Final CD Report
The Impact of Student-Centered Teaching on Learners' Beliefs
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1. Introduction

Ever since I came to Japan as an ALT, I saw that in the eyes of many language teaching institutions, speaking with native English speakers holds special value. However, traditional, non-communicative and teacher-centered models of instruction are still prevalent. Many teachers and students rely on such models, due to perceived practicality or personal beliefs, because entrance exams still require writing and reading rather than communication.

Ten years later, MEXT is requiring communication in the classroom, but beliefs are harder to change. As a class leader in the Power-Up! Tutorial Program (PUT), I found that some students believed that the native speaking tutor should be the center of interaction. I asked myself, how can I facilitate a communicative and student-centered classroom despite the learning beliefs of students?

2. Theoretical Background

First, I define communicative and strategic competence. Next I discuss the benefits of communicative and student-centered teaching techniques. Lastly I examine the importance of teaching and learning beliefs.

i. Communicative Competence

Savignon (1998) in Lee and VanPatten (2003) stated that true communication is the "expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning" (p. 51). Negotiation of meaning takes place when learners try but fail to convey an intended message as they work together to make what they say comprehensible to themselves and others. If communication is not taking place in the classroom because "failure" is punished and feared, then opportunities for negotiation of meaning will not take place, having a negative impact on acquisition.

Communicative competency was further defined by Savignon (1998) as: "*grammatical competence* (knowledge of the structure and form of language), *discourse competence* (knowledge of the rules of cohesion…), *sociolinguistic competence* (knowledge of the rules of interaction…), and *strategic competence* (knowing how to make the most of the language you have, especially when it is 'deficient') (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 53).

ii. Strategic Competence and Communication/Conversation Strategies

In the earlier stages of language learning, the gap between what learners can say and want to say is wide. In such cases, "verbal and non-verbal communication strategies …may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or insufficient competence." (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30). Dornyei and Scott (1997, p. 188-192) list many strategies for repairing communication and negotiating meaning, including but not limited to circumlocution, self- and other-repair, fillers, asking for help, asking for meaning, asking to repeat, summarizing, and so on.

If communication at all levels of English is the goal then strategic competence should be developed side by side with grammatical so that learners have more chances to gain discourse and sociolinguistic competencies in increased chances for interaction.

iii. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Lee & VanPatten (2003) contend that "communicative language ability-- the ability to express one's self and to understand each other-- develops as learners engage in communication and not as a result of habit formation with grammatical items" (p. 51). CLT, often described as an approach rather than a technique, can provide the meaningful interaction and negotiation of meaning necessary for developing all aspects of communicative competence.
Brown (2007), quoted in Chang (2011) defined CLT as follows:
1. The goal is to develop all four communicative competencies.
2. Techniques that engage learners in practical use of the language for authentic and meaningful purposes are to be employed.
3. Accuracy and fluency are complementary, but fluency may take priority over accuracy if it results in more meaningful communication.
4. Students should ultimately use the language in ways which are unrehearsed. (p.3)

iv. Student-centered learning and teaching

One way that CLT differs from many traditional models is in its more student-centered approach. Lee and VanPatten (2003) identified the Atlas complex—or the idea that the teacher is an authoritative transmitter of knowledge, and that students are merely to receive that knowledge—as the dominant model of traditional language instruction, i.e. ALM or grammar/translation. Such methods can be said to be teacher-centered because the teacher is the center and arbiter of information transfer in the classroom (Brown, 1994; Lee and VanPatten, 2003; Wright, 2011). In contrast, Savignon (2013) stated that "by definition, CLT puts the focus on the learner" (p. 136) which is the defining characteristic of student-centered instruction (Brown, 1994). Brown (1994) defines student-centered teaching by its inclusion of:

1. Techniques that focus on or account for learners' needs, styles, and goals.
2. Techniques that give some control to the student…
3. Curricula that include the consultation and input of students and that do not presuppose objectives in advance.
4. Techniques that allow for student creativity and innovation.
5. Techniques that enhance a student's sense of competence and self-worth. (p. 80)

