

Action Research Final Report

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Improving Senior High School Students' Communicative Competence Through Skills Integration

Introduction

(Goal and Objectives)

The overall teaching goal of this action research is to become better at supporting learners to be confident in communicating with their L2 and create an engaging learning atmosphere in the class. This study also aims to encourage students to actively participate in script-free speaking activities using communication strategies. And using Skills Integration as an approach in providing useful teaching materials and lesson plans that will help improve students' communicative competence.

(Challenges I Faced)

Second language learning plays an important role in a learner's language experience. Gardner (1985) regarded second language learning as a reflection of one's self-identity projected through the L2. "The L2 may also be used to construct a personality which is significantly different to that of the L1, using the L2 to create a unique identity that can be used as a type of defensive system". As this is my first year of teaching as a senior high school teacher, I have encountered challenges in navigating how I could effectively create a positive L2 learning experience for my students. The students I taught were first grade senior high school students. And teaching in a CLT approach is somewhat far different from what learners were used to in junior high. Mitchell (2017) researched on the change of how Japanese high schools conduct language learning. A shift from a passive exam-based grammar focused L2 learning environment to a more communicative language teaching was being realized. In the previous years, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Japan (MEXT) has a goal to be completed in 2020 as a part of the nationwide globalization reform.

The EFL education can be a difficult process to both learners and educators as immense amount of preparation and support for the students are needed in order for this goal to happen. Indeed, problems arose at the beginning of the first semester (April 2022) as the units were not designed to be topic-based and in effect did not end up to be communicative for the students. Once these problems were realized and students' comments were collected and analyzed there was a significant change with the units done from the second semester to the third semester. In this action research report, I will discuss the practical ways on how these issues were addressed.

Teaching Context

- (1) Level: Senior High School (1st grade Music Course)
- (2) Class size: 1 class with 24 students (21 females and 3 males)
- (3) Subject: Logic and Expressions I
- (4) Time: 50 minutes, 2x/week
- (5) Textbook: None
- (6) How I addressed these challenges:

After realizing that improving students' speaking ability alone is not just the main issue to be addressed, I changed my second and third objectives as the lessons progressed. Apprehending that the improvement of their speaking and writing ability are connected, I looked into more practical ways that helped students to be successful in acquiring their L2 (written and orally). When the students were able to curate their thoughts well in their compositions, students were also closely prepared to do their speaking activities.

Clear & Measurable Objectives

1. 90% of the students will be able to write more than 90 words by the end of the third semester (*Students' Writing*)
2. 90% of the students will be able to do script-free small talk for two minutes or more (*Speaking Tests*)
3. Students will be able to use the appropriate conversation strategies effectively in their communication activities and speaking tests by the end of the third semester (*Students' Survey and Speaking Tests*)

Objectives were designed to meet the school's grade requirement and increase students' communicative competence Skills Integration. The objectives were also changed midyear based on the issues arose from students' performance and comments.

Literature Review

(a) Meeting Language Learners' Needs

Language learning is a process. Learners may learn a second language by simply learning to compare the nature of their L1 with their L2. Keeping in mind that languages can have similarities and differences at the same time. However, without a linguistic background of their L1, learners may end up universally accepting errors and make assumptions that can lead to the disregard of proper language patterns and the nature use of their L2. In order for a learner to make sense of their second language acquisition, one must development a strong sense of association with their L1. Because learning their second language is as equally important as learning their first language. According to Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, an individual must be satisfied with lower-level deficit needs before progressing on to meeting higher level growth of needs. The hierarchy of needs from the bottom upwards are: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self- actualization. The five-stage model can be divided to deficiency and growth needs. The first four levels are often referred to as deficiency needs (*D-needs*), and the top level is known as growth or being needs (*B-needs*). Deficiency needs occur due to deprivation and said to be motivating people if unmet. And the longer the duration is being denied, the stronger to fulfill the motivation can become. For example, the longer a person goes without food, the hungrier they will become. He clarified later on that satisfaction of needs is not an "all-or-none" phenomenon. Eliminating the false impression that "a need must be 100 percent satisfied before the next need emerges" (Maslow, 1987) Growth needs come from the desire to grow as a person and not because of a lack of something. Once these growth needs are reasonably satisfied, an individual may able to reach the highest level which is called "self-actualization". Every person can be capable and have the desire toward a level of self-actualization. However, failure to meet lower-level needs can be a disruption to the progress being made. And that can be a reason why everyone will not be able to move through the same phase at once but can rather have a uni-directional manner that moves back and forth between the different types of needs.

Learners' Motivational Needs

Motivation as defined by Dornyei & Otto (1998), "...as a dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and...acted out." It is a drive that keeps us going and grounding us if unexpected shift might happen in our daily routine. This means that we have full control of making our own agendas in keeping ourselves motivated. A lot of factors may occur and it may vary selectively on an individual's response when they're sensing a lack of self-worth in their situation. Elliot, Dweck and Yeager (2017) argues that, there are strong arguments for replacing the term "achievement motivation" with "competence motivation." A cognitive theory of motivation that connects with this is the self-worth theory. "Self-worth theory is said to be as the people who are highly motivated to maintain a fundamental sense of personal value and worth, especially in the face of competition, failure and negative feedback." (Covington, 1992) This basic need of self-worth roots out from different social and cognitive patterns that strengthens learners' own beliefs and behaviors. Predominantly, when a learner's poor performance becomes a threat to the learner's self-esteem. As the learner may end up withholding effort and end up not trying, it may cause the learner to be defensive with their response to their incompetent performance.

(b) Communicative Language Teaching: CLT

Ellis (1997) mentioned that one of the goals of SLA is to improve language teaching. Some researchers have studied what impact teaching has on L2 learning to this end. There's a significant relevance between teacher's beliefs, knowledges and practices. For decades, the Grammar Translation Method and the Audiolingual Method was used to for language teaching. Both of these methods involve attempts to teach learners grammar, contradictory only in how this is to be accomplished. However, language pedagogy highlighted the need for more real communicative experiences for learners. Communicative Language Teaching was introduced with the assumption that grammar need not to be taught before learners can communicate but will acquire their L2 naturally as part of the means of learning to communicate. Richards and Rogers (1986) concluded that Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. They later explained that a reasonable degree of theoretical consistency can be determined at the stages of language and learning theory. At the levels of design and procedure there is much greater room for individual interpretation and variation than most methods permit. (p. 83) As pointed out by Richardson (1994), "...in order to

understand how teachers make sense of teaching and learning, one should focus on teachers' beliefs and practices." In early CLT, many educators have associated communication with conversation—but conversation of a particular type: the expert figure asked questions, the students answered them. "In CLT, the instructor was no longer simply the drill leader but was also charged with providing students with opportunities for communication, that is, using the language to interpret and express real-life messages."

