

Final report

To develop students' basic communication abilities
through focus on form instruction and performance test.

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1. Introduction

It has been about 20 years since English teachers have been asked to teach students communicative English in JHS English classes. However, even classes have become more opened to communication, radical change in student's communicative competence are not seen yet.

Teaching grammar and vocabulary has been in the center part of JHS English teaching. And main focus of treating grammar has been on accuracy since students have entrance exams after 3 years of JHS life. However, as for grammar in communication, teaching only accuracy is not enough. Grammar teaching in JHS nowadays is required to teach students the mechanics of the language, and also the how why, and where the particular structure, word, or phrase are used. It is also important to experience the language use situations to students.

My action is aim to develop students' communication abilities through focus on form instruction and performance test, and the research is to know how students develop their communication competency through my class.

2. Theoretical background

1. Communicative competence

The word of communicative competence was introduced by Dell Hymes in 1968. Based on his theory, Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (1980) extended this competence into four dimensions as follows; 1) Grammatical competence, 2) Socio cultural competence, 3) Discourse competence, 4) Strategic competence. Savignon (1997) claimed that "Communication is the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning; and communicative competence is always context specific, requiring the simultaneous, integrated use of grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence" (p. 225).

2. Communicative language teaching.

It is a goal for language teachers to make communication happen in the classroom settings in communication targeted language class. However, the issue is not simple and easy. There is no best method (Prabhu, 1990). CLT is not a method but an approach (Brown, 1994, 2001; Omaggio, 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Savignon, 2002). Savignon (2002) also claimed "CLT is properly seen as an approach, grounded in a theory of intercultural communicative competence, that can be used to develop materials and methods appropriate to a given context of learning" (p. 22-23).

Brown (2007) suggested the following seven characteristics of a CLT approach. (pp46-47)

1. Overall goals. CLT suggests a focus on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence. Goals therefore must intertwine the organizational (grammatical discourse) aspects of language with the pragmatic (functional, sociolinguistic, strategic) aspects.

2. Relationship of form and function. 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 remain as important components of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.

3. Fluency and accuracy. A focus on students' "flow" of comprehension and production and a focus on the formal accuracy of production are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use. At other times the students will be encouraged to attend to correctness. Part of the teacher's responsibility is to offer appropriate corrective feedback on learner's errors.

4. Focus on real-world contexts. Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.

5. Autonomy and strategic involvement. Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through raising their awareness of their own styles of learning (Strengths, weakness, preferences) and through the development of appropriate strategies for production and comprehension. Such awareness and action will help to develop autonomous learners capable of continuing to learn the language beyond the classroom and the course.

6. teacher roles. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing font of knowledge. The teacher is an empathetic "coach" who values the students' linguistic development. Students are encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with other students and with the teacher.

7. Student role. Students in a CLT class are active participants in their own learning process. Learner-centered, cooperative, collaborative learning is emphasized, but not at the expense of appropriate teacher-centered activity.

Savignon suggested a very important aspects of language acquisition from her research in 1972. She states, "Those students who had been given the opportunity to use their linguistic knowledge for real communication were able to speak French. The others were not" (1983, pp.78-79) (cited in Lee and VanPatten 2003). Her research indicates that given opportunities to use the language is necessary to promote language acquisition. It is one of the essential aspects of teaching to improve students' communicative competences.

All those claims indicate that CLT should be employed to meet learner's communicative context. Teachers should be flexible and adaptable to modify the topics and activities.

3. Grammar teaching

Grammatical knowledge is fundamental to the development of any language skills. The communicative methods reflecting Krashen's model of L2 acquisition in 1970s and 1980s showed that natural language learning does not lead to high levels of grammatical and socio linguistic competence (e.g., Swain, 1985). A new approach to grammar instruction combines formal instruction and communicative language use. Long (1988) distinguished this communicative grammar teaching concept as focus on form from traditional grammar teaching concept, focus on forms. Current views of L2 language classroom methodology are in agreement on the importance of form-focused instruction within the communicative framework, ranging from explicit treatment of rules to noticing and conscious raising (Ellis, 2001, 2006; Williams, 2005) techniques for structuring input to learners.

