

How Focus on Form impacts on students' motivation and communicative competence.

Takayuki Fujimoto

I. Introduction

Almost 10 years have passed since the last Course of Study for senior high schools, which said that English classes should be conducted in English, was released from MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). However, teachers have little knowledge of teaching theories. That leads, the ways of teaching especially grammar teaching, have not changed. Lee & VanPatten (2003) affirmed that “traditional instruction consisting of drills in which learner output is manipulated and the instruction is divorced from meaning or communication is not an effective method for enhancing language acquisition” (p. 137). Moreover, for people in Japan, it takes a long time to acquire English skills. To keep studying English for many years, students need to have motivation, a positive attitude toward learning. However, here in Japan, in spite of rapid globalization, students have few opportunities to use the target language in their English classrooms. It causes students to think that they cannot use English and they believe they are not good at using English. Motivation is one of the most important factors in learning a language. On the other hand, motivation is too broad for researchers to study clearly. In recent years, Dörnyei (2005) proposed the Second Language Motivational Self System (L2MSS). L2MSS claims that when learners have a clear vision of their future selves, Ideal L2 selves and Ought-to L2 selves combined with L2 learning experiences, lead to learners' intended effort. Several studies found that the three components, Ideal and Ought-to L2 self-concepts and positive L2 learning experience, were able to account for important aspects of motivation (Yashima, Nishida, & Mizumoto, 2017). However, since English learners have little chance to use English in Japan, they would not have clear “vision” of using it. As Taguchi (2015) mentioned, it is not always the case that English proficiency is as strongly related to successful job-hunting in Japan. That is, English is not valued by many English learners in Japan. Little research is done to figure out what kind of instruction makes students' vision of their self-images clear. Therefore, in this research, I want to show how communicative language grammar teaching impacts the students' beliefs and increases language learners' motivation.

II. Context

I am a teacher of a senior high school. In my school, more than half (57%) of the students get a job after they graduated from the high school. And, other students who go on next education enter the vocational colleges or two years college which they can pass the entrance examination without an academic test. What they need to enter the next education is an interview test or a short essay. To enter the next education, it is not necessary to take the English tests. It means they just learn English in school because they are told to do so. These things can be the reasons why students have difficulties to have a clear goal of learning English. They do not look interested in learning English. That is my current concern and I want to cope with this situation. Other English teachers in my high school also have the similar thoughts and we concluded that we need to change the way of teaching in English classes. Although I mainly teach third year students, I also manage first grade classes. We seven teachers including a first year teacher and part time teacher work together. Every teacher uses the same materials and teaches in the same sequence. To do so, we have weekly meeting where I explain the new worksheets and activities and we exchange our information. This

research conducted at a public high school started from April in 2018 and continued to February in 2019.

III. Goal

- (1) To develop an instructional style that instills a positive attitude toward communication in students.
- (2) To create effective opportunities for students to be able to use grammar they have learned through the class.

IV. Literature review

(1) Focus on Form

Teaching grammar is one of the crucial issues in English Education. Then, do language learners need to learn grammatical rules? Savignon (2018) says that communicative competence consists of four competences, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, and grammatical competence. First, discourse competence is ability that people can connect sentences and form a meaningful whole out of a series of utterances. Second, sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and of discourse. The third competence is strategic competence. This ability is used to compensate for imperfect knowledge of rules or limiting other competence. There are paraphrase, repetition, and hesitation, for example. The last competence is grammatical competence, which is knowledge of lexical items and linguistic code of language. Thus, to improve communicative competence, language learners need to learn grammar rules.

Then, how should we teach grammar to high school students? Ellis (2006) noted that “there is now a clear conviction that a traditional approach to teaching grammar based on explicit explanations and drill-like practice is unlikely to result in the acquisition.” And, Ellis (2015) also convicted that “meaning- focused instruction that supplies learners with plentiful input that they can understand is effective in developing oral skills.” It is essential to expose language learners to meaningful context. However, language learners need to notice the grammatical rules through meaningful context to acquire the target language. Meaning focused instruction is not enough to take place language acquisition. VanPatten (1990) also suggested that “learners, in particular early stage learners, have great difficulty in attending to both form and content.” It is not easy to attend both meaning and form at the same time. To solve this problem, Ellis (2015) proposed a focus-on-form. A focus on form provides learners with the opportunity to take ‘time-out’ from focusing on message construction to pay attention to specific forms and the meanings they realize.