Student-centered as opposed to teacher-centered instruction can facilitate more communication in the classroom by actively engaging learners, creating a learning environment in which learners are invested in cooperation and co-creation, which can also boost learners' motivation (Brown, 1994, in Chang, 2011, p. 2). More student-centered instruction also ensures interaction (Brown, 1994) which many researchers posit is essential for language acquisition (Lightbown and Spada, 2011). Some examples of student-centered techniques include cooperative learning, think-pair-share, peer-teaching, rubrics, and self-assessment (Froyd and Simpson, 2008; Geeslin, 2003).

v. Learning Beliefs

As mentioned, beliefs in the efficacy or practicality of CLT determine whether educators adopt student-centered learning techniques. However, beliefs not only affect how teachers teach. How language learners feel about the language they are learning and how they are taught are hypothesized to affect language acquisition itself, students' attitudes toward classroom practices, and thereby, student attitudes toward the courses they take; a ripple effect extending from the theoretical, to the pedagogical, to the programmatic (Tse, 2000, p. 70).

My thesis adopts Lightbown and Spada's view (2011) that "virtually all learners… have strong beliefs and opinions about how their instruction should be delivered" and that these beliefs "are usually based on previous learning experiences and the assumption… that a particular type of instruction is the best way for them to learn" (pp. 66-67). Ellis (2008) conjectures that these beliefs could be determined by instruction, personality, and cognitive style as well as culture. Other studies seem to show that certain beliefs are connected to certain kinds of language success (Abraham and Vann, 1987, cited in Ellis, 2012), that there are differences in beliefs between novice learners and advanced learners (Mori, 1999), and that beliefs change over time (Kern, 1995; Tanaka and Ellis, 2003).

What do Japanese learners believe about language learning? Studies which have been done seem to indicate relatively low self-confidence (self-efficacy beliefs), as in Sakui and Gaies (1999) or Tanaka and Ellis (2003). However, Horwitz (1999) asserts that few studies actually compare the learning beliefs of learners in different cultural contexts. Based on the results of her study (1999), she argued that local culture—as in teaching practices, classroom culture, and even socioeconomic status—seem to have at least an equal influence on learning beliefs as the broader scope of one's heritage or culture (Horwitz, 1999).

Tanaka and Ellis (2003) divided beliefs about learning and teaching into three broad categories: analytical beliefs, experiential beliefs, and self-efficacy beliefs (p.65). However, if teachers believe that language is best learned through CLT (experiential) but students prefer more traditional methods (analytical), or if students don't believe that they can be successful at communication (self-efficacy beliefs), then problems may arise (Shulz, 2001, p. 244). Differences in beliefs between teachers and those they teach can be addressed directly by evidence of improvement or performance (Alanen, 2003, p.63; Horwitz, 1998, p. 292). By utilizing student-centered techniques, then addressing learners' beliefs directly, it may be possible to expand learner's beliefs to get the best out of CLT instruction.

vi. Research Issues

Many studies conducted on learning and teaching beliefs are exploratory in nature (See Kern, 1995, Shulz, 2001, or Horwitz, 1998) or seem to imply that beliefs are constant personality traits that are sure to affect learning. However, Ellis (2008) contended that beliefs are "not really stable and trait-like but rather dynamic and situated" (p. 699) and "the fact that learners hold a particular belief is no guarantee that they will act on it" (p. 703). If "beliefs are context specific" (Alanen, 2003, p. 62) then it seems necessary to examine learners' beliefs in regards to specific contexts and activities.

It also follows that "the extent to which learner beliefs are variable over time, from person to person, and setting to setting needs to be explored. For example, "it is essential to determine how student beliefs change over the course of language instruction" (Horwitz, 1998, p.291). In addition, "few researchers have examined how learners' beliefs change as a result of learning experience over a period of time" (Tanaka and Ellis, 2003, p.65). To do so, Tanaka and Ellis (2003) recommend case study methods such as interviews, as quantitative methods alone might fall short when dealing with such complex matters as change in beliefs.