Patsy M. Lightbown & Nina Spada (2013) also supported this concept as stated "Approaches that provide attention to form within communicative and content-based interaction receive the most support from classroom research." (p.195) They also argue that second language teachers can (and should) provide guided, form-focused instruction and corrective feedback in certain circumstances. (p.197)

4. Approach for grammar teaching.

VanPatten and Cadiro (1993) conducted research on processing instruction and drew the following conclusions.

First, altering the way learners process input could alter their developing systems. Second, the effects of processing instruction are not limited to processing but also show up on production measures. Finally, the effects of processing instruction are different from those of traditional instruction.

Lee and VanPatten (2003) has also claimed that input processing is linked to acquiring form and structure, access is linked to accuracy and fluency in output. And they implicate that learners need not only input to build a developing system but also opportunities to create output in order to work on fluency and accuracy. They claim "A focus on output in language instruction should make every attempt to have learners produce language that communicates something – has meaning –to someone else." (P169-170)

Ellis (2001) distinguished between planned and incidental focus on form. He argued that in both types attention to form occurs while learner's primary focus is on meaning. Planned focus on form involves targeting preselected linguistic items during a meaning-focused activity, either through input, corrective feedback on errors in the use of pre-targeted forms, and on incidental focus on form, attention occurs either in response to errors during communicative activities to address language forms anticipated to be problematic. Fotos and Nassaji, (2007) claimed that following R. Ellis (2001b) and Williams (2005), they also insisted that focus on form must be a

component of a broader L2 instructed learning that provides ample opportunities for meaningful and form-focused instruction and practice.

Following Ellis (2006) stresses the need for "longitudinal studies that investigate the effects of instruction over time" (P.103), Sato, et al (2011) implemented yearlong action research projects of focus on form instruction on Japanese junior high school English classes. Those are designed to implement planned focus on form (Fukumoto and Ishitobi), as well as both planned and incidental focus on form (Morioka). The study corroborates the findings of Sato, et al (2009), and those studies clearly indicates that students learned grammar better through Focus on form than traditional grammar teaching.

5. Communicating in classroom

The act of communication in most settings involves the expression, interpretation, and most important is negotiation of meaning. (Savignon,1998, cited by Lee and VanPatten 2003). The research conducted by Leeman Guthrie and Brooks reveals that teacher fronted activities provide few opportunities for the expression and negotiation of the meaning for learners. McCreary (1980) reported that small group work produced more negotiation of the meaning. Porter (1986) found that learner-to learner interactions in the classroom resulted increased opportunities for self-expression for the learner. According to Wolven and Coakely (1996), much formal learning takes place through the spoken language. And increasingly, through the medium of English, being able to speak in the language of instruction will greatly facilitate students' participation in class. To speak in English, they have to develop various pragmatic competences. Learners need to learn how to initiate and maintain conversations, to sustain group discussions, describe feelings and give reasons in an acceptable manner, and ask for more information or assistance. (Brice 1992) In many second language classroom context, communication break downs between student-student interaction because of the insufficient amount of second language knowledge and ability. In that case, CSs are strategies that learners use when they want to overcome the inadequacies of their interlanguage resources.

Lee and VanPatten (2003) suggest teachers to use information-exchange task because we communicate in various purposes in our real-life setting since underlying concept in the communication is some exchange of meaning or information. They claimed, in the classroom, information exchange tasks work best at giving learners a purpose for using their developing language abilities as well as further developing three abilities. (P72)

6. Communicative competence and speaking.

Second language speaking is 'a combinational skill ' because it ' involves a high element of doing various things at the same time'.(Johnson 1996:155) Goh and Burns (2012) proposed a model of second language speaking competence that comprises knowledge of language and discourse, core speaking skills and communication and discourse strategies. And they also suggested to reinforce those competencies in order to produce utterances and discourses that are fluent, accurate, and socially appropriate within the constraints of cognitive processing.