(2) Motivation and vision

Motivation is a central issue in education because students with high motivation tend to

success learning. Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long, often tedious learning process (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei 2008, Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). Research of motivation toward language learning has been done since 1950s, especially the work of Gardner and his colleagues. Recently, according to Dörnyei (2007), “the cognitive-situated period of [second language] motivation research shifted the attention to classroom-specific aspects of motivation and created a fertile ground for educational implications directly relevant to classroom practice (p.111)” Dörnyei (2005) developed the theoretical framework of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). In this hypothesis, there are three components. First, it is Ideal L2 Self: if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the Ideal L2 Self is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves. Next is Ought-to L2 Self: the L2 learners study because of duties such as exams or promotion. The last component is L2 Learning Experience: the impact of learning and the experience of success. (Yashima, Nishida, & Mizumoto, 2017) paraphrased that “the theory posits that if the learners’ vision of themselves using the L2 is important to them, this self-image will serve as a powerful motivator.” If the learners have clear vision of their ideal selves, they might motivate the learners. Dörnyei & Kubanyiova (2014) concluded that the model of L2MSS embraces the experiential nature of vision. And, they continued, [T]he way teacher can help to facilitate the construction process is by orchestrating encounters for the learners with variety of images of attractive possible selves and by supporting students in their pursuit of these self-images that are congruent with their own identities.

V. What I did

(1) Recursive talk with Conversation Strategies

Recursive talk is a free timed conversation. In each class, students talk in pairs for several minutes. Regularly, students talk about what they had talked in the last class or about what they wrote in Free writing. To compensate their lack of communicative competence, four Conversation Strategies, fillers, rejoinders, shadowing, and follow up questions, have been introduced to students.

(2) Speaking Test

In each semester, students have speaking test. The goal of time and the topic for speaking test were given at the each test. In May and June, the target time was 1 minute. It was made longer gradually. It was one and a half minutes in October and November, and it was two minutes in February. After the speaking test students have the reflection.

(3) Free writing

Free writing is a simple task where students write about what they want to without stopping for five minutes. Since this task focus on meaning rather than form, grammar correction is not

offered. Here are 6 rules. 1. Write many words 2. Romaji is OK. 3. Messy and dirty writing are OK. 4. Grammar mistakes are OK. 5. Don't stop writing. 6. No dictionaries. No erasers.

(4) Fun Essay

Fun Essay is an activity where students make a posters as an assignment. In each semester, students make the posters. The goals of the number of the words are increased in each semester. Before making posters, rubric are given to the students. There are three aspects, length ,content, and design.

VI. Research issues and Research questions

- (1) How will high school students learn grammar through Communicative Language Teaching instruction?
- (2) How will Communicative Language Teaching instruction change high school students' visions and motivate students?
- (3) How will Communicative Language Teaching instruction develop their communicative competence?

VII. Method

I measured the students' development over the course by analyzing changes in their spoken and written output in class performance tests and worksheets. I will also measure students' motivation through mixed-methods instruments. The questionnaire has items drawn from the work of Taguchi et al. (2009) which were based on Dörnyei's theory. I will conduct a survey to see students' comments about their beliefs in learning English, self-evaluations and interviews with three level of students. This research conducted at a public high school started from April in 2018 and will continue to February in 2019. The learners are 1st year 16 students (8 boys and 8 girls). This class called English Expression1 is held three times a week. The questionnaire has two parts. First part includes 42 items. Dörnyei (2005) proposed The L2 Motivational Self System which is made up of three dimensions, Ideal L2 Self, Ought-To L2 Self, L2, and Intended Learning Efforts. They are adapted from Taguchi et al. (2009). Second part asked students write comments. The students wrote their thought after speaking test and end of the semester. As for first part, here are examples of each 7 variables.

① Ideal L2 Self (Ideal L2)

➤ Examples from questionnaire

I can imagine a situation where I am speaking English with foreigners.

I can imagine myself writing English e-mails/letters.

② Ought-To L2 Self (Ought-To)

➤ Examples from questionnaire

My parents believe that I must study English.

If I do not study English, I will be in trouble on my trip in other countries.

③ L2 Learning Experience (L2 Experience)

➤ Examples from questionnaire

English Activities are fun.

I really enjoy learning English.

④ Intended Learning Efforts (Intended Efforts)

➤ Examples from questionnaire

If an English course was offered in the future, I would like to take it.

I am working hard at learning English.

⑤ L2 Learning Environment (L2 Environment)

➤ Examples from questionnaire

I like the overall atmosphere of my English class.

I find my friends in this class friendly.

⑥ Attitude to learn about grammar (Attitude Grammar)

Attitude to learn about grammar means how much the students are positive to learn English grammars or how much they try to use it. To know how students' beliefs on learning grammar has changed, 6 items are made.

➤ Examples from questionnaire

I try to think about the target grammar.

I enjoy finding rules of new grammar.

⑦ Effect of learning grammar (Effect Grammar)

The effect of learning grammar refers to how much the students can use the target through learning this class.