This year, I effected a number of changes to the curriculum and activities to ensure a more student-centered interaction, which more closely aligns with the goals of PUT. I wanted to take the opportunity to see if student-centered teaching changed students' learning beliefs over time. I also wanted to make sure that this new curriculum had a positive effect on students' communicative competence.

vii. Research questions

How do student-centered techniques change learner's analytical and experiential learning beliefs?
How do student-centered techniques improve learners' confidence' (self-efficacy beliefs?)
How do student-centered techniques improve learners' communicative competence?

3. Methods

i. Research context and participants

I conducted this Action Research at a private foreign language university in the Power-Up Tutorial Program (PUT), a speaking course. The participants were one class of fifteen 1st year students all majoring in the Department of English and Contemporary Studies. Ten of the students were female, five were male, and all were between 18-19 years of age. The interviewees were all female. These students were designated non-honors or intermediate in their English language proficiency by the third-party exam before the start of the semester. In April, the average TOEFL score of the participants was 396.

Before the mandatory study abroad in August of 2015, only three of the fifteen students reported some experience abroad in an English-speaking country, whereas ten students reported no experience abroad (two did not respond). On average, the participants took seven or more English classes a week other than their PUT class; classes which were more teacher-centered and less communicative than PUT according to their coordinator and institutional syllabi. It should also be noted that all of the students who participated in this study studied abroad In Ireland or England for one month in August.

The classroom setup was unique to this context in that there was one native English teacher (hereafter referred to as "tutor") to every three students. The textbook is Tools for Increasing Proficiency in Speaking: Book 1, by Duane Kindt. The class met once a week for 90 minutes. The goal for the course was for students to develop their communicative competence as defined by the following goals: to improve students' confidence; to push for deeper content in their English conversations; to develop the ability to understand and make themselves understood (understandability); to increase their participation; and to become proficient in the use of various conversation (communication) strategies. In the first semester, the results of students' reflections were compiled into documents and shared with the students to increase awareness of the goals of the course and develop confidence.

To achieve these goals, students participated in a variety of student-centered activities, including creating their own conversation cards (SOCCs) as an aid in spontaneous communication, training in conversation strategies, unplanned conversations both with peers and with native speakers, weekly speaking tests (conversations) that were also self-assessed against the course rubric, recording/transcription/ self-evaluation, peer-teaching of idioms, and written reflections after activities, at the mid-term, and at the end of the year. As the high tutor to student ratio could potentially work against the development of communicative competence if left unchecked (Long and Porter, 1985), care was taken to rein in tutor involvement during activities and to favor pair conversations over group conversations with a tutor whenever possible.

ii. Research Design

After peer-teaching and recording and transcription, students answered Likert scale questions regarding the activities, as well as reflected on the experience in open-response questions, all in Japanese. Students also completed a final reflection (in Japanese) consisting of five open-response questions on their perceived improvement after completing the first semester.

In the first semester, I administered surveys (Reflections) on learning and teaching beliefs in the third class in May and the 14th class in July, and in the second semester, in the 11th class in November. All fifteen students participated in both surveys on beliefs. The 5-point Likert scale survey was formed based on Horwitz's BALLI (1998) and Tanaka and Ellis's (2003) survey on learning beliefs. There were 16 closed questions. After the advice of the advisor, a 17th question was added from the second semester to see how students' beliefs regarding cooperative learning changed over time. The numerical results were tabulated, including changes in

average and mode between the first and final surveys. Rank of averages (excluding #17) is also included to show changes in agreement. I analyzed the textual data using thematic analysis. The full survey instrument used in the final reflection, as well as the survey on learning beliefs, can be found in the Appendix (ii and iii). Lastly, in December near the end of semester, I interviewed five students who volunteered with the help of a bilingual coworker to really examine if and how the students' beliefs changed over 11 months of student-centered instruction.

Communicative competence was assessed weekly using the rubric for the course (see Appendix, i). The conversation (weekly speaking test) scores of the five interviewees in the first and second semesters are shown. Averages, minimums, maximums, and ranges were also calculated and summarized. Student names were replaced with pseudonyms. The research schedule can be seen below.