(c) Communicative Competence

Canal and Swain (1980) defined the four components of communicative competence; (1) grammatical competence, (2) sociolinguistic competence, (3) discourse competence, and (4) strategic competence. Beginning with the inverted tip of pyramid and moving upward, Savignon (1997) rationalized that grammatical, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence increase along with a consequent overall increase in communicative competence. Why is there a need to improve learners' communicative competence? According to Savignon (1997), "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). Savignon (2002) later explained that the essence of CLT is the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence.

(d) Role of Pair and Group Work in Students' Communicative Competence

Lev Vygotsky (1978), concluded that language develops primarily from social interaction. He argued that in a supportive interactive environment, "children are able to advance to higher levels of knowledge and performance." Vygotsky referred to a metaphorical place in which children could do more than they would be capable of doing independently as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky observed that the conversations of children with adults and other children is important. He saw these conversations as the origins of both language and thought. The conversations provide the child with scaffolding, that is, a kind of supportive structure that helps them make the most of the knowledge they have and also to acquire new knowledge. Raulon & McCreary (1986) research shows that small group work produced twice the number of content confirmation checks. The learners did much of the talking when they were given the opportunity to talk in groups. According to Porter (1986), "Learner to learner interactions in the classroom resulted increased opportunities for self-expression." While the advanced-intermediate pairings resulted in increased negotiation for

both learners compared to intermediate-intermediate and advanced pairings. Therefore, the rationale for this is to see the benefit of pair/group work in students' communicative competence. As for the process of acquisition, there are at least three distinct sets of processes involved with all of them going on at the same time. We can outline them in the following way:

(a) *Input processing*: This is how learners make sense out of the language they hear and how they get "linguistic data" from it

(b) *System change*. This process involves two subprocesses:

- *Accommodation*: How learners actually incorporate grammatical form or structure into the implicit system of the language they are creating
- *Restructuring*: How the incorporation of a form or structure can cause a ripple effect and make other things change without the learner ever knowing

(c) *Output Processing*: How learners acquire the ability to make use of the implicit knowledge they are acquiring to produce utterances in real time, for example, during conversational interactions or while making a presentation in class

As Lee & Van Patten pointed out, "...just because something appears in the input does not mean that learners get it right away. During input processing, for example, learners *selectively* attend to features in the input, a selectivity that is driven by internal processes and strategies."

The role of the learner is to attend to the meaning in order to perform a task. In this sense, it is the language that is *meaning bearing*. Krashen (1982) has put a strong claim in regard to *Comprehensible Input*. According to him, comprehensible input causes acquisition.

Because not all language learners are equally successful, there must be more at work than comprehensible input as other linguists consider language acquisition as a complex process involving social, cognitive, linguistic, and other factors.

Research Questions

1. How do students improve their speaking ability using communication strategies?
2. How do students improve their writing ability?
3. How does skills integration improve students' communicative competence?

Research questions were intended to address the issues raised at the beginning of the first semester. And carefully thought through based on students' positive and negative outlook towards second language learning. Lightbown & Spada (2013) say that, "If a learner responds

that he or she frequently interacts with speakers of the second language, it may not be because he or she is motivated to learn than one who reports less interaction. Rather, it might be that these individuals live where there are more opportunities or a greater necessity for language practice than those who report a low frequency of interaction.” In regard to this, I would like to know how the communicative opportunities I provided for learners will serve as a positive reinforcement in their L2 acquisition at the end of the year. And how at this extent can I improve in providing teaching materials and teaching approach that are communicative, meaningful and student-centered.

As mentioned in the introduction, the learners were incoming first grade students who are used to traditional grammar teaching. It was challenging to motivate them as their knowledge and background about English language learning is limited. At the beginning of the semester, they were given iPads. And they use these iPads when they need to use a dictionary. A dilemma of using their iPads was raised after I realized that they have written difficult vocabularies in their compositions which meaning they don't even know. Therefore, I would do random checks on how well they know what they've written by listening on how they use it in their small talk activities. Another ineffective usage of these new learned words and phrases is using them improperly in their speaking tests. Consequently, creating confusion to the other pair and thus getting lesser points for their grammar's accuracy points.

However, using *Communication Strategies* helped address this issue. As pointed out by Canale & Swain (1980) “Having a strong strategic competence can help students to avoid breakdowns in communication when they do not have the appropriate L2 skills concerning the target language.”

What I did

(Logic and Expression Class's Year Plan)

		Topic	Essay	SP test	配点
1 学期	中間	[Short paragraph] ①What do you often do in your free time? ②What did you do in Golden Week?	50-60words	2 mins 30 secs	素点 <input type="checkbox"/> テスト 50 点 <input type="checkbox"/> 課題点 50 点 SP test 20 点 Essay 20 点 平常点 10 点 観点別評価① テスト 50 点×2】 観点別評価② 課題点 50×2】 観点別評価③ 【原則 B (50 点)】
	期末	[Short paragraph] ①Where do you want to visit? ②Which do you like better, the countryside or big cities?"			
2 学期	中間	A Person I Admire	90words		
	期末	My Future Life			
	期末後	Winter Vacation			
3 学期		My first year			

		Target Grammar	Conversation strategy	プリント
1 学期	中間		opener/closer shadowing	Topic sentence の作り方 Big Idea の立て方
	期末		rejoinder what else (Tell me more)	Big Idea と Follow up sentence の関係 Format concluding sentence の作り方 composition evaluation
2 学期	中間	関係代名詞 Relative pronoun	Excuse me (Say that again Sorry)	Parts of the paragraph / Small talk Vocabulary / Mind Map / Common Mistake / speed writing
	期末	時制未来 Future tense		Vocabulary / Shota's future life (Listening ,Reading) Mind Map / Common Mistake / speed writing
	期末後			Vocabulary / Vocabulary Quiz / Speed writing
3 学期		時制過去 Past tense	What else Tell me more	Vocabulary / Structured Input /Shota's First Year (Listening, Reading) Mind Map / Common Mistake / speed writing

The goal of this course are as follows and decided upon the English course leader:

1. To write 100 words or more in English (logically).
2. To have a natural conversation for more than 2 minutes.
3. To be positive to express oneself.
4. To enjoy using English. Don't be afraid to make mistakes!
5. To understand English directions.

