

## 1. Title

**The impact of focus-on-form instruction and communication strategies on Japanese junior high school students' communicative competence**

## 2. Context

Level: First grade Junior High School Students

Class size: 34 students (16 male, 18 female)

Textbook: New Horizon 1 (Tokyo Shoseki)

Problems: I did not feel any particular problems in conducting the class. The class members were friendly. Some boys were a little talkative during the class; however, once I asked them not to talk, they were able to follow my instructions. Low-level students who were my target students were able to speak better; however, they did not submit any work and tended to forget their textbooks and worksheets. Therefore, their scores on the term tests were not good.

## 3. Goals and objectives

I want my students to develop communicative competence in speaking and writing through increased student interaction and teacher and student feedback.

- (1) 80% of students will be able to engage in small talk conversations for two minutes or more using communication strategies by March.
- (2) I will speak less than 15 minutes per class.
- (3) By March 2025, 80% of students will be able to write their compositions with more than 50 words through the fun essays.
- (4) In the final survey, more than 70% of students will indicate that they like English

## 4. Literature review

### (1) Communicative language teaching (CLT)

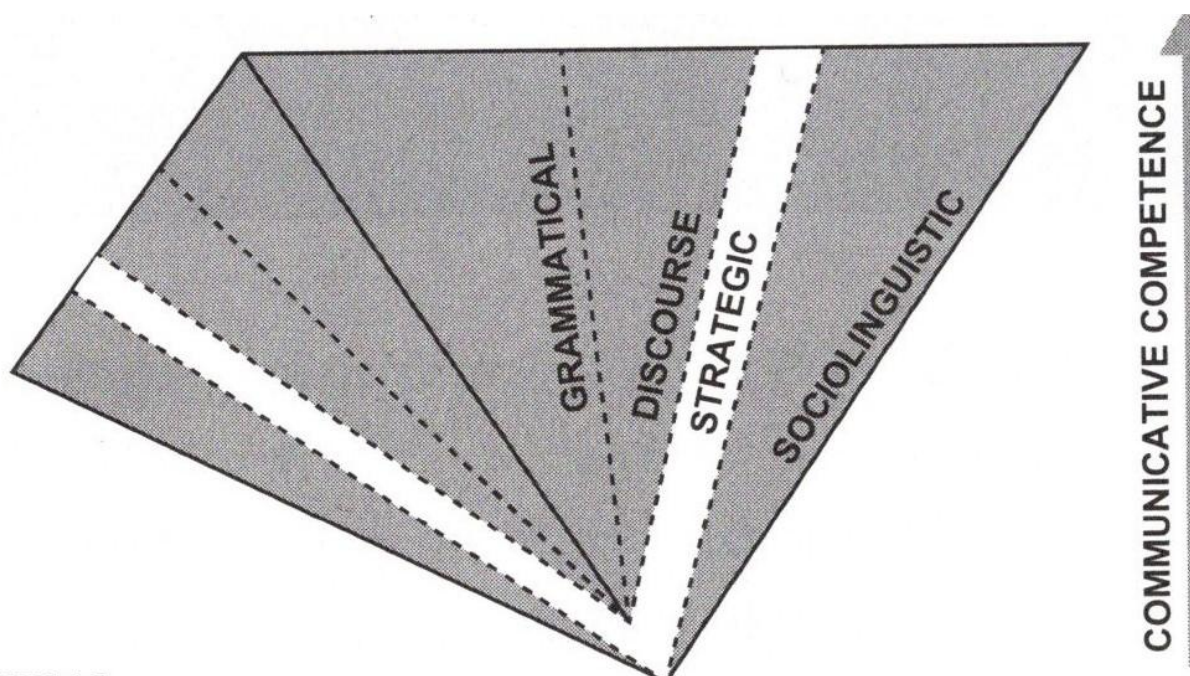
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach helps learners develop communicative competence, which was proposed by Canale & Swain (1980) and Savignon (1997). Communicative competence has four main parts:

1. Grammatical competence – knowing grammar rules,
2. Sociolinguistic competence – using language in the right way,
3. Discourse competence – making sentences flow naturally, and
4. Strategic competence – using communication strategies.

Since CLT focuses on developing communicative competence, grammar instruction plays an important role, despite the common misconception among some language teachers that CLT disregards grammar teaching.

Lee & VanPatten (2003) explain that communicative language ability—the ability to speak and understand others—improves when learners communicate, not just by practicing grammar rules (p.51). 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” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p.10).

Figure 1.



The Components of Communicative Competence (Savignon, 1997, p.49)

## (2) Focus-on-form instruction (FFI)

Grammar drills and practice are not very effective in improving communicative language ability. So, how can we teach grammar in a communicative way? The answer is focus-on-form instruction (FFI). In this approach, teachers help learners notice grammar forms through comprehensible input and output activities.

Research on Second Language Acquisition over the past 50 years shows that traditional methods, such as the Grammar-Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Method, which focus on drills and pattern practice, are not effective (Sato, 2022, p.10). Ellis (2006) also states, “A traditional approach to teaching grammar based on explicit explanations and drill-like practice is unlikely to result in acquisition of the implicit knowledge

needed for fluent and accurate communication” (p.102). Lee & VanPatten (2003) add that traditional methods do not provide enough meaningful input, so learners cannot build their grammar knowledge properly. They also mention that “Research conducted since the late 1980s suggests that learners who are engaged in meaningful or meaning-based approaches to grammar (called focus on form) do as well as or better than those who are engaged in activities that are nonmeaningful or not part of some communicative intent” (p.123).

Unlike traditional methods, focus-on-form instruction is based on language acquisition theory. This means that learners receive comprehensible and meaningful input, which helps them learn the language effectively. According to Lee & VanPatten (2003), input should be “manipulated in particular ways to push learners to become dependent on form and structure to get meaning and/or to privilege the form or structure in the input so that learners have a better chance of attending to it” (p.142). This kind of input helps learners notice grammar forms while focusing on meaning (Ellis, 2001, p.20).

In addition to input, output is also important. Lee & VanPatten (2003) state that “Although input is necessary for creating a system, input is not sufficient for developing the ability to use language in a communicative context” (p.168). They (citing Terrell, 1986, 1991) also explain that “Just because a learner has incorporated a particular form or structure in the developing system does not mean that it can be accessed easily (and thus produced automatically)” (p.169). This means that learners need opportunities to use grammar repeatedly in communication to improve both fluency and accuracy.

### 3) **Communication strategies (CSs)**

Communication strategies are useful ways to help with communication. They include both spoken and non-spoken actions that help people reach a communication goal, even when there is a problem (Brown, 2015, p.30). According to Savignon’s “inverted pyramid” (2002, p.8), all learners, whether they are good or not at speaking, need strategic competence. This means that in conversations, learners can practice listening again and repeating what others say, no matter how much English they know (Fujimoto, 2021, p.11).

They are very helpful because even beginners can use them to start, continue, and end a conversation properly. Here are some common conversation strategies:

- Opener: Start a conversation. (*Hi. / How are you? / How are you doing?*)
- Rejoinders: Show interest in the conversation. (*I see. / Sounds good.*)
- Shadowing: Repeat what your partner says to confirm understanding.
- Fillers: Avoid silence and give yourself time to think. (*Well. / Let me see.*)
- Follow-up questions: Ask more questions to get extra information or keep talking. (*What else? / When?*)
- Closer: End a conversation. (*Nice talking with you. – You too.*)

These simple phrases help learners keep a conversation going and exchange information in English.

#### 4) **Information-exchange task**

When designing lessons, setting a clear goal is essential. An information exchange task serves as an effective lesson goal. Furthermore, establishing a lesson goal helps in creating detailed lesson plans and clarifies the subgoals. According to Lee & VanPatten (2003), a lesson goal framed as an interactive information exchange task enables instructors to structure the lesson while identifying subgoals throughout the process.

#### 5. **Research questions**

- (1) How does focus-on-form instruction change students' attitude toward learning English?
- (2) How do communication strategies improve students' speaking ability?
- (3) How does focus-on-form instruction together with performance tests improve students' communicative competence?

#### 6. **What I did**

I mainly did four things in class throughout the third semester: using focus-on-form instruction, introducing new communication strategies, conducting two performance tests, and administering a survey.

##### **(1) Focus-on-Form Instruction (FFI)**

In each unit of the *New Horizon* textbook, there are three grammar points. Focus-on-form instruction consists of four steps: input (meaning), input (form), noticing, and output.

In Step 1, students listen to the teacher's English and fill in the blanks in English or Japanese. Through this activity, students can understand the meaning of the sentences.

In Step 2, students listen to the same sentences and circle the words they hear. By circling the words they hear, students can comprehend the forms.

In Step 3, students fill in the blanks in the explanation of the grammar points by themselves. Through this process, they notice the grammar rules.

In Step 4, students talk with their peers while referring to a model dialogue. They change partners at least three times each time.

In Step 5, students write sentences that are used in the Step 4 activity. (see Appendix 1-A)

##### **(2) Speaking Test (Information-Exchange Task & Communication Strategies)**

I created a worksheet for the performance test (speaking test and writing "Fun Essay") (see Appendix 1-B). There are four steps as follows. I gave the criteria at the beginning of the class. We decreased the points for accuracy; instead, we added points for communication strategies and fluency. (see Appendix 1-B)

**Step 1:** Students fill in the blanks based on what the teacher says and understand the outline of the performance test.

**Step 2:** Students think about their own ideas in English using brainstorming pictures.

**Step 3:** Students summarize their ideas in English while referring to the examples.

**Step 4:** Students talk with their partners while referring to the model dialogue.

After this introduction in one lesson, students practiced it as small talk before each lesson.

In the February survey immediately after the implementation, many students reported that communication strategies helped them continue their conversations, enjoyed talking with their partners, and wanted to speak more English. Just after the speaking test, many students had positive attitudes toward speaking English with their partners.