Table 1: Research Schedule (2015)

| | Time Administered | | | | | | | |
| | Semester 1 | | | Semester 2 | | | | |
Instrument	April	May	June	July	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Reflections		O	O	O	O		O	O
Questionnaire	O			O			O	
Speaking Test	OOO	OO	O	OO	OO	OO	OOO	O
Interview								O

4. Results

i. Changes in Learning Beliefs
Interview data

As per the direction of Tanaka and Ellis (2003) I wanted to use case-study or qualitative methods to determine causes for changes in learning beliefs. The interview data strongly suggested that, in fact, the students' beliefs changed more than the survey data suggests. These changes seemed to be caused by their time spent studying abroad, their experiences in PUT, and the pressures of exams.

Starting Beliefs

All students reported a similar language learning background before university: little to no speaking and no emphasis on expression. Students at the start of the year held a few analytical beliefs and negative attitudes toward speaking English. They wanted to speak without grammatical errors (students H, B and C), and they didn't enjoy speaking English (students D, H and I). However another student shared that she valued expression from the start, if only at the basic, word-by-word level (student I), and another student (C) asserted a value on speaking, as well. This could show that some of the participants started the course with some experiential leanings. Otherwise, the connection between their similar language learning backgrounds and their initial learning beliefs seems evident.

Developing Beliefs

Study abroad had an influence on students' learning beliefs, causing them to focus less on grammar and more on communication because of the ease of speaking with other language learners (students B and I), the relationships that they formed (B and I), the use of strategies (D and B), and the urgency of real-world communication (Student B). Two students even asserted that perfect knowledge or use of grammar was not at all important for real-world communication (D and I). Success or failure in communication while abroad also seemed to alter the self-efficacy beliefs of some of the interviewees (D and B). They seemed to believe that success was proof of true language ability, and that failure was proof that they weren't "there yet" with their language learning. However, in the case of one student (D) a failure while abroad impressed upon her the importance of speaking. All in all, it

can be said that their experience abroad could have shifted the beliefs of some students toward a more experiential perspective, and had an impact on their self-efficacy beliefs for better or for worse.

In many cases, students expressed an experiential leaning in clear connection to how they were taught in PUT, showing the potential influence that student-centered methods could have had on learning beliefs. Such students seemed to value learning through experience, with an emphasis on expression and content rather than accuracy. They came to grow in strategic competence and in acceptance of their own mistakes.

Their responses showed that teaching techniques employed in PUT such as recursive conversation practice and interaction, the making of SOCCS, recording and transcription, and interaction with learners of a similar language learning level could have played a part on the self-efficacy beliefs of many students. In addition, all five interviewees also expressed the various signs of their improvement after two semesters of student-centered instruction. They pointed to improved expression and confidence (Student C), use of strategies (Student B), and participation (students I, B and D). One student even said that she was able to make English-speaking friends (Student D).

Even though students could share the causes and signs of their improvement this year, two students (B and I) still maintained that they could not be truly confident in their ability until they became more accurate. This could show that analytical learning beliefs on the parts of these two students could prohibit them from translating knowledge of their improvements into confidence.

Students voiced other beliefs about language learning. These beliefs align with the goals of PUT and completely differ from the beliefs that students reported holding at the start of the year. Students came to enjoy speaking English (H, I and B) and came to value depth of expression (H), confidence (D, B and C), understandability (B), and vocabulary and speaking (I). In fact, four of the five students came to value speaking more than before, while still maintaining that study was important. It is clear that students experienced a shift toward a more experiential leaning in their learning beliefs, but kept some of their analytical beliefs- particularly, the belief that in language learning, study comes first.

Even if the participants recognized that exam culture may not be ideal for learning (I) and felt that grammar was only good for exams, and not as useful in communication (I, C and D), they could not deny the impact of exams on their lives (H and D). One student wanted all mistakes corrected because she had to "learn grammar properly" to get better scores (D), and other students felt that exams were accurate measures of ability (C and B).

All in all, the participants' responses illustrate a link between exams and self-efficacy, as well as a link between exams and analytic learning beliefs. That is because exams remained an integral part of students' lives. Despite their experiences while studying abroad, the student-centered practices in PUT, and the leaps toward a more experiential leaning, exams may have kept the participants tied to their analytical learning beliefs.

