade 1 students faced was asking questions, which took about three months for them to learn how to do it successfully. Although I introduced follow-up questions during conversations, only one student was able to make incidental questions during their speaking test. It may take some time for the students in Grade 2 to master this skill and use follow-up questions effectively in their conversations.

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Appendix 1-A

Time	Interaction T-Ss, S-S, S, O	Activity & Procedure
(3)	T-Ss	**(1) Greetings and Schedule**
(5)	T-Ss	**(2) Clothing Review** The students review the vocabulary of the unit: clothing.
(25)		**(3) Activity: Talk About Your Favorite Piece of Clothing** The students will talk to their partners about their favorite piece of clothing using rejoiners, shadowing, and follow-up questions.
(10)	T-Ss	First, there is a demonstration done by two students in front of the class. The other students will listen and grade the performance (S, A, B) while telling the reason why they gave that grade.
(15)	S-S	Then, the students will be placed into different pairs for three rounds. The students have to talk about the topic for two minutes.
(7)	S-S	**(4) Wrap-up Activity: Hot Seat** One student comes up to the front of the room and sits in a seat. The other students have to ask questions about their favorite piece of clothing, and that student has to answer.
(5)	S	**(5) Clean-up and Reflection** The student will show their drawings, clean up, and reflect on today's activity.

Total: 45
T-Ss: 18
S-S: 22
S: 5

Appendix 1-B

Name: ██████

"Who Is Your Favorite Family Member" Writing Activity

Round 1

(A): Name: ████████████████████
(B): you

(A) Question:
his Cougll

(B) Answer:
Yes

Round 2

(A): Name: mr b██████████
(B): you

(A) Question:
What canhe Cook

(B) Answer:
My dad Can Cook ramen

my favor
ite famil
y mem
ber is
dad. His name is ████
I like my him becau
se is he is cool. My dad
cook. My dad Cano ook ram

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PART 2

Step 1: With your friend, write ⭐ shadowing, ⭐ rejoinders, and ⭐ a question.

A: Hello, ▬▬▬▬▬▬.

B: Hello, ▬▬▬▬▬▬. How are you?

A: I'm ▬▬▬▬▬▬, How are you?

B: I'm ▬▬▬▬▬▬. Who is your favorite family member?

A: I like dad.

B: ⭐_____? ⭐_____. ⭐_____

_____?

A: _____. Who is your favorite family member?

B: I like brother.

A: ⭐_____? ⭐_____. ⭐_____

_____?

B: _____. See you!

A: See you!

Step 2: Perform with puppets!

Name: _____

Continuing the Conversation: Follow-Up Questions

Part 1

A: Hello, ▬▬▬▬▬▬.

B: Hello, ▬▬▬▬▬▬.

A: How are you?

B: I'm ▬▬▬▬▬. How about you?

A: I'm ▬▬▬▬▬. Who is your favorite family member?

B: I like my ▬▬▬▬▬.

A: Your ▬▬▬▬? Oh really, I see. ⭐ _____

_____?

B: _____. It's time to go. See you later!

A: See you!

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1-2 Neptune Class

JANUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER

HOW CAN I GET BETTER AT ASKING QUESTIONS?
どうやったら、しつもんがうまくなりますか？

Good question! We will continue to practice in class how to make questions in English. But, you should read many stories from Kids A-Z to get more question ideas. Also, watch English videos like Blippi on Youtube.

いいしつもん！ えいごでいろんなしつもんをするほうほうをれんしゅうしていきましょう。ただし、いろんなしつもんのアイデアをゲットするには、Kids A ～ Z のはなしをたくさんよむことがだいじです。また、Youtube で Blippi などのえいごのビデオもみてね！

RECOMMENDED

Blippi

Kids A-Z

What Has These Feet? Where? What Makes Me Happy?

We Don't Eat Our Classmates

I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly

WHAT IS A FOLLOW-UP QUESTION?
ついかのしつもんとは何ですか？

We use follow-up questions to talk about something more deeply. If you ask a question and your friend answers, it is often good to ask a question about their answer. It shows that you are listening and interested in what the other is saying.

トピックについて、よりふかくはなすためのしつもんです。あいてがしつもんにこたえたとき、そのこたえについて、さらにしつもんするといいですね。それは、あなたがあいてのはなしをきいていて、きょうみをもったことをしめしています。

WHAT DO YOU THINK？
どう思いましたか？

1. たのしかった。ペアーの子といっしょにはなしてたのしかった。

2. English がとくいじゃないから、ふつうにかんじる。

3. たのしかったです。なぜなら、ともだちとはなせたからです。

4. えいごがわからなくて、しつもんをできなかった。

EXAMPLE

A: Hello!
B: Hello!
A: What will you eat this Christmas?
B: I eat chocolate cake.
A: Do you like chocolate cake?
B: Yes, I do.

Who is Your Favorite Family Member?

MOM Kaho

kind

red

rabbit

chocolate

book

penguin

Appendix 1-C

Why?
Circle what you think

Good   Ok   I can do better

eye contact   smile   volume   speaking

rejoinders   shadowing   making questions   helping

Speaking Activity Reflection

Part 1

Step 1: What do you think of your speaking in the speaking activity?