Since teaching materials have already been made by the leader of our course, I have made three questions as a basis of trying to create a different approach in teaching these materials to the students—is it communicative, collaborative or student-centered? The year plan will serve as a basis of any progress made at the course of the year.

(a) Teaching through Skills Integration (Input Output based activities)

The pattern on which the lesson plans were taught are as follows:

<i>Structured Input →</i>	<i>Conversation Mind Map →</i>	<i>Speed Writing →</i>	<i>First Draft →</i>	<i>Common Mistakes →</i>	<i>Peer Reading →</i>	<i>Final Draft</i>
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I have realized that missing on any of these stages will make it difficult for the learner to achieve the curriculum requirement of writing 90 words at the end of the year. The weakness of this plan is that students were given *structured input* activities which had minimal communicative information-exchange tasks. Otherwise, *Conversation Mind Map* was interchangeably useful to any input missed at the beginning. For the better understanding of the unit, I have found out that both input-based and output-based activities should be used in order to create a strong scaffolding for students’ lesson comprehension. After writing students’ mind maps and using it for small talk conversations they are given the task to do 10-minute *Speed Writing*. Whereas, students write what they can remember from the conversation mind map they made and previous small talk conversations they did. Without the intention of correcting their grammar but solely focusing on the content of their writing. After successfully finishing their *Speed Writing*, students will write their *First Draft* on the next lesson. I’ve seen the progression by comparing their writings from the previous semesters. They’ve achieved the goal of writing 90 words in the third semester and even went beyond it. Some students wrote with their personally acquired knowledge and some were able to curate ideas just by getting information from other students. And there are students who were able to do both and write more.

(b) Pair/group work in input/output-based activities

Continuing the progression through skills integration, students started to realize their mistakes through corrective feedback. I will put emphasis on this certain activity which is *peer reading* (peer check). As this is an activity, I was surprised that students found useful at the end of the third semester. Before the semester ends, I asked my students to rate the usefulness

of the activities done in the previous lessons. Students usually don't have strong opinions about activities or worksheets used in the class. But on how many students have rate Peer Reading, I have seen the significance it made to complete their Final Draft. They were not entirely keen on correcting their classmates' composition at first. But eventually, as I've instructed them to help other students with corrective feedback, they were able to grasp the importance of working with other pairs. Whether or not it is through speaking or writing. I have observed that students all worked and asked their pairs to check, analyze and self-correct as they were doing the peer reading. Stating the obvious fact in improving learners' oral communicative ability, Vygotsky (1978) have mentioned that conversation when done in group/pairs provide learners scaffolding that will serve as a supportive structure in making the most of the knowledge learners have and desire to acquire.

(c) Implemented communication tests

Aside from being a curriculum requirement, I tried my best to make my students feel comfortable during communication tests. I have experienced marking students who were really good during small talk activities at the class and then end up anxious during performance tests. I think it is a great way to assess through these tests if students were able to apply the communication strategies from our class based on their understanding. Other times, it also depended on how well prepared the learner or their pair were. Note that it is not only the oral communication strategies that was present, they've also managed to apply posture, eye contact, gestures and voice inflection over the semester.

(d) Used communication strategies in small talk & timed conversations

At the beginning of the semester, students were briefed on how the breakdown of their grades would be. It will be 50 points for the term test, 20 points for the speaking tests, 20 points for the essay writing and 10 points for participation. Speaking test was used as a way to assess the students' English oral ability improvement. Other classes had considerably low scores at the first two speaking tests. As they were only given a chance to practice the speaking dialog a day before the speaking test. We call this practice in our school as *timed conversations*—where students get to have a group, listen, observe and grade the group member's oral ability like the teacher does. Therefore, being given the opportunity for the learner to self-correct and realize their areas to improve. At first, it was a difficult task for the students to do timed conversations. Because not only they are listening in their L2, they are also processing the meaning at the

same time they were grading their groupmates. I personally think that it is not helpful as students can only get to practice speaking in a whole class dedicated for timed conversations. Therefore, I made it a point that they will be doing small talk activities every class starting from one minute with an increase of two minutes or more before the actual communication test. I raised this idea to other co-teachers as it will be helpful for students to remain calm on the actual test as they have been doing this on a regular basis. At the first semester, I taught my students opener/closer, shadowing, rejoinders and how to address a communication breakdown by using the phrase, “What does that mean in Japanese?” when referring to an unfamiliar word they’ve encountered. As mentioned by Nation (2001), “...a learner needs to have meaningful encounters with a new word before it becomes firmly established in memory. The estimates range as high as 16 times in some studies.” I have found out that repetition and regular small talk activities somehow built up the students’ capacity to talk longer in English. The target language and communication strategies taught made the conversations seem natural. Although, keeping in mind that there are students who also misuse communication strategies in a different context.

Based on my observation, *Communication Breakdown* is also one of the reasons conversations wouldn’t continue. The lack of vocabulary from their second language makes the conversation less accessible. Thus, making the students just switch back in Japanese. From the last two semesters, students were able to access and fill in the lack of vocabulary words with communication strategies. Giving them more time to comprehend the questions for the second time. Having the script-free activity applied, the students also talked more than just focusing on the script or worksheets they could look at. I didn’t give them a printed script and have only always written the script on the board so I could erase it later. The first two pairs are with a script and the last pair is to talk without a script. Eventually students were able to be confident talking without a script. And they also talked more and loudly without it.