Figure 2.

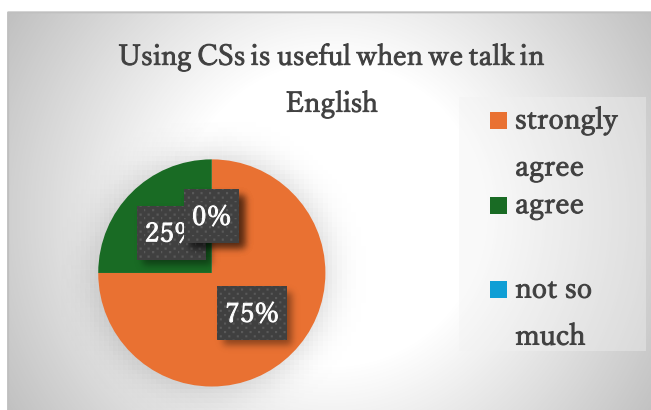


Figure 3.

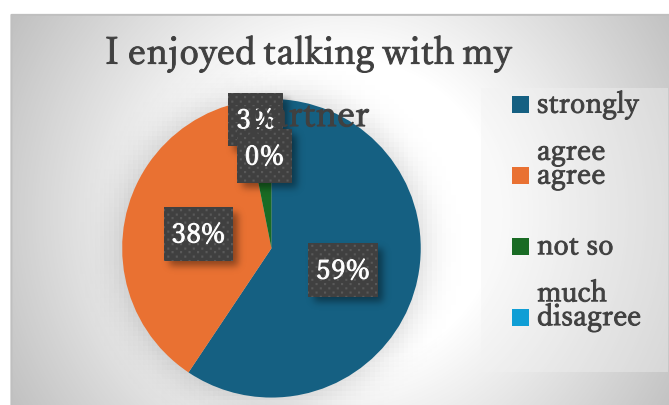
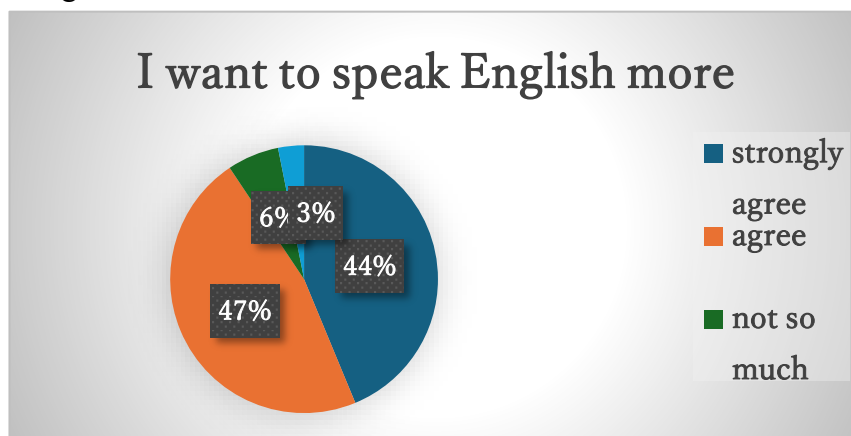


Figure 4.



Therefore, I decided to provide one more opportunity for speaking practice, although I had originally planned to conduct four speaking tests. When I informed the students of this change, they looked happy, and nobody said that they did not want to have another speaking activity. I was pleased to see their positive reactions.

### (3) Fun essay

I conducted a fun essay activity as follows.

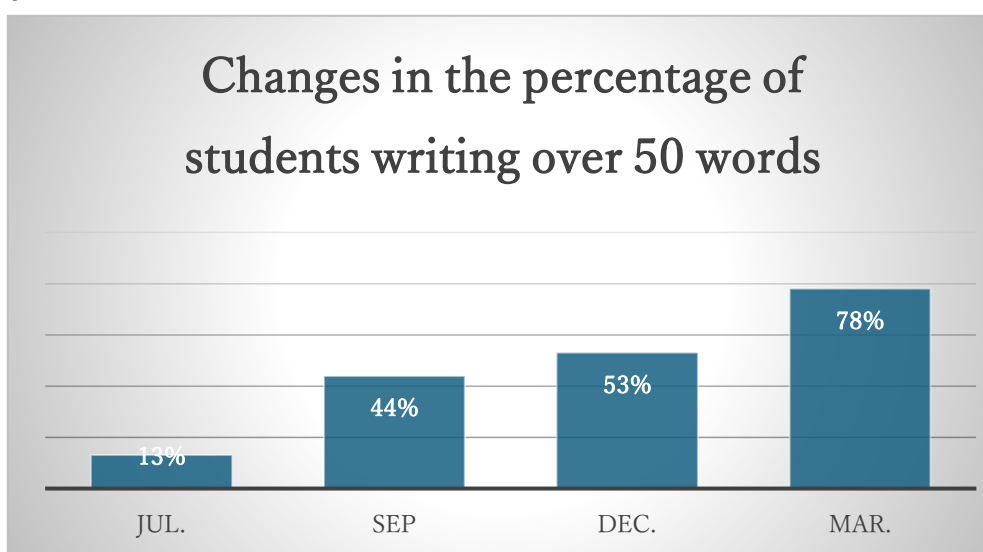
First, students wrote a draft of their fun essay in the classroom while two students were taking the speaking test in the hall. I collected the drafts immediately after the class finished. I asked the ALT to mark vocabulary mistakes in red pen and to underline sentences if she could not understand their meaning or find grammatical errors.

Second, students drew pictures on the final fun essay sheet at home. I selected some common errors from the drafts, and students identified them in groups of four. Later, students received their corrected drafts and wrote their final fun essays, referring to both the drafts and the list of common errors. As for other grammatical mistakes, if students noticed them and knew the correct forms, they revised them. However, if they did not, I allowed them to write the sentences as they wished. I gave them twenty minutes to write in class.

During the final writing activity, many students wanted to write more, so some of them asked to extend the time. This suggests that students were highly engaged in the activity.

According to the graph, the percentage of students who could write over 50 words increased significantly over time, from a low level in July to 78% in February. Although it did not fully reach the target of 80%, the result was very close, indicating substantial improvement in students' writing ability.

Figure 5



#### (4) Survey

I conducted surveys in April, July, December, and March.

In April, I asked students to reflect on their situation at that time, as they did not yet understand communication strategies (CSs) because they were first-year students. I was not able to conduct the survey in April, so I asked students to reflect on April when I conducted the survey in July. I also asked additional questions to the focus students. I will present these results in the Results section.

### 7. Results

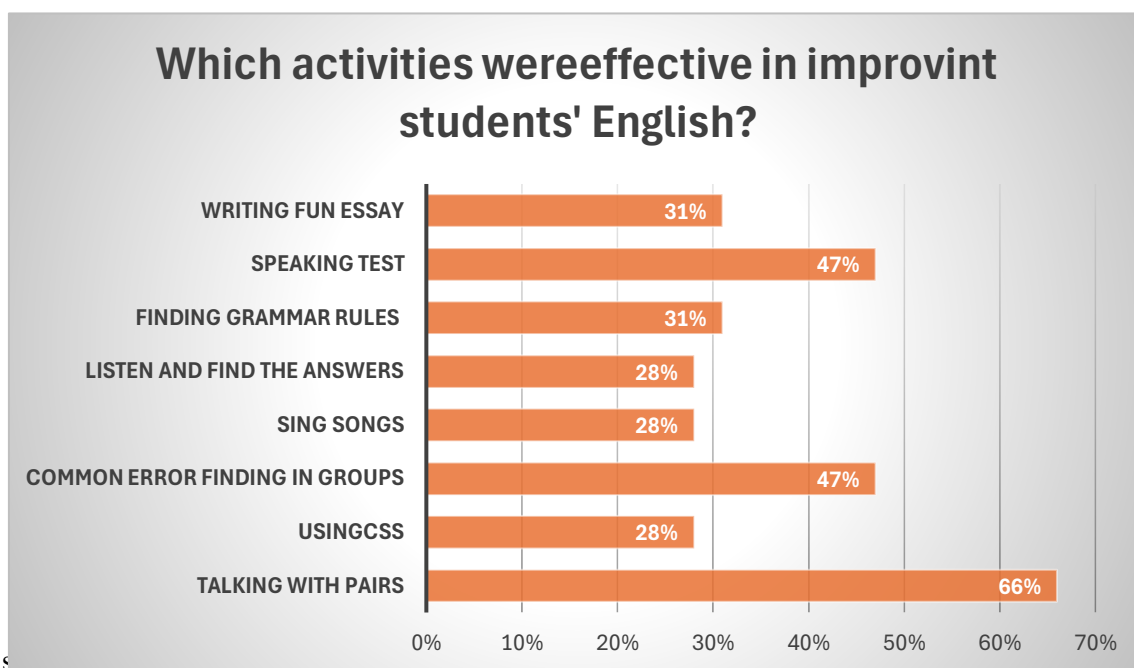
#### 7-1. Survey analysis

##### ①Activities

I conducted a survey asking which activities were useful for developing students' English abilities. In July, students chose only one activity, so the total is 100%. However, in February, student could choose up to three activities. Therefore, I converted the February data in to percentages base on the number of students to make a fair comparison.

According to the survey (Figure 2), the most effective activity was talking with pairs (66%). The second most effective activities were the speaking test and common error correction (47% each). Writing fun essays and finding grammar rules were selected by about 31% of the students, while listening activities, singing songs, and using communication strategies were each chosen by around 28%. Since this was a multiple-choice question (up to three answers per student), the percentages do not total 100%. Overall, interactive and communicative activities tended to be perceived as more effective than individual or input-based tasks.