Survey Data

I wanted to see if student-centered learning techniques changed students' reported beliefs about learning, so I used surveys to discern any general trends. First I looked at analytical beliefs. In November, students disagreed more with statements regarding the goal of PUT (Q3) and error correction (Q5 and Q8), reflecting a slight shift towards a more experiential/student-centered perspective. In particular, there was a significant change in Q3, with a majority of students switching from agree to disagree. Students came to understand that the goal of PUT is not perfection, but communication. All other items kept a similar mode with small decreases in average, indicating little change. It seems that student-centered instruction alone was not enough to significantly decrease analytical beliefs. Table 2 shows students' change in analytic or teacher-centered learning beliefs over time.

Table 2: Change in Students' Analytical Learning Beliefs (2015) n=15

	Analytic/Teacher-Centered Question	April			July			November		
		Rank (μ)	Mean	Mode	Rank (μ)	Mean	Mode	Rank (μ)	Mean	Mode
1	When my partner and I can't understand each other, the PUT tutor should do something to fix the problem.	8	3.33	4	6	3.40	3, 4	4	3.71	4
3	The goal of PUT is to learn how to speak English perfectly.	6	3.53	4	12	2.80	2	14	2.50	2
5	Only a native speaker can tell me how to improve my English speaking ability.	16	2.47	2	16	2.27	2	16	2.14	3
7	I need to master English grammar rules before I can speak English.	3	3.73	4	3	3.93	4	6	3.57	4
8	I want my PUT tutor to correct all of my mistakes.	3	3.73	4	5	3.67	4	9	3.21	4

Source: surveys collected in class (April, July, November 2015)

As for experiential learning beliefs, more students came to agree with the statement that speaking is the best way to improve one's English ability (Q2) and shifted to a more neutral position regarding their own ability to fix breakdowns in communication (Q6). By the end of the year, there was also a significant positive change in (Q4) and (Q11), so students seemed to care much less about making mistakes and more confident in their ability to tell when their English has improved. From July and through the end, students seemed to believe that they could work together to improve their English ability. In all items except for (Q6), students agreed more with experiential items by a factor of 1. These results could reflect a shift toward a more experiential/student-centered perspective, suggesting that student-centered instruction increased their experiential beliefs but could not take away their analytical beliefs. Table 3 shows students' change in experiential or student-centered learning beliefs over time.

Table 3: Change in Students' Experiential Learning Beliefs contin. (2015) n=15

	Experiential/Student-Centered Item	April Rank (μ)	Mean	Mode	July Rank (μ)	Mean	Mode	November Rank (μ)	Mean	Mode
2	The best way to improve my English speaking ability is by speaking English.	2	4.07	4	1	4.67	5	1	4.50	4, 5
4	As long as my speaking partner understands me, it doesn't matter if I make mistakes.	13	2.60	3	14	2.60	2	9	3.21	4
6	When my partner and I can't understand each other, I can use English to fix the problem.	10	3.00	4	10	3.20	3, 4	11	3.14	3
11	I am able to tell when my English has improved.	11	2.80	3	6	3.40	3, 4	7	3.43	4
17	My partner and I can help each other to improve our English ability.	---	---	---	---	4.13	4	---	4.21	4

Source: surveys collected in class (April, July, November 2015)

ii. Students' Change in Confidence (Self-efficacy Beliefs)

While the majority of students reported an increase in confidence in their reflections (See Mid-term CD Report 2015) , I wanted to see if students' reported self-efficacy beliefs also changed from April to the end of the year. I asked students to respond on a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) to statements regarding their confidence on various aspects of English. Students reported the most significant change in their perceived ability to listen (Q1), moving from a mode of 2 to 4. Students' reported confidence rose very slightly in all items aside from (Q2), which experienced a tiny decrease in average. Overall, there were very little changes in mode but greater changes in average. Table 4 shows my students' change in self-efficacy beliefs over time.