(e) Conducted a survey three times (July 2022, December 2022 and March 2023)

Quantitative data was collected through survey in order to assess students’ communicative competence level and pay attention to issues raised at the beginning of the first semester. And students’ feedback and comments were also gathered for the improvement of the course. Golombek & Johnson (2002) emphasized that discovering students’ perspective through action logs and responding to learners’ needs help build a collaborative community

in which learners are free to express their opinions and experiences without being afraid of making mistakes in the language they're acquiring. However, as mentioned above, I have allowed my students the autonomy to give their comments in either Japanese or English—thinking that they will be able to express their true intentions in the language they are comfortable to use. I did the student surveys while students are waiting for their turn to do their speaking tests. I have found significant responses that I could use in helping to improve the next English course I will teach. The feedback sheet helped me to look into directions towards communicative language teaching.

Results

(Data from students' survey)

Surveys were done at the first, second and third semester. With a variation on the second semester on assessing the importance of grammar teaching and the significance of learners' communicative competence improvement to language acquisition. At the first semester, there were 18 participants out of 27 number of students who took the survey as the class had a lot of absences at that time. At the third semester, there were 24 participants as 3 students permanently moved to other schools. Therefore, the accuracy of these results can be disputed based on the number of participants who took the survey.

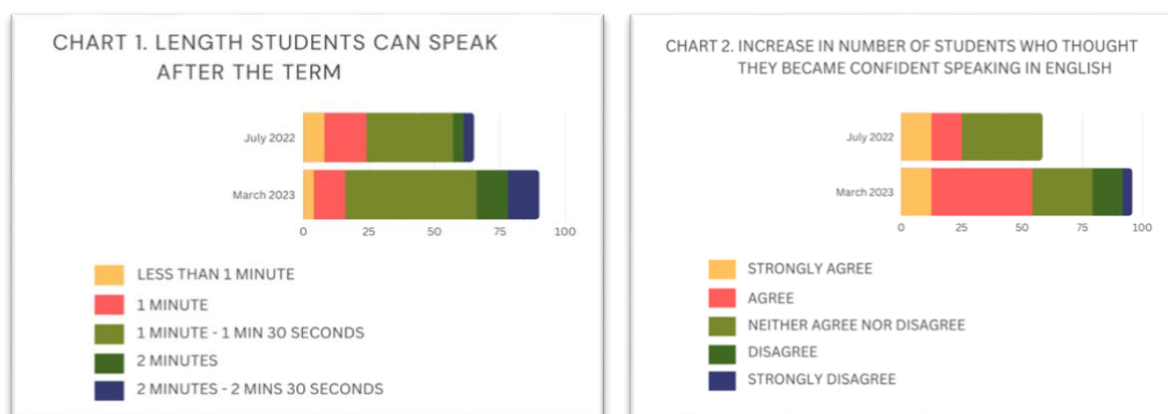


Table 1 & 2. Students' comments

I was able to keep the conversation going

The conversation continued without stopping

I was able to speak English little by little

Negative comment: I couldn't do it all

Chart 1 & 2 suggests that there was an increase in students' oral communicative competence after the 3rd semester. 54% of the students claimed that they are competent enough in speaking with their L2 compared to the 25% who thought so in April. However, there were only 8% increase in the number of students who thought they can talk within the target time which is 2 minutes and 30 seconds for their speaking tests. With this result, I have analyzed that students do not relate the increase of their oral communicative competence confidence closely with how long they could talk. But rather they were able to find significant meaning with how much they have understood in their conversations. Analyzing the students comments, I have underlined the phrase that majority of the students have written in the comments at the third semester. Most of them have mentioned about '*keeping the conversation going*' or '*continued without stopping*'. Making an assumption that learning communication strategies had an impact in helping improve students' oral communicative competence—by saying that students were able to respond to their pairs logically with focus on meaning and an intention of understanding and being understood.

As I noticed students' comments about continuing the conversation without stopping, I've realized that they were referring about addressing communication breakdowns little by little because of the increase in communication strategies learned throughout the course of the year.

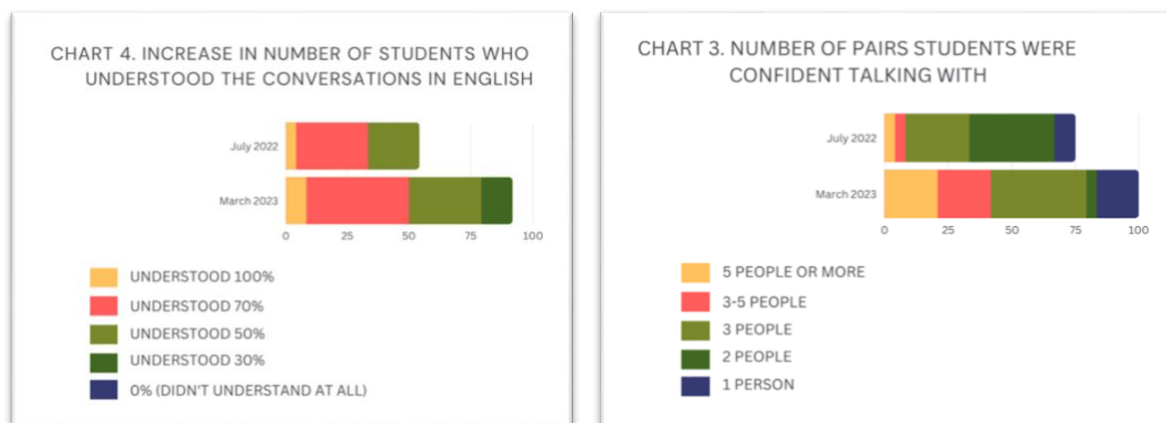


Table 3 & 4. Students' comments (Information-exchange tasks)

- *I tried to talk in English without using Japanese*
- *I was able to understand what my partner is saying*
- *I think that there are a lot of things you can learn just by talking to other people*
- *It is fun to know about other people's experiences*

Communication breakdown is inevitable in any language learning process. There is a possibility that communication breakdown can still occur in our first language. Let alone the challenge a learner could have when it occurs in their L2. In April, only 4% of the students claimed that they can talk with 5 students or more. At the 3rd semester, it increased by 16% similar to the number students who are confident to talk with 3-5 students. In March, 41% of the students claimed that they understood their conversations by 70% (mostly) compared to the 29% who thought so in April. Significantly, there was a decrease on students who thought they couldn't understand the conversations at all from 12% to 0%. It means that the more students learned from their conversations and communication strategies the more students were able to comprehend each other's conversation.