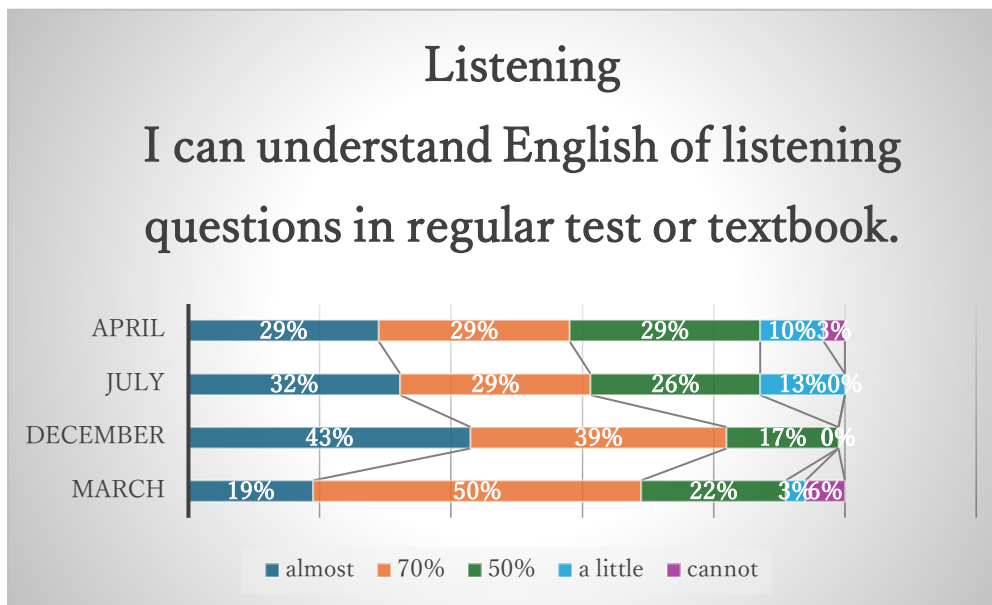
Figure 2



②Lis

According to the survey (Figure 2), the results show that students' listening ability improved from April to December. In particular, the percentage of students who answered 'almost' increased. However, it decreased in March. One possible reason is that the sentences in the textbook are longer.

Figure 7



### ③ Speaking

In April and July, the questionnaire not include the categories related to two-minute conversations, such as 'two minutes with some stoppings,' To ensure accuracy and clarity, the data were divided into two separate graphs: one for April and July, and another for December and March. The results show that students' ability to sustain conversations improved over time. In April and July, many students could only speak for a short time. However, in December and March, more students were able to continue conversations for about two minutes. These results suggest that continuous speaking practice contributed to the development of students' fluency and confidence.

Figure 8

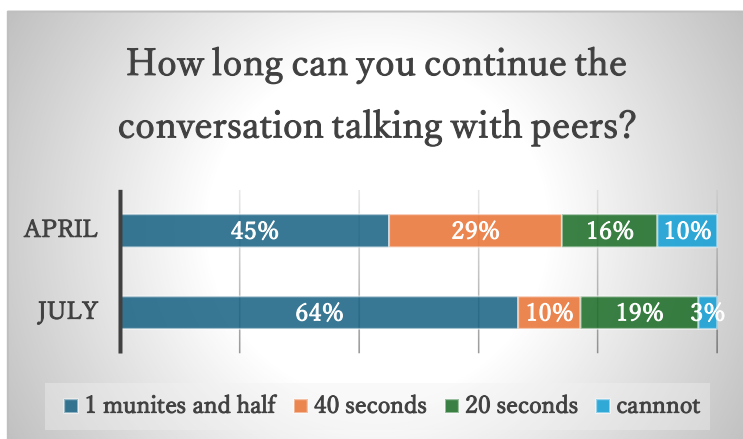


Figure 9

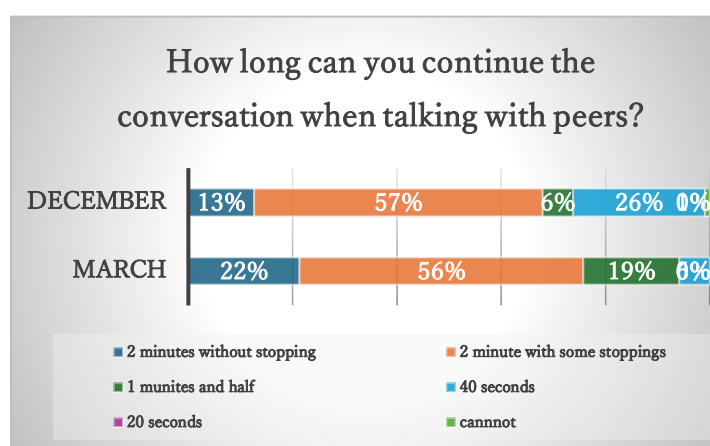


Figure 10

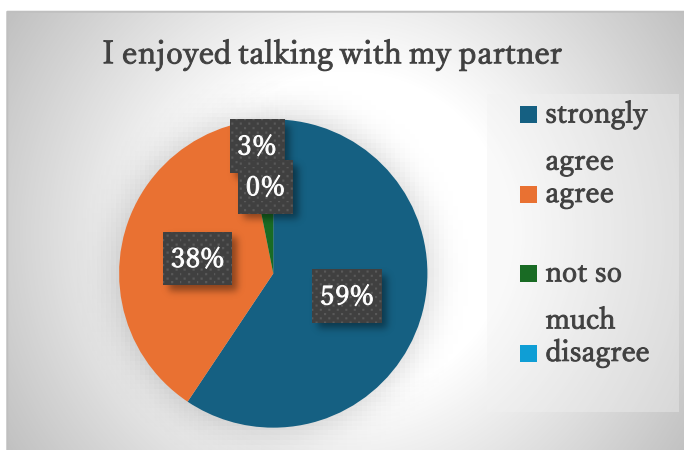
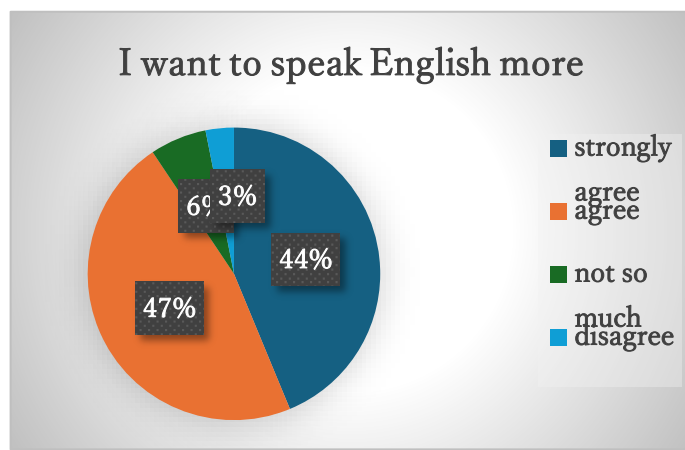


Figure 11

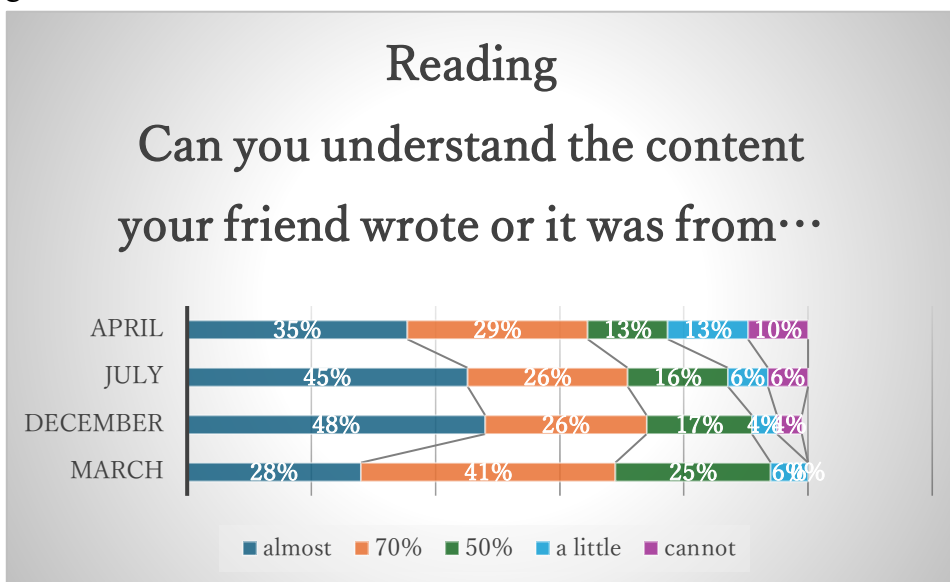


In the February survey immediately after the implementation, many students reported that communication strategies helped them continue their conversations, enjoyed talking with their partners, and wanted to speak more English. Just after the speaking test, many students had positive attitudes toward speaking English with their partners.

④ Reading

The results show a gradual improvement in students’ reading comprehension over time. IN April, many students could understand only part of the content but from July onward, the number of students who could understand most of the content increased. By December and March, more students reported that they could understand almost all of the content, while the number of students who understood little or could not understand decreased. These results suggest that students’ reading ability developed steadily through continued practice.

Figure 12



## ⑤ Writing

As shown in Figure 1, 78% of the students wrote more than 50 words in the final fun essay.

They did not have access to their writing sheets when they took the survey.