7. Communication strategies.

Broadly speaking, 2 types of communication strategies are used by second language learners. One is reduction strategies and the other is achievement strategies. The former ones are used to avoid speaking too much and the latter ones are used to maximize opportunities and to achieve their communication goals. Through the use of various achievement strategies, learners engage in the process of meaning negotiation and receives feedback to help modify what is said. And as known, this will help learners to participate more effectively during oral communication, but will develop their language further.

Interaction strategies are referred to as 'oral communication strategies' and they are 'strategic behaviors that learners use when facing communication problems during interaction tasks' (Nakatani 2006).

Tarone (1980) argues that all strategies may be beneficial in that they help learners negotiate their way to the correct target language forms. Kasper and Kellerman (1980) suggest that communication strategies are also an important vehicle for producing pushed output, (Cited by R. Ellis 1997).

Interaction hypothesis of second language acquisition is described by Long (1985 and 1996, cited by H.D. Brown 2007). Long and others pointed out that as learners interact with each other through oral and written discourse, their communicative abilities are enhanced. To make negotiation of meaning happen in communication of second language learners, they need to know how to negotiate the meaning.

8. Assessment.

Krashen and Terrell made the following statement the relevance of the testing, to match between the goals and testing.

Using an approach in the classroom which emphasizes the ability to exchange messages, and at the same time testing only the ability to apply grammar rules correctly, is an invitation to disaster. (Krashen and Terrell, 1983, p.165, as cited in James F. Lee and Bill VanPatten 2003)

There are implications for testing and curriculum by J.D. Brown & Hudson (1998) as follows;

1) Washback effects:

Positive washback occurs when the tests measure the same types of materials and skills that are described in the objects and taught in the courses.

2) Significance of feedback:

Feedback can become an integral part of the learning process. In particular, personal-response assessment provides rich forms of feedback to the students that can be integrated into the learning.

3) Importance of multiple sources: Assessment based on multiple observations are more reliable than assessments based on a few observations.

H.D. Brown (2007) claimed assessment and teaching as partners in the learning process. (P.482)

1. Periodic assessments, both formal and informal, can increase motivation as they serve as milestones of students' progress.
2. Assessment can spur learners to set goals for themselves.
3. Assessment encourage retention of information through the feedback they give on learner's competence.
4. Assessment can provide a sense of periodic closure to various units and modules of a curriculum.
5. Assessments can encourage students' self-evaluation of their progress.
6. Assessments can promote student autonomy as they confirm areas of strength and areas needing further work.
7. Assessment can aid in evaluating teaching effectiveness.

As to match the goal and evaluation, teachers need to employ performance test under the communicative language teaching.

Bachman, L.F and Palmer, A.S (1996) claimed that the most important quality of a test is its usefulness. And they propose a model of test usefulness with six test qualities.

1. Reliability.

It is often defined as a consistency of measurement.

2. Construct validity.

It pertains to the meaningfulness and appropriateness of the interpretations that we make on the basis of test scores.

3. Authenticity.

It is the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language task.

4. Interactiveness.

It is the extent and type of involvement of the test taker's individual characteristics in accomplishing a test task.

5. Impact.

It is an impact on society and educational systems and upon the individuals within those systems.

6. Practicality.

It pertains primarily to the ways in which the test will be implemented, and, to a large degree, whether it will be developed and used at all.

Davidson and Leung (2009) define two types of assessment. One is formative and the other is summative. According to them, "formative assessment is seen informal and fairly frequent, involving the gathering of information about students and their language needs while they are still learning. "and summative assessment is "generally defined as those more formal planned assessments at the end of a unit, term, or year which are used to evaluate student progress and / or grade students. Tests have become a way of life in the educational life.

The score is used to differentiate people such as in the case of entrance exams or getting jobs. However, as Earl, L.M (2007) pointed out, schools have responsibility for preparing all students for tomorrow's world; teachers have the where withal to guide all students to high levels of learning. (P86) And our responsibility will be increased.

3. Research issues and research questions

My focus on teaching English is speaking act this year since JHS classes are asked to teach communication and teaching speaking can cover various skills and competencies of communication. Focus on form instructions and performance tests were employed to my classes to achieve the goal and assessment in performance was also introduced to facilitate the effect of instructions and tasks.

Overall class goals.