The theme I found in students' comments are summarized in one thought of *'being able to understand what my partner is saying without using Japanese.'* I think that learners in this case have a deep understanding of what communicative language learning is. As their strategic competence increases so as their communicative competence. The goal is to understand and to be understood. And not even become a native-like communicator on the first few years, but rather be better at communicating in a verbal and non-verbal way—including posture, eye contact, voice inflection and body language.

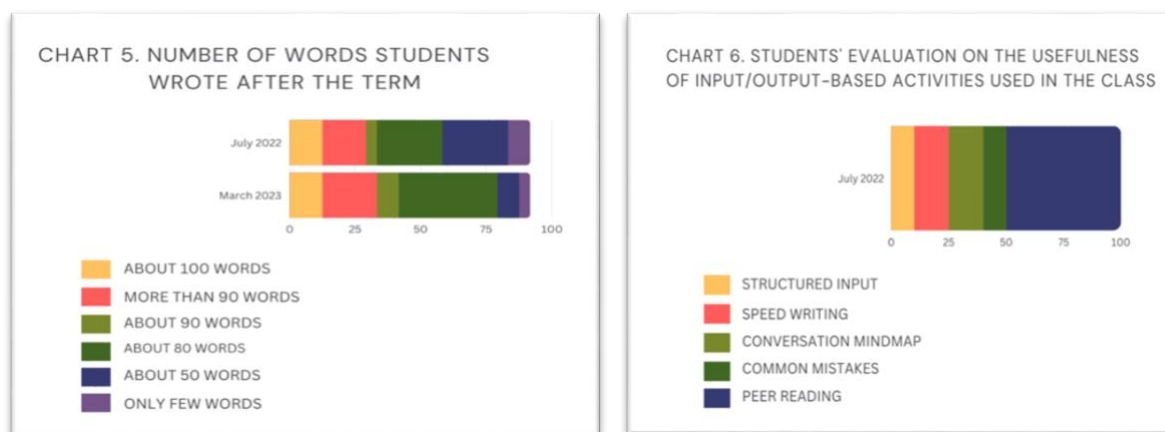


Table 5 & 6. Students' comments

- *I was able to express in English the words I only know in Japanese*
- *If I can write English for a little, it will be fun and refreshing*
- *I like writing better than reading*

At the 3rd Semester, I have asked the students to rate the usefulness of each of the writing activities used in our English class. The process that leads them to writing their Final Draft is quite long. But using the feedback sheet, I was able to know how my students felt about the importance of these activities as their scaffolding to be equally and communicatively competent in both of their English speaking and writing ability. I had the students rate the activities from ‘5’ if they found the activity useful and ‘1’ as the least useful. It appears that 54% of the students thought that *Peer Reading* was the most useful for them.

In this activity, I taught the students to read other students’ writing, analyze, check and self-correct their own writing. As this activity emphasized indirect corrective feedback towards students’ writing.

At the end of 3rd semester, 28% of the students said that they can write about 90 words compared to the 20% of students who thought so in April. There was a 12% increase with students who claimed that they can write about 80 words in March. Analyzing this data and how their speaking tests performance were, I have realized that skills integration through writing and speaking are closely related in increasing students’ communicative competence. The more students wrote, the more they were able to curate their ideas well and express themselves in their L2 orally.

In September, I gave a feedback sheet about students’ priorities in language learning. They were asked about which ability they want to improve in the future. Out of 24 students, 16 students responded that they want to improve their speaking ability more than their listening, reading and writing ability.

Table 7. Learners’ reasons are as follows:

If I can’t speak English, it will be inconvenient if I go abroad.
If a foreigner will be in trouble, it will be useful if I can speak English.
There are times that I will encounter foreigners because I want to be a professional musician.
I want to avoid language barrier if I go abroad.

Because I have to speak English in a foreign country.
Because I want to use English in my future career and travels.
If I will be able to be fluent in the English language, I would be able to broaden my opportunities.
Because people who can speak English are very cool.
I would like to experience talking with different people.
Because I want to be able to talk to different people when I travel.
I want to talk to a lot of people.
If I go to abroad again, I want to talk with my friend.
I will be able to express what I really want to say because I can speak the language.

I have analyzed students' comments into four themes. The comments highlighted in *yellow* are learners who want to use English as a *means of survival*. These comments might be coming from learners' social and cultural backgrounds and thus it may cause learners to see L2 learning as a revenue to counter their shared prejudice towards being in a new environment or around new people. Comments highlighted in *green* were analyzed as comments of learners who want to *benefit from their L2 learning*. These are learners who are trying to make sense of why they have to learn their L2 in the first place. The comments highlighted in *turquoise* are learners who have a *global sense of L2 learning*. They are motivated communicating in their L2 because of their own personal language learning backgrounds and experiences. And these experiences brought them a positive reinforcement towards language learning that allows them to cater challenges regardless if they have a vast knowledge of their L2's nature. The last comment which was highlighted in *purple* is a learner who pays attention to *communication with a focus on meaning*. This learner wants to understand and be understood. This learner might have encountered communication breakdown with their L1 so it is important for them to equally be competent in expressing themselves in their L2.

In reference to Maslow's (1943) *Hierarchy of Needs*, the needs to be met was designed from the bottom upwards which are: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. 25% of the students referred to their L2 learning as a means of survival. Thus, it relates more on the probability of being able to meet one of their deficiency needs (*D-needs*)

which is included in the first four level of the Hierarchy of Needs. Students' need for 'safety and security' and 'love and belonging' somehow gives them an idea that being able to connect with people who doesn't speak the same language as theirs would create lesser conflict on both sides. 8% of the students want to benefit from their L2 learning. And this also falls on the 'safe and security' needs as they refer to the L2 learning experience as something that can lead them to future career growth and travels. The percentage of the students who wants to benefit from their L2 learning is significantly low as they are still in first grade senior high school. The more opportunities for growth of their L2 learning the more this safety need will increase. And as they get older and need the a strong sense of safety in their employment, achievement and leisure, they can also feel a sense of increase in meeting their 'self-esteem needs' which are two level upwards from 'safe and security' needs.