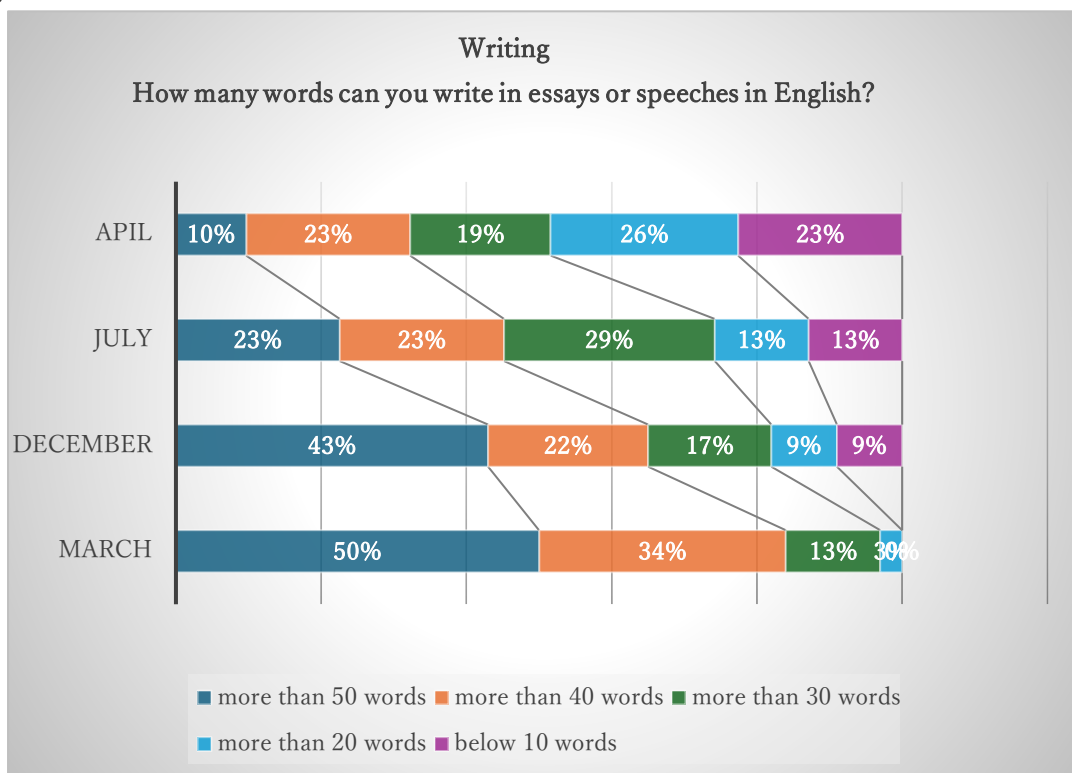
This indicates that, although they were able to write more than 50 words, they still lacked confidence in their writing ability.

However, 50% of the students reported that they felt their writing skills had improved (see Figure 2).

This result suggests that there may be a gap between students' actual performance and their self-perception.

In other words, even though their writing ability has developed, they may not yet fully recognize their own progress. They wrote their final essays by referring to drafts corrected by the teacher, so they may have thought that they would write fewer words if they wrote on their own without such support.

Figure 13



⑥English skill

The graphs show the changes in students' preferences for improving English skills and the skills they felt they had improved. In April, many students wanted to improve their writing skills (42%), followed by speaking. Over time, students' preferences became more balanced across the four skills.

In terms of actual improvement, writing showed the highest percentage in February (41%), indicating that many students felt improvement in their writing ability. Speaking also remained relatively high throughout the year.

Students initially wanted to improve writing the most. By February, many students reported improvement in writing, as well as in other skills. This suggests that the activities helped develop multiple English skills.

Figure 14

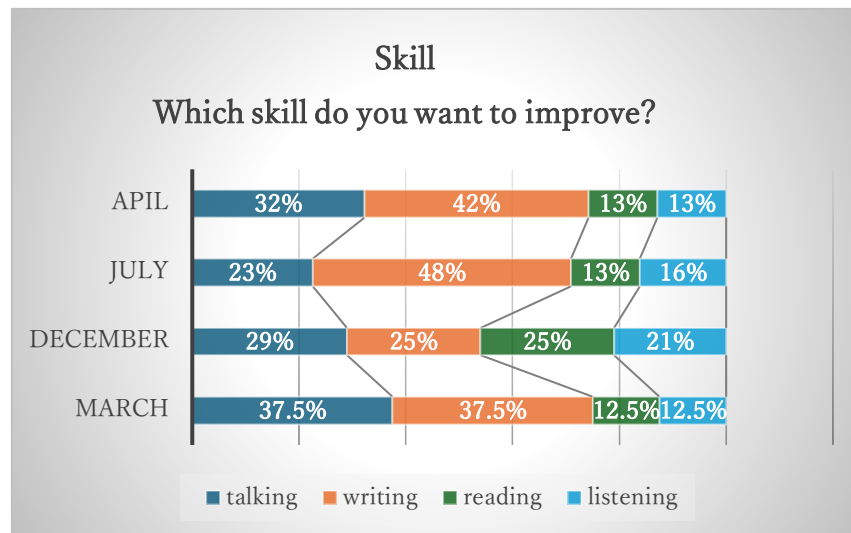
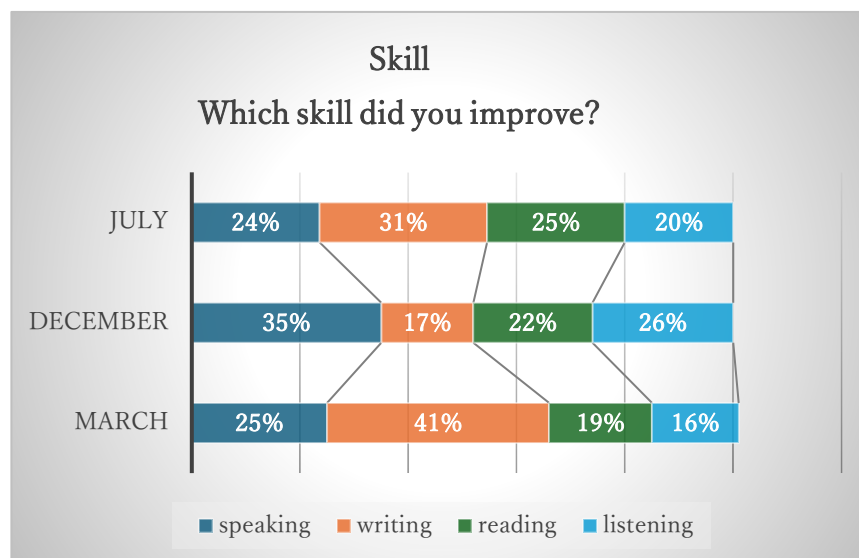


Figure 15



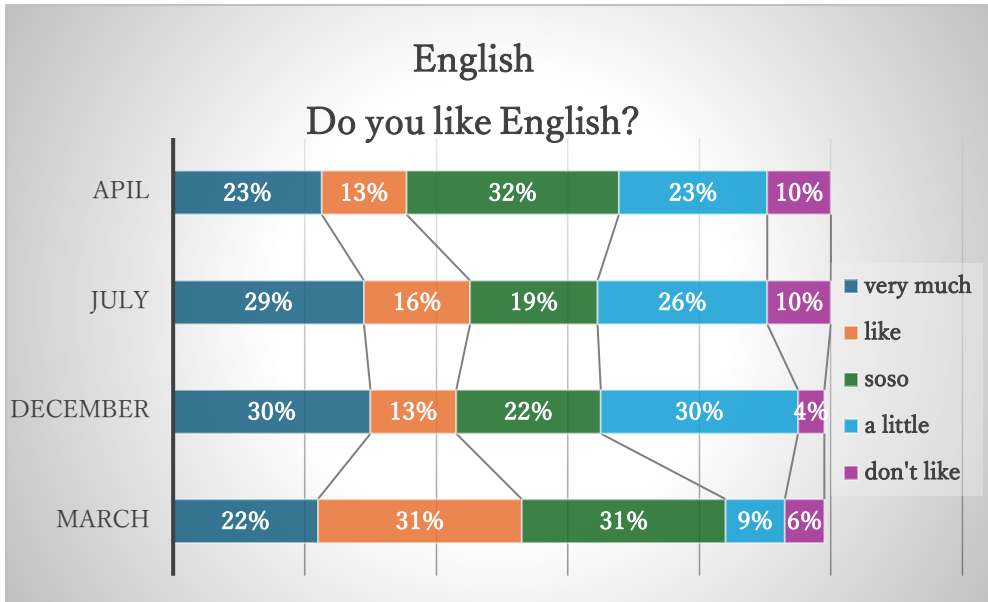
⑦English

Regarding students' attitudes, not all students reported that they liked English itself. However, when including "so-so", more than 70% of students showed a positive attitude toward English.

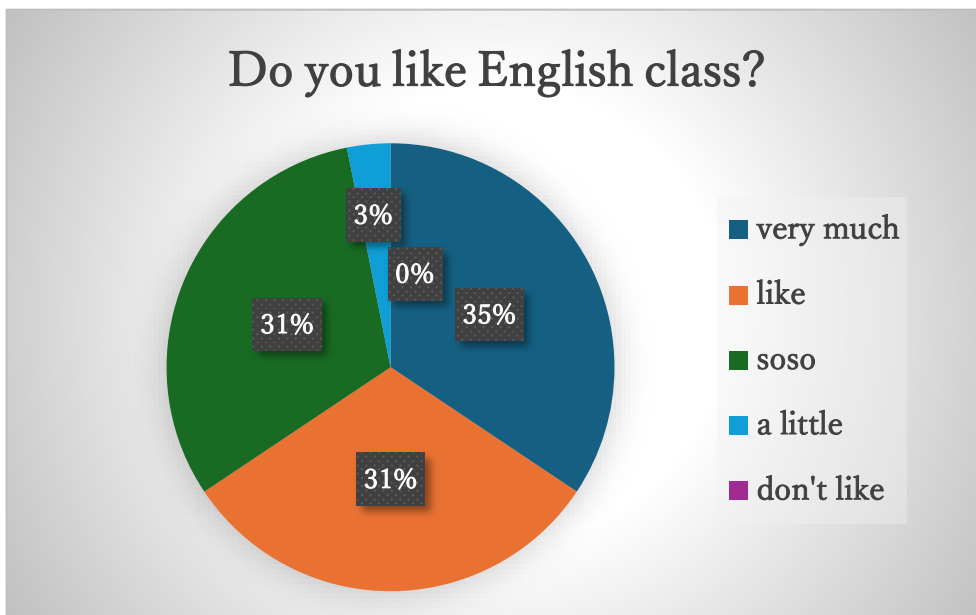
On the other hand, more than 90% of the students reported that they liked English classes, and no students answered negatively.