A

Step 2: Why? Circle what you think.

eye contact   smile   volume   speaking

rejoinders   shadowing   making questions   helping

Step 3: Share with a friend.

A: What do you think?
B: I think a S / A / B.
   I was good at _____.
   I was ok at _____.
   I can do better at _____.

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March 2024 Survey Questions

1. What do you think about English class?

2. Which statement best describes the reason for your answer in #1? Please choose one of the following:

   I like speaking to my friends in English.

   English is interesting.

   The teacher makes it easy and simple to understand the content

   I like remembering and speaking English.

   I like doing class activities in English.

   I do not understand what Amy-sensei is saying.

   The class is too easy.

   I do not why I have to use English.

3. Please rank Small Talk.

   1: I love it.

   2; I like it.

   3 It is ok.

   4: I like it a little.

   5: I do not like it at all.

4. Please rank Interview/Information Exchange.

   1: I love it.

   2; I like it.

   3 It is ok.

   4: I like it a little.

   5: I do not like it at all.

5. Please rank Show and Tell.

   1: I love it.

   2; I like it.

   3 It is ok.

   4: I like it a little.

   5: I do not like it at all.

6. Please rank Asking and Answering Questions.

    1: I love it.

    2; I like it.

    3 It is ok.

    4: I like it a little.

    5: I do not like it at all.

7. Please rank Playing Games as a Group

    1: I love it.

    2; I like it.

    3 It is ok.

    4: I like it a little.

    5: I do not like it at all.

8. Please rank Reading Books to My Friends

    1: I love it.

    2; I like it.

    3 It is ok.

    4: I like it a little.

    5: I do not like it at all.

9. Please rank Making Presentations in English

    1: I love it.

    2; I like it.

    3 It is ok.

    4: I like it a little.

    5: I do not like it at all.

10. What did you think of making the conversation card about your favorite family member on Keynote?

    4-point Likert scale with "1. I love it" and "5. I don't like it"

11. What do you think about group speaking activities in class?

    4-point Likert scale with "1. I love it" and "5. I don't like it"

12. What do you feel about Small Talk?

    4-point Likert scale with "1. I love it" and "5. I don't like it"

13. What do you feel about working in a group and speaking English?

    4-point Likert scale with "1. I love it" and "5. I don't like it"

14. What do you think about the English Class Newsletters?

    4-point Likert scale with "1. I love it" and "5. I don't like it"

15. How do you feel about receiving help from your classmates?

    4-point Likert scale with "1. It is very good!" and "5. It is very bad!"

16. Working in group/pair activities has made me confident in speaking English.

    4-point Likert scale with "1. I think so" and "5. I don't think so"

17. Watching the teachers or my friends show me the conversation in class or through videos helps me to do the speaking activity.]

    4-point Likert scale with "1. I think so" and "5. I don't think so"

18. I have improved my speaking skills in English since April.

    4-point Likert scale with "1. I think so" and "5. I don't think so"

    19. I can learn more English from my friends than from the teacher.

    4-point Likert scale with "1. I think so" and "5. I don't think so"

19. How do you feel about understanding the directions and the content in English class? Please pick one.

    I understand all that the teacher says in English. (100%)

    I understand most of what the teacher says in English. (75%)

    I understand half of what the teacher says in English. (50%)

    I understand a little of what the teacher says in English. (30%)

    I don't understand what the teacher says in English. (0%)

20, What do you like to do more to improve your English speaking skills?

    I want to speak more with my friends in English. I want to practice more dialogues or sentences with the teacher in English.

    I want to do more activities where I have to exchange ideas or information with a friend in English.

    I want to do a presentation in my group in English.

    I want to do more small talk activities.

    I want to do roleplay.

    I want to do more speaking activities where I move around the classroom.

    I want to tell more stories in English

    I want to exchange ideas or information with grade 2-5.

    I want to do the Solan thinking tools in English.

21. What skill do you want to get better at in English class?

    Speaking

    Reading

    Listening

    Writing

22. How can you get better at this skill?

23. What English class goals do you have for second grade?

24. Is there anything you wanted Amy to do more or less?

25. Please write a message to Ms. Amy.

26. Anything else you want to write.

March 2024 Focus Group Questions

1. What did you think about English class?

2. Why do you think learning English is important?

3, Do you think learning English is easy or hard?

4. What are the challenges of learning English?

5. What did you think about the activities in the English class? Which ones were your favorite? Which ones you didn't like?

6. Was it helpful for your friends to help you learn English in pair or group activities?

6. What do you think about the speaking tests? Did you have enough time to speak to your friends? Could you have a conversation in English with friends?

7. What have you improved in Ms. Amy's English class?

8. What goals for English do you want to achieve in Grade 2? Or even in the future?

9. Anything else you want to say?

評価する技

年　組　名前：

PMIシート

Plus （よかった点）	Minus （改善点）	Interesting （おもしろい点）

LCA Group
瀬戸SOLAN小学校