20% of the students have a *global sense of their L2 learning*. In the first semester, I gave out a survey to know about my students' language learning backgrounds and histories. 40% of these students have been abroad and 45% of them have foreign friends they often talk with. 54% of them are also studying English in a cram school. Analyzing this data, I have found how these comments reflected on how much students already know through their language learning histories. These students were more receptive to feedback and committing mistakes than the ones who commented of not wanting to put themselves at stake if they couldn't speak in their L2 well. According to Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, every person can be capable and have the desire to meet the highest level of needs which is called "self-actualization." This includes meeting the need of an individual to have a sense of their morality, creativity, spontaneity, acceptance, experience purpose, meaning and inner potential. Their language learning backgrounds created significant effect on their 'experience purpose'. And thus, meeting this need also helped them to meet the other deficiency needs downwards which are the self-esteem, love and belonging and safe and security. The student who has the need to understand and be understood falls on the category of meeting 'love and belonging'. Connection with other people gives us a strong sense of self-respect as being able to communicate effectively. Not all individuals are good communicators. It is a skill we still have to improve. And even with our L1, we can still have misunderstandings too. Covington (1992) said that an individual's self-worth roots out from different cognitive and social patterns. It strengthens learners' own beliefs and behaviors. And predominantly, a learner's poor performance can also become a threat to a learner's self-esteem. Learners may become defensive about their response with their incompetent performance and might end up

withholding effort and give up on trying. He also said that the people who have a strong sense of self-worth are highly motivated to maintain a fundamental sense of personal value and worth, especially in the face of competition, failure and negative feedback.

One of the main goals of this research is to create a positive L2 learning experience in my students' first year in senior high school. For three years, they will encounter almost the same activities and lesson flow. But the difference will be the difference in each of the students' language learning goals. Their goals might create a clash as not all of them will be motivated by the same reason. Thus, being able to get to know my students through analyzing their comments led me to evaluate the teaching approach and materials I was using for the whole year. Knowing about their language learning needs taught me to curate lesson plans that will be communicative, useful and meaningful for students. In the future, my desire for my students is to be individuals who are communicatively competent and confident speaking with their L2 as much as their L1.

What I Learned

As a first time senior high school teacher working with a team, I have encountered various challenges that led me to be more resilient, accountable and forgiving in terms of addressing my own weaknesses towards communicative language teaching. As we were approaching towards the end of the third semester, I've written down a list of what I've learned in my first year teaching at senior high school.

1. Communicate well with other teachers in the team.
2. Don't be afraid to ask for help specially if it's about navigating things in the class.
3. Be humble enough to know that other people know better than you.
4. Be receptive with other teachers' feedback so that you can improve your teaching approach, not perfect but improve.
5. In teaching, we always start out copying someone's idea. And it's okay, as long as we give the people who created them the right credit and recreate those materials we've acquired as if they are our own ideas.
6. Teaching beliefs is difficult to convert but it is not impossible.
7. As a learner and a teacher, we have to know the proper way of using key themes in order to introduce it to our team.

8. Don't assume that everyone (even teachers) already knows these themes. Especially when introducing CLT.
9. Without proper training and support it is hard to influence a whole team towards Communicative Language Teaching. If not knowledgeable and trained properly, it can be frustrating to teachers who are used to traditional teaching.
10. I wouldn't say that traditional way of teaching English is bad because that's where probably most of us teachers learned, too. If any, study on how to encourage fellow educators towards CLT. We must understand that these concepts need to be broken down into concepts that are easy to comprehend. Introduce it to them intentionally and consistently. And keep training new educators who will adapt these concepts. Therefore, in the long run, this teaching approach will be widely spread.

As a first time senior high school teacher who remained challenged in completing this course in a year, I have also written down a list of what I learned in my approach towards my students.

1. Listen to students' comments. Aside from gathering the data, analyze carefully what key themes and issues can be raised just by reading students' comments
2. Carefully observe how students respond to certain activities. We, educators would sometimes label students as unmotivated or lazy because students were sleeping at the class. And in my years of teaching, it is difficult to navigate these things as it can be influenced by different factors.
3. Mix the level of students. There might be a possibility that students would copy each other's errors. But in information-exchange task it is useful that learners would be paired to various students.
4. Encourage more speaking opportunities.
5. Give immense and explicit input before introducing any activities.
6. Update students' improvements as a generally and individually (if possible) each term.
7. If we point out students' good performance, we can also approach them on areas they need to work on. As a learner myself, I would like that my teacher would point out areas to improve on so I can help myself to work them out.
8. Teach students intentionally. Give them reasons as to why learning a second language is important. (See students' comments in Table 7)

9. Creating rapport with students is important. Language teaching is important but creating a space where learners' feel safe to express themselves is much more engaging and lighter.
10. Technology is useful. If the learners' have it, let them use it. In this age, we have to be adaptable with the fast-paced way of learning. So that, we can cater our students' needs.
11. Lastly, teach the basics of about everything they need to learn in their first year.
Create a strong language learning background that students can go back to anytime they need it.

Future Issues

In conclusion, I think that breaking down the teaching approach into small achievable steps greatly help learners to achieve their goal. Teaching grammar and vocabulary is not enough. Learners' must have meaningful encounters to each target language being taught. Teaching communication strategies works only if learners have an understanding of the strategies being used. If not, it may cause confusion to the other end and lead to communication breakdown. It is important to keep in mind how instructors can help learners reinforce their thought process through reflection in either by means of speaking or writing. By integrating the four skills we will be able to create subgoals that lead to our main goal which is to improve learners' communicative competence. Often one skill will reinforce another. For example, by input and modelling we learn how to write or speak through examining what we hear. I think that creating small achievable tasks can greatly help in reinforcing big tasks. The frequency of peer/group task in the classroom greatly affects the effectiveness of input/output-based activities. The effectivity of the materials used should be challenged, analyzed and improved by the instructors and create a unified CLT approach for the learners to be successful with their L2 acquisition. Again, teaching belief is difficult to change but it is not impossible.

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Students' Communication Test Sample Dialog

**Students' names have been changed to Miyu and Aya to hide their real names*

Miyu: Hello.

Aya: Hello.