This suggests that although some students still feel unsure about English itself, they have positive attitudes toward English classes. Therefore, the lessons were successful in creating a supportive and enjoyable learning environment.

**Figure 16**



**Figure 17**



⑧ Communication strategies

The results show that communication strategies (CSs) were useful for students when speaking in English, as all students responded positively. In particular, the use of openers, rejoinders, and closers increased from December to March, indicating that students became more familiar with these strategies.

Figure 18

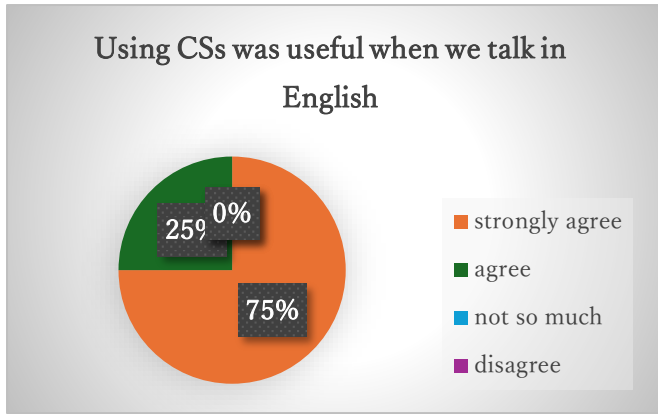


Figure 19

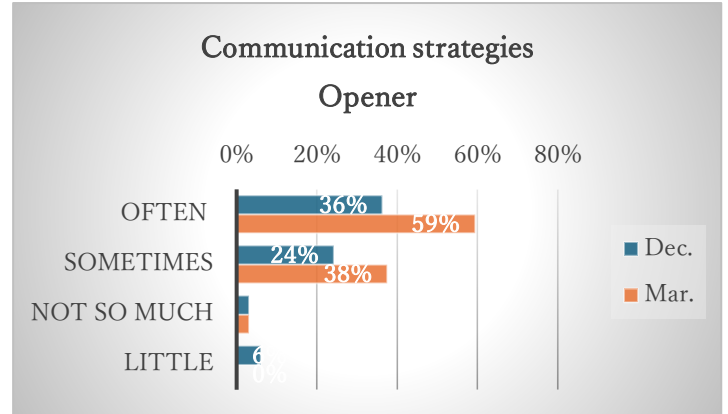


Figure 20

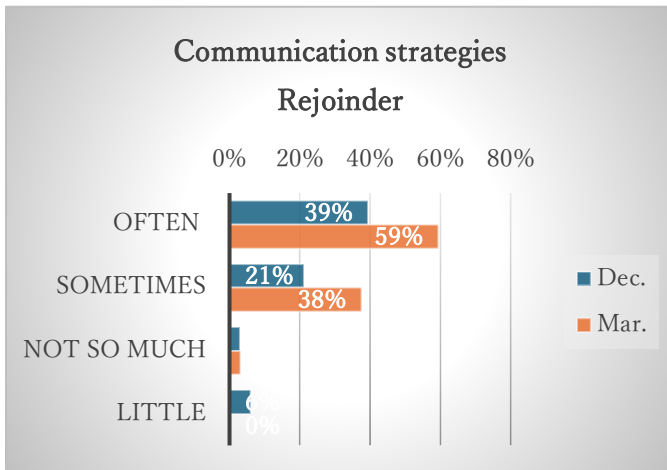


Figure 21

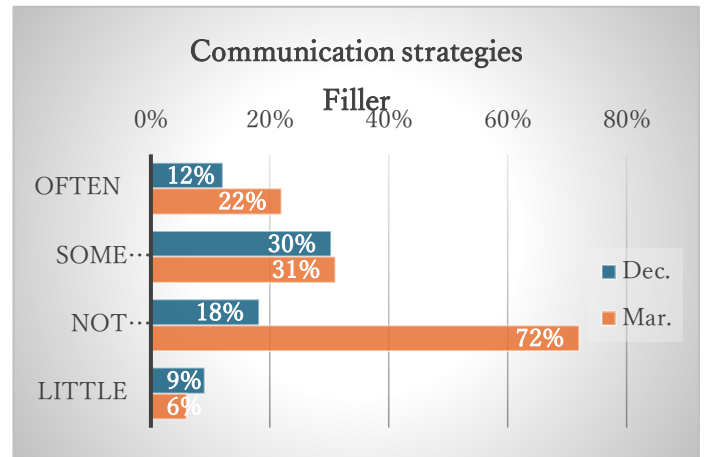


Figure 22

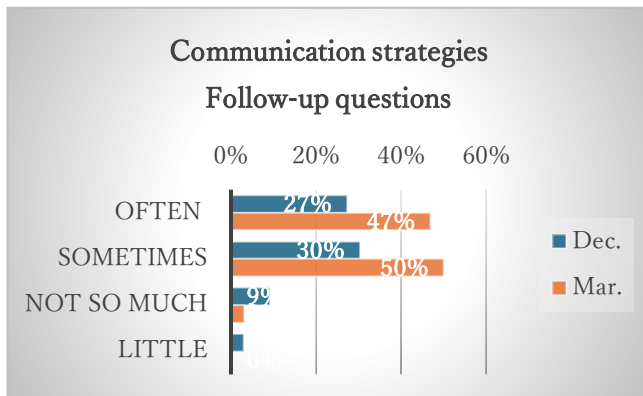
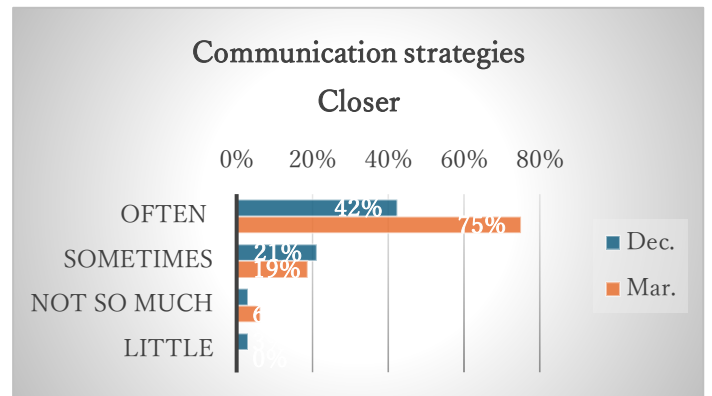


Figure 23



I compared two excerpts from December and February.

Ken (low-level student) used openers, closers, and rejoinders in December; however, he used shadowing and follow-up questions in February. By using these strategies, he was able to continue the conversation with his peer for 2 minutes and 35 seconds.

In addition, Ken was able to sustain the conversation without his peer's help in February, whereas he needed scaffolding from his peer in December. This suggests that his use of communication strategies became more effective over time and contributed to his increased fluency and independence in speaking.

### Excerpt 1

#### **December 2025 speaking test Ken low-level Tom Indian 2 minutes & 15 seconds**

Tom: hello how are you?

Ken: i'm sleepy how about you.

Tom: great by the way look at this this is my dad shoes.

Ken: oh nice ah: what to ah what to

Tom: ok ok this a nike air jordan

Ken: oh nice what what

Tom: [whispered to help Ken ask the next question.]

Ken: what your father name.

Tom: his name is rikle.

Ken: oh nice name.

Tom: thank you.

Ken: do you like him?

Tom: yeh i love him. He: is great.

oh how about you?

Ken: e:: mechanical pen.

Tom: oh nice mechanical pen. whose mechanical pen.

Ken: it's :: my sister's.

Tom: oh sister's? what is your sister's name.

Ken: her name is yuki.

Tom: yuki↑ nice name. ah: do you like him >oh sorry her<

Ken: yes. she likes youtube.

Tom: oh: youtube. Oh: nice what is your sister xxx how old are she.

[The timer sound]

Tom: Ok. nice talking with you

Ken: you too.

## **Exerpt 2**

### **February 2026 Speaking test Ken low-level Mami middle-level 2minutes & 36seconds**

Mami: hello how are you

Ken: i'm sleepy how about you

Mami: i'm sleepy too

what did you do=what did you go during winter vacation

Ken: ah:with my home

Mami: oh home ni:ce

what did you there

Ken: e:: did you play xxx play video game

Mami: oh nice did you enjoy it

Ken: yes e: i play-d fortnite

Mami: oh fortnite nice

Ken: ok my turn

what do you go to during winter vacation

Mami: i went to my grandparents house with my family

Ken: oh nice e: e: what:did you do there

Mami: i ate ozoni a:nd toshikoshisoba

Ken: oh ni:ce e: did you enjoy it

Mami: yes i did i enjoyed playing table tennis with my brother

Ken: oh nice what play card game [Ken pointed Mami's picture, card game]

Mami: I played babanuki

Ken: oh babanuki nice

Mami: [Mami looked at Ken's picture sheet ] what's this [Mami pointed Ken's picture]

Ken: e:my play cats

Mami: oh nice what's this

Ken: I°don't° know

Mami: <oh>

Ken: [Ken looked at Mami's picture sheet] what's name

Mami: my dog is fuku

Ken: oh fuku nice

Mami: [Mami pointed at Ken's picture sheet) what's this

Ken: ah: it's: haru

Mami: oh haru nice name

[Mami looked at Ken's picture sheet]

what is this xxxx

Ken: xxxxxx

Mami: oh xxxxxx

[timer's sound]

Mami: nice talking to you

Ken: you too

## ⑨ Fun essay

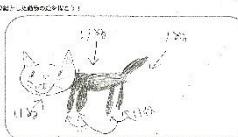
The data from the three focus students show different developmental patterns. The low-level student demonstrated only limited improvement in writing, despite some gains in speaking. They may suggest that writing development requires more explicit support, such as vocabulary scaffolding for structured sentence practice. In contrast, the middle-level student showed steady improvement, increasing from 33 words to 83 words. This indicates that the activities helped students expand their ideas and write more fluently. The high-level student showed the most remarkable development, increasing from 52 words to 105 words. This suggests that higher-level students were able to extend their writing significantly.