1. To foster a positive attitude toward communication.
2. To develop students' overall basic communication abilities through teaching speaking.

Research questions

1. How do students perceived focus on form instructions and performance tests?
2. How do students perceived their communicative competence of four skills?
3. How do students developed their speaking competency in speaking act?

4. Results

Regarding class goals 1: Did they foster a positive attitude toward communication?

Research Issue 1

Do students promote motivation in overall focus on form instruction and performance test?

Question1-1 How do students perceive the English class?

Table1. I like English

	May	July	March
Agree	-	27	32
Somewhat agree	-	38	35
Somewhat disagree	-	23	25
Disagree	-	12	7
I have no idea	-	0	0

Table2. English class is fun.

	May	July	March
Agree	-	23	14
Somewhat agree	-	54	71
Somewhat disagree	-	15	4
Disagree	-	8	11
I have no idea	-	0	0

Question1-2. How do they participate in English class?

Table3. I participated in English class in a positive manner,

	May	July	March
Agree	12	15	11
Somewhat agree	62	73	68
Somewhat disagree	12	7	18
Disagree	0	4	4
I have no idea	15	0	0

Table4. I used as much English as possible.

	May	July	March
Agree	8	23	14
Somewhat agree	65	65	57
Somewhat disagree	19	8	25
Disagree	4	4	4
I have no idea	0	0	0

Question1-3 How do they perceive performance test?

Table5 : I was more motivated by the performance test.

	July	March
Agree	44	39
Somewhat agree	48	53
Somewhat disagree	4	4
Disagree	4	4

Q1-4 How do students perceive English class?

Students comments regarding motivation.

I always enjoyed the English class. Talking to my classmates was fun.
 My proficiency got a lot better than before. I found I understand English more and it became much more fun!
 I didn't like English at first, but I enjoy it very much now because I find myself can do more now.
 I didn't enjoy my English class a little but talking to my classmates was fun.
 I had too many things to remember.

2. Regarding class goal 2: How do students perceive their four skills?

Research issue 2: Do students perceive the development of their communication skills?

Question2-1. How do they perceive the understanding of English used in class?

Table6. (Reading) I understand English textbook.

	May	July	March
Agree	15	35	24
Somewhat agree	42	58	43
Somewhat disagree	38	7	29
Disagree	4	0	4

Table7. (Listening) I understand English used in class.

	May	July	March
Agree	4	23	18
Somewhat agree	38	65	57
Somewhat disagree	54	12	21
Disagree	4	0	4

Question 2-2. How they perceive their speaking skill?

Table.8 (Speaking) I use communication strategies.

	May	July	March
Agree	19	31	18
Somewhat agree	46	50	64
Somewhat disagree	31	12	14
Disagree	12	4	4

Table.9 (Speaking) How long can you keep talking?

	May	July	March
Over 2 min.	0	46	46
1 min. and 30 sec.	8	27	18
1min.	31	19	25
30 sec.	34	4	25
Impossible	0	4	7
No idea.	27	0	4

Table10: I find my speaking competency get better through the performance test.

	July	March
Agree	29	35
Somewhat agree	54	61
Somewhat disagree	13	4

Table11. Rubric is effective to develop my speaking skill.

Disagree	4	0
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	July	March
Agree	46	35
Somewhat agree	42	61
Somewhat disagree	8	0
Disagree	4	4

Question2-3 How do students perceive their competency?

Table.11 Students comments regarding speaking competency,

I understand what my teacher is talking about in English. I could develop my competency of speaking.
 I can now talk in a good manner. I can read more words now. I can talk longer and fun now!
 My speaking competency gets better. Even I cannot write the word, I can use them in my speaking act.
 I can write and speak more. I didn't like to write English sentences at first, but I can write more now.
 I couldn't write or read English at all at first. But my reading and speaking competency gets better.
 I understand a lot of grammar now. My grammar mistakes are reduced. I can use more English now.

3.Regarding class goal 3: How do students developed their speaking competency in speaking act?

Research question3: Do students developed their grammar competency for their speaking?

3-1 How do students develop their grammar competency?

Table12. Students outcome after the planned focus on form.