Table 4: Change in My Students' Self-Efficacy Beliefs (2015)

	Question	April n	Avg	Mode	November n	Avg	Mode	Change Avg
1	I feel good about my English listening ability.	84	2.85	2	84	3.13	4	10.0%
2	I feel comfortable while speaking English.	84	3.06	3	84	3.05	3	-0.4%
3	I believe that I will be able to speak English very well in the future.	84	4.39	4, 5	84	4.43	5	0.8%
4	I can use many conversation strategies.	84	2.67	3	84	3.33	3	25.0%
5	I can say what I want to say in English.	84	2.70	3	84	3.21	3	18.9%
6	If I do my best, I can have a deep conversation in English.	84	3.42	4	84	4.13	4	20.9%
7	I can participate actively in English conversation.	84	3.54	4	84	3.90	4	10.4%
8	When my partner and I can't understand each other, I can use English to fix the problem.	83	3.24	3,4	84	3.79	4	16.8%
	Overall Responses	671	3.23	4	672	3.62	4	12.1%

Source: surveys collected in class (April, November 2015)

It appears that for the most part students' self-efficacy beliefs did not change in a significant way. However, when these results are compared with that of other classes, it can be seen that the positive growth is greater and the negative growth is lesser. Students in my classes started slightly less confident than the students in all other PUT classes and arrived at the same or higher level of confidence by the end of the year. It's possible that student-centered instruction played a part in this growth.

iii. Students' Communicative Competence

To see improvement in students' communicative competence, I looked at the interviewees speaking test scores at the mid-term and end of the year. I analyzed these scores using descriptive statistics. While there was improvement in scores over the course, in general, students' performance remained relatively stable as indicated by the low range.

The stability of relatively high scores could be due to the fact that course goals were communicated clearly and students assessed themselves frequently, indicating a good understanding of the standards of the course. More likely, these goals are more attainable for a larger number of students because they are communicative and not accuracy-oriented in nature. Students also improved their scores by the end of the year. This growth, however slight, is significant because in the second semester the course became more difficult. Assessment was of the honors standard, the communication strategies that were taught were more complex, and the topics were more challenging. Students scored at least as well as when topics were lighter and strategies were simpler, which could show that difficulty was successfully scaffolded over the year. Table 1, below, shows a comparison of speaking test scores by the end of the 1st and 2nd semesters.

Table 5: Students' Speaking Test Scores (April-November 2015)

Student	B		C		D		H		I	
	Sem 1	Sem 2	Sem 1	Sem 2	Sem 1	Sem 2	Sem 1	Sem 2	Sem 1	Sem 2
Final Grade	91%	91%	85%	89%	90%	91%	83%	89%	86%	81%
Mean	10.6	11.4	9.1	10.6	10.5	11	11	11	10.9	11.1
Min	8.5	10.5	4.5	9	8	10.5	*9	10.5	10	10
Max	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Range	3.5	2.5	7.5	3	4	2.5	3	1.5	4	2

Source: weekly speaking tests (group conversations) conducted in class (April, July, November 2015)

5. Discussion

i. How did student- centered techniques change learner's analytical and experiential learning beliefs?

Student-centered teaching techniques seemed to cause an increase in the participants' experiential learning beliefs. All interviewees and most participants experienced varying degrees of change toward a more experiential leaning. These students cited many of the qualities of PUT for this change, both directly and indirectly, in their responses. Students H, B and D all mentioned strategy use while abroad, indicating that students of both experiential (H and B) and analytic (D) leanings found communication strategies important and useful in a real-world communicative context. Three students, H, B and D, explicitly expressed a change in their learning beliefs toward the experiential because of their learning experience in PUT. In all, the interviewees cited the spontaneity of classroom interactions, communication strategies, recursive practice, and speaking with peers as reasons for change, showing a link between authentic communication in class and experiential beliefs.

The participants' experience while studying abroad emerged as another factor in experiential learning beliefs. Students cited the multicultural environment and the urgency of real-world communication as reasons for their beliefs. Students I, B, C and D all expressed a shift from form to meaning in their values because they were able to learn with other second-language learners, which allowed them to focus on making meaningful relationships and worry less about making mistakes. A few other students (C and D) cited their study abroad experience as impressing the importance of speaking. Student D's reported failure to conduct a survey while abroad showed that her lack in self-efficacy beliefs kept her from pushing through communication breakdown. All in all, students seemed to shift from accuracy to adaptability, expression, and fluency.