Miyu: How are you?

Aya: I'm sleepy. And you?

Miyu: I'm fine. Etto...by the way, how was your first year?

Aya: My first year was challenging.

Miyu: Oh. What did you enjoy?

Aya: I enjoyed...I enjoyed making friends.

Miyu: Ohh! Make friends...(shadowing) Who did you support...who supported you?

Aya: (showing confusion)

Miyu: (showed example) Uh...friends. Uh...teacher?

Aya: Friends.

Miyu: Ohh! (With the excitement of being understood) Nice! Nice! Ehh...ohh...what did you learn?

Aya: I learned..I learned (inaudible) practice (showing playing flute gesture)

Miyu: Practice? Ohh...yey...learned. Uhh.. my first year it is. It was very dramatic.

(Self-corrected)

Aya: Why?

Miyu: Uhm, because I enjoyed going to Nagashima Spaland. I rode (hakugen).

It's very scared but I, I, I like it. Ehh...(thinking) oh, oh...I visit. Oh, question please.

(After realizing the time)

Aya: Hmm...what, what do you enjoy?

Miyu: Oh, I enjoyed...school festival.

Aya: (Nodding in agreement)

Miyu: I made big costume and big item. It is very difficult but I enjoyed it.

Aya: (Looked at the time. Looked at her partner and laughed.)

Tell me more. (After realizing she ran out of questions to ask.)

Miyu: Ah! I learned...I learned study music is fun.

Aya: (Nodded)

Miyu: I like singing...and dancing.

Aya: (Nodded again and showed body language like in a panic situation)

Miyu: Oh, my favorite is song "Remember Me"

Aya: *Ohh...Nice talking with you.*

Miyu: *You, too.*

Lesson Plan and Materials Used

Recent Lesson Plan My First Year | Lesson 4 | Comic Writing and Presentation

02/1/2023 (Doho High School | Music Class | 24 Students)

Time	Interaction	Activity and Procedure
	T-Ss, S-S, S	
3 (3)	T-Ss (English)	Greeting
3 4 (7)	T-Ss	Warm-up (Small Talk Activity) Materials: Mind Map worksheet Goal: Use follow-up questions Questions from Idea Bank 1. Teacher writes an example dialogue 2. Demonstration with a student
7 3 (10)	Ss-Ss Ss-Ss	a. Task (output) 1. Students converse with three or more people leveling up the conversation goal (Use follow-up questions) 2. Doing it twice with different pairs using their <i>Mind Map</i> worksheet. They talk with the third pair without using the <i>Mind Map</i> and with the script erased on the board.
10 15 (25)	S Ss-Ss (English)	a. Task (output) 1. They write their own comic based on the three big ideas of their first year in high school. (Reference from the mind map) 13 minutes comic writing 2. Present it to their pairs. Their pair can also ask them questions. (2-3 different students) 3. After that, the pairs would assess the partners who presented.
		Conclusion

Total time: 45 minutes

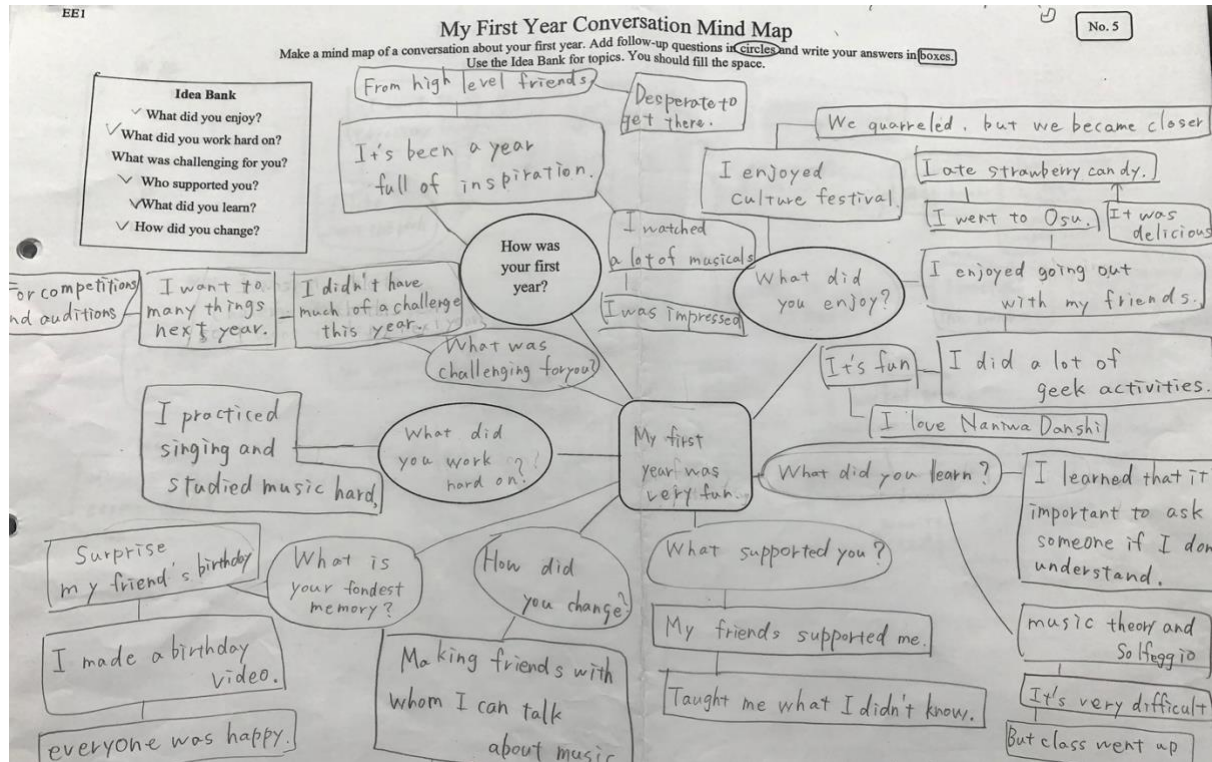
Ss-Ss: 25 minutes

S: 10 minutes

T-Ss: 10 minutes

Conversation Mind Map

(Example of student's worksheet)



Comic writing



Name	Easy to understand	Voice	Eye Contact	ALL ENGLISH
Aori	A B C D	A B C D	A B C D	100% 80% 50%

Speed Writing

EEI

Speed Writing 1

My First Year 07

In paragraph form, write as many words in complete sentences as you can in 10 minutes.