Grammar features (past tense)	Correct answers (%)	Error examples
Watch TV	100	
Play sports	96	I did play sports yesterday.
Play games	100	
Clean my room	93	I did clean my room. I didn't my clean room.
Use computer	96	I uses computer yesterday.
Study English	88	I didn't studied I didn't studied I studied

Table 13 I learned how to use the grammar In the conversation.

	%
Yes	32
Somewhat yes.	59
Somewhat no.	9
No.	0

3-2 How do students perceive their learning of grammar?

Table 14 Students comments.

• I remembered words gradually while I was talking to my classmates.

- I could use the form in my conversation.
- I remembered words and phrases and I could say what I wanted to talk about.
- I gradually got used to use the grammar but I often missed singulars a or prepositions.
- I could ask what I wanted to ask in English.
- There are still things that I don't understand. There are things that I cannot say.
- I remember the grammar well because I repeated what I need to remember.
- I needed to rephrase the words many times at first but I could say them fluently at last.

3-3 How do they developed their speaking competency in English?

Table.15 Grammatical features, interactional features and topic and interaction management in performance test of targeted students in July and March are analyzed.

Table15-1 Student G

a) Grammatical features.

Grammatical features	July 2016		March 2017	
	N	Examples	N	Examples
Formulaic expression	3	Hello. How are you? Thank you.	4	Hello. I'm sleepy Can I ask you a question? See you.
Non-clausal units	13	Me, too. Oh! 6 Uh-huh. Yes. 2 Oh, Karate. Okay.	16	How about you? Ok. 2 What club in? In? 2 Oh, volleyball club. Ok. Oh. Yes. Japanese food. And you? Pineapple? Sushi! Me, too. 2
Clausal units	7	I'm very sleepy. My name is **. I'm 12 years old. I live in Japan. I'm from Yaizu. I like cats. I like curry. What is your name?	9	I like summer. I like curry. I like Japanese food. I like cat. I in the table tennis club. What sports do you like? What sports do you play? I play table tennis and soccer. Oh, you like Japanese food.
Coordinating Clause.	2	I watch news. I watch zip. I play table tennis but I no regular player.	1	I don't like volleyball but I like table tennis and soccer and basketball.

b) Interactional features.

Intercational features	July 2016		March 2017	
	N	Examples	N	Examples
Back channels	14	Aha. Oh! 6 Ah-huh. Me, too. Okay. 2 Yes. 3	9	Ok. 4 Oh, 2 Me, too. Oh, really? Yes.
Repetition	1	Oh karate!	3	Oh, volleyball club. Sushi!
Repetition requests	0		0	
Clarification request	0		0	
Hesitation phenomena	1	Eeee..	7	Ummm.. 7
Confirmation checks	0		1	Pineapple?
Comprehension checks	0		1	You like Japanese food.

c) Topic and interaction management

Topic and interaction management	July 2016		March 2017	
	N	Examples	N	Examples
Starting new topic	1	What is your name?	1	What sports do you like?
Developing the topic	0		2	I don't like volleyball but I like table tennis and soccer and volleyball. I in the table tennis club. What club in? What sports do you play? I play table tennis and soccer. I like curry and Japanese food. Oh, you like Japanese food.
Change topic	0		0	

Features

a) Grammatical features.

He is good user of grammatical features. He used a lot of words and phrases in the conversation.

He uses more clausal units in March. The kinds of clausal units that he used was increased. He could use more function of the words in March.

b) Interactional features.

He uses a lot of interactional features. Compare to July, he uses more hesitation phenomena in March. This makes the conversation very natural and hesitation time allowed him more time to select better words and phrases.

c) Topic and interaction management

The utterance in April was very simple but in March, he developed the topic very well. As we can see, he developed the topic of sports deeper. There more information about the topic and it made the conversation more interesting.

Table.15-2 More examples of grammatical features, interactional features and topic and interaction management in performance test of targeted students in July and March.

Student A

a) Grammatical features

Both in July and March, he used good grammar features. The feature in March got more complex and better.

b) Interactional features

He used almost all interactional features listed there in his conversation. He used repetition request in the trigger of the communication breakdown and succeeded the negotiation of the meaning in July. In March, he pointed out the error of his pair and clarified the meaning in the conversation.

c) Topic and interaction management.