I put all sheet on the wall in the classroom and 8 sheets that were great mark was on the wall in the hall. (see Appendix 1-C)

### Student A (Low-level)

July ( 9 words)

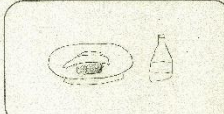
Fun Essay: Animal Introduction (動物紹介)



【英訳】  
This is dog I like from Chinese  
cat.

October ( 7 words)


Fun Essay: What country's food do you like?



【清書き complete version】  
I like Japanese food like sushi.

December ( 21 words)


Fun Essay: My Family (家族紹介)



【英訳】  
I like my sister Yukiko and my friend  
Yuki. I like her very much. She is  
beautiful. She is very smart.

February ( 8 words)

Fun Essay: My Winter Vacation (冬休み)




【英訳】  
I like winter. I like to go to  
the snow. I like to play in the snow.

### Student B (Middle-level)

July ( 33 words)


Fun Essay: Animal Introduction (動物紹介)



【英訳】  
This is pig. It is pink. It can  
speak. It can walk. It can  
eat grass. We can see it at  
pig house. It is very cute.  
I like it.

October ( 45 words)


Fun Essay: What country's food do you like?



【清書き complete version】  
I like Japanese food.  
I like otafuku.  
I like tako tatake.  
I do not like wasabi tatabe.  
but some times I eat wasabi tatabe.  
I like sushi too. I can not cook sushi  
but I go to Sushiro. Do you like Japanese  
food?

December ( 54 words)

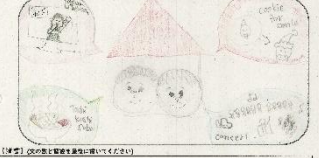
Fun Essay: My Family (家族紹介)



【英訳】  
I like my family. I like my mother  
and my father. I like my sister  
and my brother. They are very  
smart. They can play the piano.  
She goes to his concert. I want to  
be my sister.

February ( 83 words)

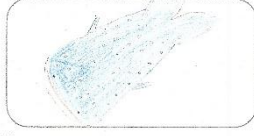
Fun Essay: My Winter Vacation (冬休み)



【英訳】  
During my winter vacation I went to my  
Grand parents house in Osaka. I cooked cake for  
Santa. My Grand mother, mother and I went to make  
Christmas. I bring baked good for my family. I looked  
funny. I was happy. I ate toast. I like to walk with my  
family. It was delicious. I watched Kouhaku Uta  
Per for my family. It was fun. I good  
per for my family. It was HANA in Kouhaku Uta  
Gassen. I looked fun. Thank you.

July ( 52 words)


Fun Essay: Animal Introduction (動物紹介)



【英訳】  
This is whale shark. It is from the sea.  
It is white and blue. It can eat fish.  
It can drink a lot of water. It can swim  
fast but it can't walk and run.  
We can see it at Okinawa Churaumi  
Aquarium. It is very cute and cool.  
I love it.

October ( 63 words)


Fun Essay: What country's food do you like?



【清書き complete version】  
I like Hawaiian food. I like pancake.  
I like fruit pancake the best. I like ocai  
bowl too. They are sweet and delicious. I can  
cook pancake. But I can't cook ocai bowl.  
My mother can cook ocai bowl well. My favorite  
topping is banana. Do you like pancake and  
ocai bowl? What toppings do you like?  
I want to eat pancake and ocai bowl with  
banana.

December ( 66 words)

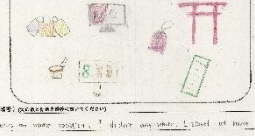
Fun Essay: My Family (家族紹介)



【英訳】  
I like my family. I like my mother  
and my father. I like my sister  
and my brother. They are very  
smart. They can play the piano.  
She goes to his concert. I want to  
be my sister.

February ( 105 words)

Fun Essay: My Winter Vacation (冬休み)



【英訳】  
During my winter vacation I went to my  
Grand parents house in Osaka. I cooked cake for  
Santa. My Grand mother, mother and I went to make  
Christmas. I bring baked good for my family. I looked  
funny. I was happy. I ate toast. I like to walk with my  
family. It was delicious. I watched Kouhaku Uta  
Per for my family. It was fun. I good  
per for my family. It was HANA in Kouhaku Uta  
Gassen. I looked fun. Thank you.

**Table 1 Majority students' comments from the final survey**

category	comment
Fun	I enjoyed talking with my classmates.
	Pair work was fun and helped me communicate with others.
	Singing English songs was enjoyable.
	It was fun to ask questions and continue conversations.
	I enjoyed speaking English more than before.
	I liked communicating with different classmates.
	English class became more enjoyable than in elementary school.
	I enjoyed using English in class activities.
Growth	I became able to speak English more than before.
	I can write more sentences in English now.
	My vocabulary has increased.
	I improved my listening and speaking skills.
	I became able to understand grammar better.
	I gained confidence in speaking English.
	My test score improved compared to before.
Future Goals	I want to speak English more.
	I want to communicate with more people in English
	I want to do better in future English test.
	I will continue studying English next year.
Difficulty	English is still difficult for me.
	Listening is sometimes hard.
	I cannot always say what I want in English.

**Table 2 Target students' answers**

	question	High level A	Middle level B	Low level C
1	How did you prepare for the speaking test?	I practiced follow-up questions at home	I practiced at home everyday.	I didn't practice at home at all.
2	There were many speaking activities such as pair work and group work. Were they effective? How did they influence you? Please answer freely.	My partner's questions were very helpful.	I could speak English more.	I don't know.

3	Was the fun essay effective? How did it influence you? Please answer freely.	I became able to write sentences without looking at anything.	I felt that English was fun.	I have no idea.
4	Was it effective to practice conversations using communication strategies based on your fun essay? How did it influence you? Please answer freely.	My expressive ability improved.	I knew many kind of expressions.	Yes, it was.
5	Was it helpful for improving your English to practice speaking and writing on the same topic?	It was helpful.	Yes, it was!	Yes, it was.
6	How has your English changed since last April? Please answer freely.	I became able to ask my partner many questions.	I like English more than before.	I could speak English better than before.

Note: All names are pseudonyms

These data were not collected through interviews but were written responses from target students.

Table 2 shows differences among students depending on their level in terms of preparation and perceptions of the activities. High-level students practiced follow-up questions at home and effectively used pair work. Middle-level students also practiced at home and felt improvement in their speaking ability. In contrast, low-level students did not practice at home and were unsure about the effectiveness of the activities. However, for Question 6, low-level student's answer was positive. These results suggest that learner autonomy is related to perceived improvement.

**Table 3 Students' speaking & Writing (fun essay) record** October - February

Level	category	Criteria(full point)	October	December	February
Hight level A	speaking	fluency(6)	6	6	6
		content(4)	4	4	4
		CSs(5)	2	3	5
		eye contact & volume(3)	3	3	3
		accuracy(2)	2	2	2
		<b>total(20)</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>

	fun essay	content(7)	7	5	7	
		design(5)	5	5	5	
		length(5)	4	4	5	
		accuracy(3)	3	3	2	
		<b>total(20)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	
Middle level B	speaking	fluency(6)	5	5	6	
		content(4)	2	4	4	
		CSs(5)	3	3	5	
		eye contact & volume(3)	3	3	2	
		accuracy(2)	2	2	2	
		<b>total(20)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	
	fun essay	content(7)	5	5	5	
		design(5)	5	5	5	
		length(5)	3	4	5	
		accuracy(3)	2	2	3	
		<b>total(20)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	
	Low level C	speaking	fluency(6)	2	2	4
			content(4)	3	3	3
			CSs(5)	2	2	4
eye contact & volume(3)			2	3	2	
accuracy(2)			1	2	1	
<b>total(20)</b>			<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	
fun essay		content(7)	5	5	5	
		design(5)	3	3	3	
		length(5)	1	3	1	
		accuracy(3)	3	3	3	
		<b>total(20)</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	

Note: All names are pseudonyms

The data were evaluated using the latest criteria.

Table 3 presents the development of three students' speaking and writing performance from October to February. Overall, all three students showed improvement in speaking, whereas the results for writing were more varied.

Regarding speaking, all students demonstrated steady progress. Student A improved from 17 to 20 points, Student B from 15 to 19 points, and Student C from 10 to 14 points. In particular, the scores for communication strategies (CSs) increased noticeably across all levels. Students A and B reached full marks (5 points) in February, and Student C improved from 2 to 4 points. This suggests that repeated speaking practice and explicit instruction of communication strategies contributed to the development of students' fluency and ability to sustain conversations. In addition, improvements in fluency were observed, especially in Students B and C.

In contrast, the results for fun essay writing were less consistent. Student B showed gradual improvement from 15 to 18 points, mainly due to gains in length and accuracy. Student A's score decreased once in December but recovered in February. However, Student C's performance fluctuated, with the total score returning to the initial level in February due to a decrease in length. This indicates that maintaining writing performance, particularly in terms of length, remains challenging for lower-level students.

In summary, while speaking ability improved steadily across all students, writing ability did not show the same level of consistent development. These findings suggest that additional scaffolding and support may be necessary, especially to help lower-level students produce longer and more sustained written output.