Class ____ No. ____ Name _____

Word Count () A B C D F

Common Mistakes

- For Example
 - × I worked hard in my classes. **For example**, math, English, and history.
 - I worked hard in my classes. **For example**, I worked hard in math English and history.
 - I worked hard in my classes, **such as** math English and history.
- Because
 - × My team won the cheerleading contest, **because** we cooperated well.
 - My team won the cheerleading contest **because** we cooperated well.
- Verb vs. Adjective
 - × My first year was **enjoyable**.
 - My first year was **enjoyable**.
 - × I **enjoyed** my first year.
 - I **enjoyed** my first year.
- Type of Adjective
 - × My first year was very **tired**.
 - My first year was very **tiring**.
 - × After the sports festival I was **being tired**.
 - After the sports festival I was **tired**.
- Misuse of "challenge." 「チャレンジする」 and "challenge" do not have the same meaning. "Challenge" has too meanings.
 - A. To strongly encourage (奨める) someone to do something difficult.
 - My friend **challenged me** to get a high score in math.
 - I **challenged myself** to get a high score in math.
 - B. To require someone to **exceed their best** to do something.
 - The math homework **challenged me**.
- Use of **to** to indicate an object of a sentence.
 - × My first year **to** really enjoyed **my first year**.
 - I really enjoyed **my first year**.
 - **My first year** **to** I learned a lot.
 - **In my first year**, I learned a lot.

Topic sentence

I worked hard in my

(worked) My Future Life 10
I practiced hard in
I challenged myself to participate in

Exercise 1: Correct the following sentences.

- I participated in many challenging things. For example club activities, and the sports festival.
- My favorite subject was science. Because, my science teacher was very kind.
- The sports festival was enjoy. I enjoyed math this year.
- I was exhausting after fall term final exams. The final exams were exhausted.
- I challenged English in my first year.
- My first year is I participated in many things.

3/8 Wed

Exercise 2: Find and correct 12 mistakes in the paragraph.

HOMEWORK

1 My first year is I was very happy. First, I enjoyed many fun things with new friends.
 2 For example, the sports festival. I participated in the cheerleading contest. We practiced very
 3 hard. It was very tired, and we did not win. However, we enjoyed cooperating and became
 4 good friends. Second, my first year is I had a feeling of accomplishment. Junior high school is
 5 I had low scores in math. But this year, I challenged math. I studied every day, and my
 6 friends and teacher helped me. I was exhausting but I got high scores on my math tests. I
 7 learned that working hard is fun. Finally, I became self-confident. Because I had these
 8 experiences. I learned that I am strong. I learned that if I try hard I can do difficult things. I
 9 am looking forward to challenging many things in my second year.

Class ____ No. ____ Name _____

Write one paragraph (90+words) about your first year in high school. Include a simple topic sentence, at three big ideas from the Idea Bank, at least 2 follow-up ideas for each big idea, and a concluding sentence.

My first year was very happy. I have three reasons. First, I learned way to make friend. I knew that it is impottant to dont be afraid and get the coutage when make friends. So I made many new friends. They always make me happy. Second, I challenged to go to school in Australia. I studied native English and I made a foteigh friend. When patting, I was very glad that people said to me "I love you". Thid, I enjoyed sports festival because my teammates wete cool when running. I also enjoyed to cheeted it. We won first prize in sport festival. So I was very glad that day. For these reasons, It was hapey.

(Students' Sample Worksheet)

EEl

First Draft

My First Year 08

Write one paragraph (90+ words) about your first year in high school. Include a simple topic sentence, at three big ideas from the Idea Bank, at least 2 follow-up ideas for each big idea, and a concluding sentence.

My first year was fun. became able to do many things with my new friends. I have three reasons. First, I enjoyed school event. For example, school festival and sport day. Second, I go to school enjoy every day. and always with smiles. Also, I tried my best not to get red marks. Third, it was difficult because the environment changed but I enjoyed talking and playing with many friends. I especially enjoyed lunch time. A lot happened this year. but it was great to be able to go to so many places.

number

36 20 18

Word Count (92)

Topic Big Idea 1 2 FUS Big Idea 2 2 FUS Big Idea 3 2 FUS Conclusion

	Content	Composition	Vocabulary	Grammar
strengths	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Very clear and logical <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lots of detail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neat writing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complex sentences	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Many meaningful words <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult words.	<input type="checkbox"/> Few errors (<1/line) <input type="checkbox"/> 過去形を正しく使えている
weakness	<input type="checkbox"/> Off topic <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear or illogical	<input type="checkbox"/> Out of place <input type="checkbox"/> Format Mistakes or sloppy writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Unclear words (e.g., interesting, cute) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Usage mistakes or spelling mistakes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 過去形の間違いが多い。 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Many errors (>2/line) or common mistakes
core	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

下のは0点とする：90語以下のもの、トピックから外れたエッセイ、まとまりがなく理解しがたいもの
 めないほど雑に書かれたもの、間違いがあまりにも多いもの

Rubric for Speaking Test

Speaking Rubric	1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points	
Follow-up Statements (FUS)	1 FUS	2 FUS	3 FUS	4 FUS	FUS-
Questions (Q) and Follow up Questions (FUQ)	1 Q or FUQ	2 Qs or FUQs	3 Qs or FUQs	1 FUQ + 3 Qs or FUQs	Q- FUQ-
Conversation Strategies (CS) Opener and Closer +	1 strategy	2 strategies	3 strategies	4 strategies including "Tell me more"	Opener Closer CS -
Fluency 流ちょうさ	遅い or 5 秒以上の沈黙がある。	遅い or 5 秒以上の沈黙がない			
Accuracy 正確さ	誤解がある。	不正確なこともあるが理解できる	だいたい正確		
Delivery アイコンタクト、声量、ボディランゲージで	1 つがよくできた:	2 つがよくできた:	全部がよくできた:		
Bonus +1	1 英語で相手を助けた。				
Deduction -1 each time	日本語で話す。				
				Total	/20

Class() No() Name()