Most of the interviewees mentioned at least one analytical belief. The beliefs that emerged were as follows: explicit instruction leads directly to improvement; exams are an accurate measure of language ability; all mistakes need to be corrected; and lastly, study is more important than speaking when learning a second language. These statements were often directly connected to exams.

ii. How did student-centered techniques increase student confidence (self-efficacy beliefs)?

By the mid-term all participants in the study claimed that they felt more confident in their English ability, and 74% reported that they had improved (See Mid-term CD Report 2015, Table 4). They could share specific signs of their improvement, including improved expression, depth, understandability, strategy use, confidence, and attitudes toward speaking, in English and in general. Many of the participants mentioned the chances for interaction as one of the causes of their jumps in confidence, strongly suggesting that in this case, student-centered techniques were effective in improving learners' self-efficacy beliefs.

In their interview data as well, all of the participants claimed that they felt more confident in their language ability because of their experience in PUT. All students acknowledged the signs of their improvement, showing a shift in self-efficacy beliefs. They seemed to think that a safe environment to make mistakes (C and H) and recursive practice (Student D) contributed to their language growth. Other signs of improvement that students shared were improved expression (Student C) and strategic competence (Student B). Students I and C pointed to increased participation and quality of communication as signs of improvement. Students C and H straightforwardly attributed a growth in confidence to PUT, allowing them to be more comfortable going abroad and to have more fun while speaking English.

iii. How did student-centered techniques improve students' communicative competence?

By the end of the year the participants had claimed improvement in a variety of areas (Mid-term CD Report 2015). They reported jumps in confidence, motivation, enjoyment, expression, understandability, and depth in conversation. They also said that they developed the ability to hold a conversation, the ability to make sentences, and the use of communication strategies. They cited increased opportunities for interaction, strategy training, talking about themselves rather than a textbook, speaking with native speakers, recording and transcription, and being required to share their opinions as the means of their improvement. These findings align with other researchers and scholars who contend that student-centered teaching can boost learner satisfaction and communicative ability through increased chances for interaction (Brown, 1994; Lightbown and Spada, 2011; Porter, 1986; Rulon and McCreary, 1986).

It is possible that in this case, strategy training affected changes in strategic competence, essential for beginning learners (Savignon, 2013; Lightbown and Spada, 2011). This development of strategic competence, evident both in the participants' scores and mentioned in the open responses, could have allowed for increased chances for negotiation of meaning, as was hypothesized in Nakatani's study (2010), which found that learners who participated in strategy training out-performed those who hadn't in communicative tests.

The sampled scores of the five students indicated an overall attainment of communicative competence as defined by the standards of the course, despite a rise in difficulty over the school year. However it is difficult to make claims about improvement in students' ability to communicate based on scores alone. Other rubrics or analysis of samples of student conversations may be necessary to ascertain changes in communicative competence.

6. Limitations and Conclusion

There are limitations in the research methods of this study that should be considered. The participants were found to have improved their communicative competency in regards to the goals of the course, with a particular emphasis on strategic competence. However a rubric which was aptly weighted per Wiggens' suggestion (1998) toward strategic competence, but also included some element of grammatical accuracy, might have better addressed all four strands of communicative competence. Conversation or discourse analysis of the recordings might shed even more light on students' improving sociocultural, discourse and grammatical competencies (Punch, 2009).

Other research methods could be used for more reliability and validity. One issue is the sampling of the study. The students whose scores were examined cannot be considered representative of the class because they opted for interview on a voluntary basis. A random or criteria based sampling might have achieved a better representation of the whole (Dornyei, 2007; Cohen et al., 2007). While this small sample size enabled the researcher to probe more deeply into complex learning beliefs, which Cohen et al. argues may suffice in a qualitative study of relatively homogenous individuals (2007, p. 105), a larger sample size might have produced data that was more representative of the class and the program at large (Cohen et al., 2007; Dornyei, 2007). The use of a control group would have allowed for results with more validity, as well.