His topic and interaction management is very well both in July and March. In March, he developed all the topics and that made the conversation more interesting and fun.

Student B

a) Grammatical features

In July, he used 14 non clausal units to talk with his pair. Even though he didn't use any clausal units, their conversation was meaningful enough. In March, his pair kept silent and it allowed him speak less. Even in that situation, he talked a lot. He used 6 clausal units and he also used coordinating clause.

b) Interactional features

In July, he used repetitions as to show his understanding of his partner's information. This usage of repetition promoted more interaction. In March, because of his pair's silence, there are less interactional features are seen and most of them are backchannels.

c) Topic and interaction management.

In July, there were no topic management seen. He and his pair took turns very quickly. In March, because of the silence of his pair, he pushed to speak more. He developed all the topic they had and he also had to offer new topics many times.

Student D

a) Grammatical features

Her grammatical features radically changed better in March. There are more words used and affirmative, interrogative and negative forms are used in her utterance. She also coordinated clause twice.

b) Interactional features

Both in July and March, there are less interactional features seen.

c) Topic and interaction management.

She was rather passive in July. She developed the topic longer and more interesting in March. She also offered new topic in better timing in March.

Student E

a) Grammatical features

Her grammatical features got better in March. She used more wh-interrogative forms in March. However, her utterance is very simple.

b) Interactional features

She didn't use enough interactional features both in July and March.

c) Topic and interaction management.

She didn't develop the topics at all both in July and March. Rather she changes the topic 3 times in a

conversation which is too frequent.

5. Discussion

Regarding class goal 1 : Do students foster a positive attitude toward communication through focus on form instruction and performance test?

From the results of Research Issue 1, about 70 to 90 % students showed the positive attitude toward English class. As we can see that some students think English class is fun but they don't like English so much. Some participate in English class in a positive manner but some did not use as much English as possible. The reason was indicated in the students' comments. They told that comprehensible English class motivated them. And they also told that talking to classmates is fun. The key to success to foster positive manner is how the instruction is understandable and how they can participate in the activities.

As the data shown in table 5, appropriate performance test was a good chance to motivate students, Another key to success to promote their motivation is they are offered 'stages' to show their achievement from their everyday practice.

Regarding class goal 2: Do students perceive the development of their communication skills?

The result of research issue 2 indicated that how students perceive their development of four skills competency. Over 70 % of students told that they developed skills of reading and listening. The students' comments showed that they perceived their development of skills. It indicates that treatment of speaking skills can treat other skills.

As for about comments many students showed that they developed how to write means that they learned the word order from speaking act and now they can write a sentence correctly. Writing also is not a simple act as same as speaking act, but teaching writing by teaching speaking is a possible teaching method in the future.

Regarding class goal 3: Do students developed their grammatical competency for their speaking?

The research Issue3 hows how students developed their grammatical competencies, 3. the table 12 showed that how students understand grammar in planned focus on form and how they could describe themselves correctly. The treatment of the function in the task was also meaningful. The students' comments showed that they realized that they can use the grammar better because they repeated the grammar many times. That means they can learn the form in the combinational skills without problems.

The research Issue 3.3 showed that how students used the competencies of communication in the speaking act. Since the speaking act needs the combinational skills, each student developed their competency in various ways.

Student A showed high competency of grammatical, interactional, topic and interaction management both in July and March. Student G showed remarkable changes in grammatical, interactional, topic and interaction management in March. Student E showed a little development only in grammatical competency. Student B overcame the partner's inefficiency in March. Some students developed more and some students developed less. How they developed or what they developed was different.

6. Conclusion (or Implication)

Thus my study shows that both focus on form instruction and performance test enables students to give both linguistic knowledge and strategies of communication in English and also gives chances to develop their communication skills. These instructions and tasks can be a booster for motivation and proficiency. I believe my instruction somewhat reached into development of students' combinational skills.

Language act is an action of combinational skills more than I expected. This study suggested me how to assess

the performance and how the teacher need to teach students as communication strategies in language learning.

7. References

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