## **8. What I learned**

Through this action research, I learned that integrating focus-on-form instruction (FFI) with communication strategies (CSs) can effectively support students' communicative competence.

First, providing students with opportunities to use communication strategies helped them continue conversations, even when they lacked vocabulary or grammatical accuracy. This suggests that fluency and interaction can be developed through strategic support rather than focusing only on accuracy.

Second, the fun essay activity contributed to the development of students' writing skills. Many students gradually increased the number of words they could write, and some showed strong engagement in writing tasks. This indicates that meaningful and personalized writing activities can enhance students' motivation and output.

Furthermore, I realized that reducing teacher talk and increasing student interaction created a more communicative classroom environment. This aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasizes student-centered learning.

Students' development was not linear but dynamic and varied depending on individual differences. The focus students showed different patterns of development, which highlights the complexity of language learning.

## **9. Future Issues**

Although this study showed positive results, several issues remain for future improvement.

First, some low-level students still had difficulty expressing their ideas in English. Additional scaffolding, such as more frequent check-ins with students during activities, may be necessary to support these learners.

Second, regarding data collection, I changed some of the survey questions. As a result, it was difficult to create a graph in chronological order and compare the data. In the future, I would like to establish consistent questions based on this year's survey and compare the results over time.

Fortunately, I was able to teach English using focus-on-form instruction (FFI) together with a co-worker who is also learning about FFI at NUFS. We created worksheets together for each unit. However, I have to move to a new school. Nevertheless, I would like to continue using FFI with my new students.

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## Appendix 1-A

### Lesson Plan

Time	Interaction	Activity & Procedure
1	T-Ss	(1) Greeting
9	Ss	(2) <u>Step 1 &amp; 2: input (focus on meaning/form)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ss listen teacher's English and fill in the blanks in English or Japanese.</li> </ul>
3	S-S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ss listen to same sentences again.</li> </ul>
2	T-Ss	Ss circle the words they hear.
4	Ss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check the answers with their peers, then with teacher.</li> </ul>
3	T-Ss	(3) <u>Step 3: notice</u>
3	T-Ss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ss fill the blanks by themselves at first and check together.</li> </ul>
15	S-S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check the answers together.</li> </ul>
3	Ss	
2	T-Ss	(4) <u>Step 4: output / Activity:</u> Using two worksheets, students tried to find the characters who were doing the same action. (5) <u>Step 5: Writing Practice</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ss write the sentence which is used in the activity.</li> </ul>
		(6) Give homework and say goodbye

T-Ss 11min. S-S 18min. Ss 16min. Total: 45min.

# Joyful English Worksheet

7<sup>th</sup> grade, Ohgidai JHS

Our Goal: ある時点にしていたことについて、説明することができる。

**Step 1** 先生の英語を聞いて、分かったことをまとめよう

	誰が?	何をしていた?	いつの何時?
1			
2			
3			

**Step 2** もう一度話を聞いて、聞こえた方に○をつけよう

1. I ( am / was ) ( study / studying ) English at 9:00a.m. last Saturday.
2. Tom ( was / is )( walking / walked ) his dog at 6:00p.m. yesterday.
3. My friends ( was / were ) ( swim / swimming ) in a pool at 2:00p.m. last Sunday.

**Step 3** Grammar Point

●現在のある時点を表すとき

I am studying English now. [①意味: ]

●過去のある時点を表すとき ※be動詞を(② 現在形/過去形)に

I was studying English at 9:00 a.m. last Saturday.

[③意味: ]

「…していた」というときは、< was (were) + … (④ ed / ing ) >の形を使う。

●疑問文は(⑤ )動詞を主語の[⑥ ]に出す

(⑦ ) you studying English at 9:00 a.m. last Saturday?

●否定文は(⑤ )動詞の(⑧前/後)にnotを置く

I was (⑨ ) studying English at 9:00 a.m. last Saturday.

**Step 4** Activity Goal: パートナーの絵と同じ行動をしている人やキャラクターを見つけよう!

**Model dialogue** : 選んだキャラクターが昨日の1時と3時にしていた事を確認する



☆ opener

A: By the way, let's talk about our pictures. Tell me about your picture.

B: Sure. Tara-chan was sleeping at 1:00 yesterday.

A: Oh, he was sleeping.

B: How about your picture?

A: Tara-chan was eating a snack at 3:00 yesterday.

B: Oh, I see.

A: Let's talk about Doraemon. Doraemon was……

★ closer

聞いたことをメモしよう

誰が	何をしていた(自分のシートでやっていたこと)	何をしていた(相手のシートでやっていたこと)	同じだったら○、違っていたら×を書く
例 Tara-chan	sleeping	eating a snack	×

同じ行動していたキャラを何個見つけられたかな? ○をつけよう → 1・2・3・4 個

**Step5**

1.今日の会話で使った表現を2つ選んで書こう!

例文: Tara-chan was sleeping at 1:00 yesterday.

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# A Sheet

at 1:00 yesterday



e.g.) Tara-chan / sleeping



Picachu / sleeping



Totoro / running



Anya / eating ice cream



Tanjiro / running



Doraemon / dancing



Dorami / walking



Nobita / flying

.....

## Help Corner

**主語** was \_\_\_\_\_ ing at 1:00 yesterday.

# B Sheet

at 3:00 yesterday



e.g.) Tara-chan / eating snack



Picachu / drinking coffee



Totoro / flying



Anya / eating ice cream



Tanjiro / running



Doraemon / dancing



Dorami / walking



Nobita / drawing pictures

.....

## Help Corner

主語

was \_\_\_\_\_ ing at 3:00 yesterday.

## What country's food do you like?

Step1) Listen to the conversation. Fill in the blanks.

どの国の料理が好きですか？	その料理は何ですか？	その料理を作れますか？

Step2) Think about your favorite food. (日本語可)

どの国の料理が好き？  
What country's food do you like? 次から選ぼう！

どの料理が好き？  
What dish do you like?



- Japanese
- Chinese
- Korean
- Italian
- Hawaiian



Empty oval for writing a country name.



その料理作れる？  
Can you cook it?

Empty oval for writing 'Yes' or 'No'.



Step3) 自分の好きな料理の情報をまとめよう。

1 どの国の料理が好きか、またその中で好きな料理を書こう。

e.g. I like Japanese food. I like sushi.



2 その料理が作れるか。作れないときは誰が作るか英語で書こう。

e.g. I can cook sushi. I cannot cook sushi. My mother can cook it.



Step4) Talk about it with your friends!

[Model dialog]

A: Hello, how's it going?

B: I'm (good / happy / sleepy / bad). How about you?

A: I'm OK. By the way, what country's food do you like?

B: I like (Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Italian, Hawaiian) food.

A: Oh, Japanese food, nice! What dish do you like?

B: I like sushi.

A: Wow! sushi. Great!

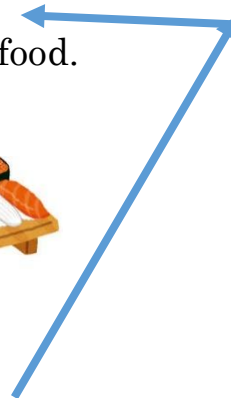
Can you cook it?

B: Yes, I can. / No, I can't. But my mother can cook it.

A: I see.

B: How about you? What country's food do you like?

Nice talking with you. You, too.



\*Change your role.

言葉が出てこないとき： Well… Um…  
Uh… Hmm… Let's see…

MEMO

友達の名前	好きな国の料理？	その料理は？	その料理を作る？ OR 誰が作れる？





# Writing / Fun Essay: What country's food do you like?

Class \_\_\_ No. \_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Categories(項目)	Points	Criteria(評価基準)
content	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He uses appropriate grammar and expressions for his favorite dishes, and there are almost no grammatical errors.</li> <li>• In addition to the English written in the model sentence, I am writing in English.</li> </ul>
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He uses appropriate grammar and expressions for his favorite dishes, and there are some grammatical errors.</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He is able to use appropriate grammar and expressions for his favorite dishes to some extent, and there are many grammatical errors.</li> </ul>
	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are many errors in grammar and expression, and the content is not well understood.</li> </ul>
Independent learning attitude	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illustrations are drawn that match the content and carefully finished using color.</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I use colors, but I haven't reached level 5.</li> </ul>
	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have hardly drawn illustrations or not at all.</li> </ul>
Sentence length	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 10 sentences are written.</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 7 sentences are written.</li> </ul>
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is written in more than 5 sentences.</li> </ul>
	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The content written is less than 4 sentences.</li> </ul>
Number of characters	4	It is written in more than 50 characters.
	3	It is written in more than 30 characters.
	2	It is written in more than 15 characters.
	1	The characters written are 14 characters or less.

sum \_\_\_\_\_ points

Speaking : **What country's food do you like?**

Class \_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Categories(項目)	Points	Criteria(評価基準)
Content and fluency	7	• The pair was able to continue the conversation smoothly for 2 minutes, and was able to ask and answer 3 questions about their favorite dishes.
	5	• The pair was able to continue the conversation for two minutes, but it was interrupted, and two out of three questions and answers were possible.
	3	• There was a bit of silence in the two-minute conversation between the pairs, and some of the above content was insufficient.
	1	• The conversation did not last for 2 minutes in pairs, so I used Japanese. The content was also insufficient.
Independent learning attitude	3	• He was speaking clearly and loudly. • They were actively making eye contact and expressing their interest by greeting each other.
	2	• I liked either the loudness of the voice and the eye contact, but the other was insufficient. • I was able to greet you and express a little interest.
	1	• The volume of his voice and eye contact were insufficient. • I couldn't greet or express interest.
Communication strategies	5	• In addition to greetings and closing words, both shadowing and rejoinders were used in the other person's speech.
	3	• I was using either of the above CS.
	1	• I could only use CS greetings and closing words.
accuracy	5	• He was able to use grammar almost correctly.
	3	• There was a slight error in the grammar, but I was able to make sense of it.
	1	• I couldn't use grammar correctly.

sum \_\_\_\_\_ points

※ 3つの質問: What country's food do you like? / What dish do you like? / Can you cook it?