Despite these limitations, this small study revealed the great impact of student-centered teaching on the participants. At this time, exam culture is a fact of Japanese life, and if educators want to reconcile what they know to be beneficial for learning with the reality of exams then the learning beliefs, motivations, and goals of students should be heard.

7. References

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8. Appendix

i. Rubric for Speaking Test

Gen.	1	2	3		Notes
Content Does the student aim for depth in the conversation	Description	Preference Description	Emotion and/or Opinion Preference Description May attempt new vocab.	/3	
Participation Is the student actively participating in the conversation	Only participates when asked a question; is often disengaged	Sometimes participates without being asked a question; rarely uses interjections; is usually engaged	Asks and answers questions for a mostly balanced conversation; uses interjections; is almost always/always engaged	/3	
Understandability What does the student do to ensure communication	Never or rarely attempts to understand or be understood	Sometimes attempts to understand or be understood but may rely on Japanese	Usually attempts to understand or be understood without relying on Japanese	/3	
Conversation Strategies Does the student actively/appropriately use strategies in the context of a conversation	Uses no strategies/ rarely uses strategies	Sometimes uses strategies, but does not attempt any target strategies	Attempts target strategies as well as a variety of others depending on the context of the conversation	/3	
			Total	/12	

ii. Survey on Learning Beliefs

次の質問に対しての回答を番号か記号で記入してください。

1-全くそう思わない
2-あまりそう思わない
3-どちらとも言えない
4-ややそう思う
5-非常にそう思う
X-質問の意味が分からない

１．＿＿＿自分とパートナーがお互い理解できなかった時、PUT tutor がその状況から抜け出す為に何かをするべきだと思う。

２．＿＿＿英会話能力を上達する最大の方法は英語を話すことである。

３．＿＿＿PUT の目標はミスをしないで英会話をできるようになることである。

４．＿＿＿ パートナーが私の会話を理解している限り、ミスをしたとしても、問題はない。

５．＿＿＿ Native speaker だけが英会話能力を伸ばす方法を教えることができる。

６．＿＿＿ パートナーと私がお互い理解できない時、その状況を抜け出すために英語を使うことができる。

７．＿＿＿英語を話す前に英文法のルールを習得する必要がある。

８．＿＿＿ PUT tutor にミスを全て直してほしい。

９．＿＿＿英語リスニング能力は良いと思っている。

１０．＿＿＿英会話をしている間　自信を持っている。

１１．＿＿＿英語能力が自分自身で伸びたと分かる。

１２．＿＿＿将来、英会話がうまくなると信じている。

１３．＿＿＿たくさんの conversation strategies を使える。

１４．＿＿＿英語で言いたいことを言える。

１５．＿＿＿努力をすれば、内容の濃い英会話ができる。

１６．＿＿＿英会話に積極的に参加できる。

iii. Interview Prompt (Japanese)

１．通っていた高校はどこでしたか？　そこは何県ですか？

２．高校ではどのように英語を教わりましたか？

３．PUT の授業の教え方は高校の英語の授業と似ていましたか？違いましたか？例えばどのように？　なぜそう思いますか？

４．NUFS に入学した頃、英語の会話能力に一番大事なものは何だと思いましたか？

５．今は何が一番大事だと思いますか？

６．PUT の授業を受け、言語学習に対しての考えは変わりましたか？なぜそう思いますか？（その理由は？）

７．英語が上手くなるには勉強することが一番いいという人もいれば、話すことが一番いいという人もいます。あなたは、勉強と話す事、どちらが一番効果的だと思いますか？

８．今年の初めに比べ、今の方が積極的に英会話に参加出来るようになったと思いますか？なぜそう思いますか？

９．今年の初めに比べ、英語のコミュニケーション能力が伸びたと思いますか？それはなぜだと思いますか？

１０．PUT を始める前に比べ、英語能力に自信がついたと思いますか？（どのように自信がつきましたか？　なぜだと思いますか？なぜそうでないと思いますか？

１１．PUT の授業を経験する前、ネーティブスピーカーと話す機会はありましたか？詳しく教えてください。

１２．何かの理由で英語圏に行ったことがありますか？（例　旅行、長期滞在、留学）

１３．行った理由を教えてください。

１４．どれくらいの期間でしたか？