Categories(項目)	Criteria(評価基準)	Points	
流暢さ Fluency	They could talk smoothly for two and a half minutes and share their winter vacation memories with each other.	6	They could keep talking smoothly with rich ideas.
		5	They stopped two or three times, but they could continue with good ideas.
		3	They sometimes stopped, and the content was poor.
		2	They stopped many times and had trouble keeping the conversation going.
		1	There were long silences, and the conversation did not continue.
内容 Contents	They could have a rich conversation by answering their partner's questions and adding more information about what they did during the winter vacation.	4	They could tell their winter vacation memories using various expressions, including ideas beyond the fixed questions.
		3	They could talk about their winter vacation memories beyond the fixed questions, but their expressions were a little simple.
		2	They could answer the fixed questions about their winter vacation memories.
		1	They could not answer the questions about their winter vacation memories well.
コミュニケーションストラテジ — Communication strategies	In addition to greetings and closing words, they could use rejoinders and shadowing, and also ask follow-up questions they thought of on the spot, not only fixed questions.	5	They could use follow-up questions three or more times.
		4	They could use follow-up questions twice.
		3	They could use a follow-up question once.
		2	They could use rejoinders and shadowing, but they could not use follow-up questions.
		1	They could use only greetings and closing words.
アイコンタクト&声の大きさ Eye contact & volume	They could try to speak actively with eye contact and a clear voice.	3	They spoke clearly and loudly, and made eye contact actively.
		2	Either their voice or eye contact was good, but the other was not enough.
		1	Their voice and eye contact were not enough.
正確さ Accuracy	There were almost no vocabulary or grammar mistakes, and they could communicate their meaning clearly.	2	There were few mistakes, and they could keep the conversation going.
		1	There were many mistakes, but their meaning was understood and the conversation continued.
		0	There were too many mistakes, and their meaning was not understood.

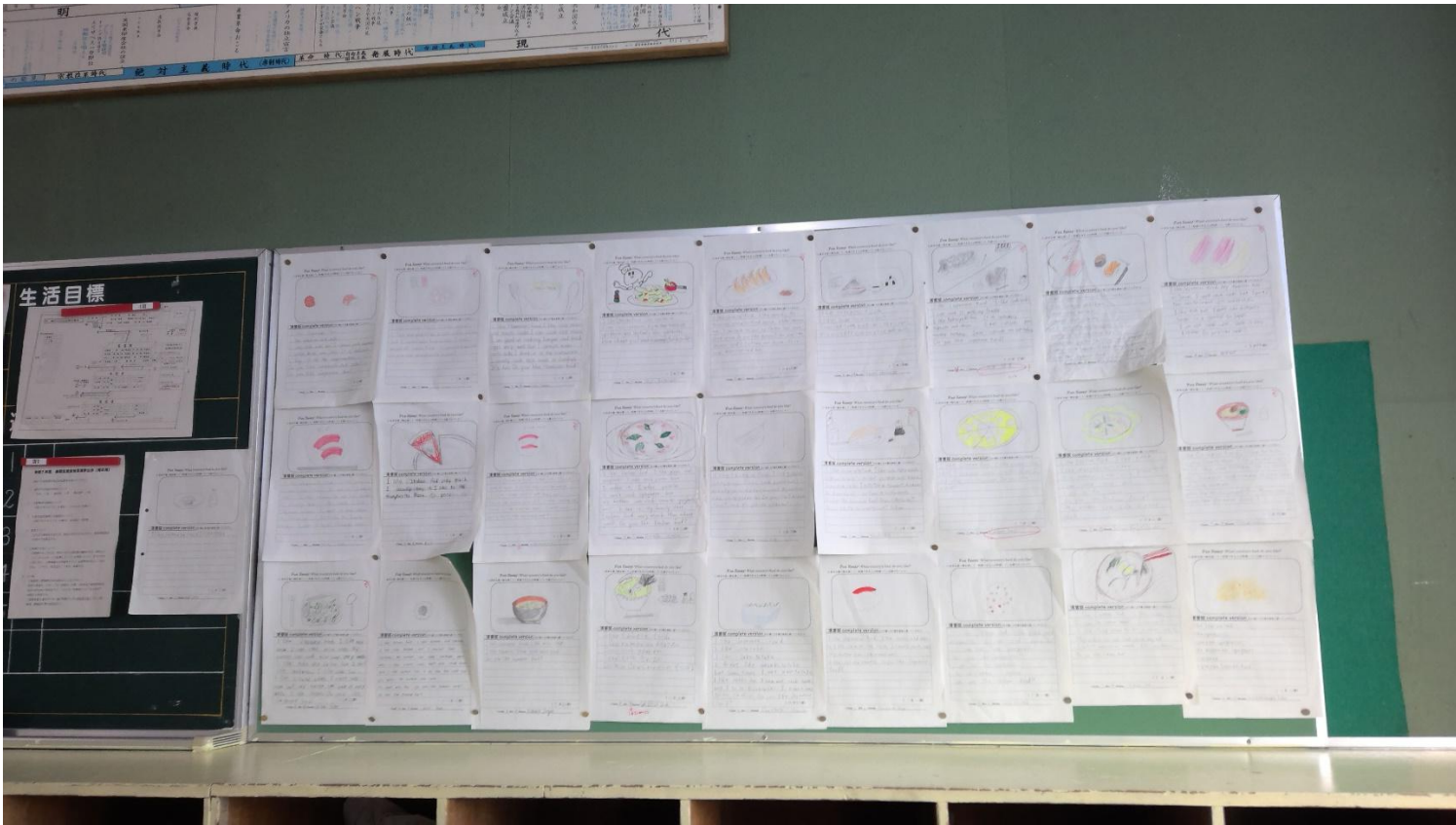
※The fixed questions

Where did you go during the winter vacation? What did you do there? Did you enjoy it?

Writing / Fun Essay: My Winter Vacation

Categories(項目)	Points	Criteria(評価基準)
内容 Contents	7	They wrote about their winter vacation memories using the grammar and expressions they learned well, and the content was interesting for the reader.
	5	They wrote about their winter vacation memories using the grammar and expressions they learned, but the content was simple.
	3	Some parts of their winter vacation memories were difficult to understand.
	1	The content could not be understood.
デザイン Design	5	They drew illustrations that matched the content and finished their work carefully using colors.
	3	It was written in one color, or colors were used but the work did not reach the level of 5 points.
	1	They drew little or no illustration.
語数 Length	5	They wrote 80 words or more.
	4	They wrote 50 words or more.
	3	They wrote 30 words or more.
	1	They wrote 29 words or fewer.
正確さ Accuracy	3	There were a few grammar mistakes, but the meaning was understood.
	2	There were many grammar mistakes, but the meaning was understood.
	1	Grammar was hardly used correctly.

Essays in the classroom



Essays in the hall (excellent works were displayed in the hall)

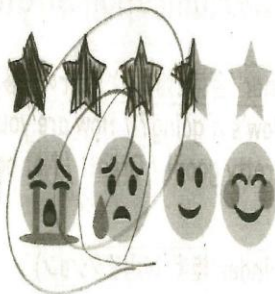


Unit 9

# Self-Reflection 振り返り

## STAR RATING

自分の頑張り度



## UNITを終了しての達成感

How do I feel about my results?



### KNOWLEDGE

このUnitで  
発見したことを  
教えてください。

スーパは英語を話せるようになった。  
正解も多くなった。  
英語もよめるようになった。

### EFFORT

このUnitで  
頑張ったことを  
教えてください。

英語をやることをがんばりました。  
よめなったら友達や先生にききました。  
家で調べたりしました。 Good

### IMPROVE

このUnitで  
楽しかった事、ワクワクし  
た事はありましたか？

席かえをして、相手と話したり  
新魚羊で楽しかった。  
友達とからたしちよとて きんちよと  
ずあ互いに目かけあって話した  
ことかな。 A

Unit 9

# Self-Reflection 振り返り

## STAR RATING

自分の頑張り度



## UNITを終了しての達成感

How do I feel about my results?



### KNOWLEDGE

このUnitで  
発見したことを  
教えてください。

- 「しました」という過去形は、  
動詞の語尾にdまたはedをつける。
- 「子音字+y」で終わる動詞は、  
yをeに変えてedをつける。
- 過去形の疑問文は、doの過去形  
didを主語の前に置く。

### EFFORT

このUnitで  
頑張ったことを  
教えてください。

- 相手の回答にリアクションをするのを  
頑張った。
- 単語を覚えるのを頑張った。
- 英語を聞き取るのを頑張った。

### IMPROVE

このUnitで  
楽しかった事、ワクワクし  
た事はありましたか？

- 相手とコミュニケーションを  
取るのが楽しかった。
- 英語の辞書を引くのが楽しかった。
- 新しい単語や文法を覚えるのが  
楽しかった。 A

A survey conducted in a class including selected focus students

3月アンケート 追加 クラス\_\_\_\_\_番号\_\_\_\_\_名前\_\_\_\_\_

- ① どのようにスピーキングテストに向けて準備しましたか？
  
- ② ペアワークや、グループワークでのスピーキング活動が多かったですが効果的でしたか？あなたにどのような影響を与えましたか。自由に答えてください。
  
- ③ ファンエッセーは効果的でしたか。あなたにどのような影響を与えましたか。自由に答えてください。
  
- ④ コミュニケーションストラテジーを使ってファンエッセーの内容を会話練習することは効果的でしたか。あなたにどのような影響を与えましたか。自由に答えてください。
  
- ⑤ スピーキングとライティングを同じトピックで練習することは英語向上に役立ちましたか。
  
- ⑥ 去年の4月から自分の英語はどう変化しましたか。自由に答えてください。