➤ Examples from questionnaire

I can speak or write with the target grammar which I learned in the class.

I have many chances to use the target grammar.

VIII. Result

(1) Performance Test and Students' reflection

Table1. The goal of time and the topic for speaking test each semester

	The goal of time	Topic
May	1:00	Self-Introduction
June	1:00	My memories
October	1:30	My favorite music
November	1:30	My hobby
February	2:00	Movies

Table1 shows the goal of time and the topic for speaking test. In May and June, the target time was 1 minute. It was made longer gradually. It was one and a half minutes in October and November, and it was two minutes in February. Table2 shows how many students commented

on each category. The table was made based on the students' reflections. For example, in October, 5 students commented that they should have used more Conversation Strategies. And, 8 students thought they should have memorized more. On the other hand, in February, 11 students commented that they should have asked more questions.

Table2. Categorization of students' comments on what they should have done in February

Categories	The number of the students	
	October	February
1 Questions and follow up questions	0	11
2 Conversation Strategies	5	1
3 Shadowing	0	3
4 Fillers	1	3
5 Rejoinders	0	0
6 Memorization	8	1
7 Make eye contact	0	2
8 fluency	1	2

Figure1 described how fluently students think they could talk. More than 80 % of the students thought that they could talk fluently for one minute in May and June. In October, the goal of the speaking test became longer. The percentage of the students who said "No" or "Not at all" increased. Although, in February, the goal of the speaking test got longer again, the percentage of the students who said "No" decreased. Table3 shows how many students commented on each category. 10 students felt improvement on fluency. The most students wrote about fluency.

Figure1. Can you talk fluently?

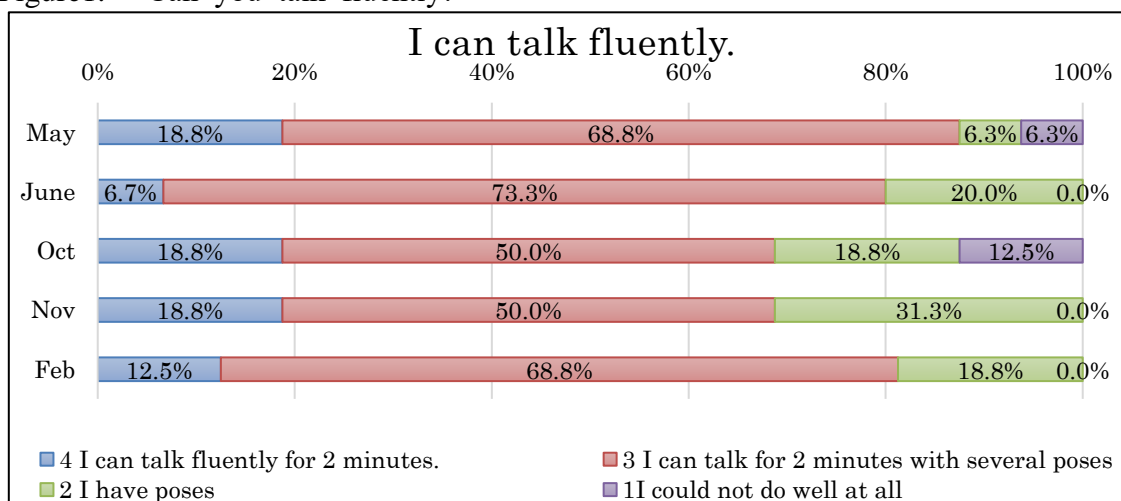


Table3. Categorization of students' comments on what I have improved since last April

Category	The number of the students
1 Use more Conversation strategies	3
2 Talk better (fluency) or longer	10
3 Positiveness	1
4 Understandable comprehensive	2
5 Make eye contact	2
6 Ask questions	1
7 Answer to the questions	1
8 No Change	1

(2) Fun Essay

Fun essay is an activity where students write an essay for one general topic and draw pictures related to the topic. The target number of words in May was 60 words. Gradually it is set longer and it is 100 words in February. Table3 shows the number of the goals and the average in each semester. The more words are set, the more words students wrote. The average of number of words achieved 120 words in February.

Table4. The goal of words and the average of the number of the words used for Fun Essay

	May	October	November	February
Goal	60 words	80 words	90 words	100 words
Average	73.3	92.4	111.6	120.6
		+19.1	+38.3	+47.3

(3) Result of the survey

Table5. The mean of the result of the survey

	Ideal L2 Self	Ought-To L2 Self	L2 Learning Experience	Intended Learning Efforts	L2 Learning Environment	Attitude to learn about grammar	The effect of learning grammar
April	31.4	37.3	46.5	40.3	59.0	44.8	45.3
July	38.4	44.3	59.5	49.0	66.0	56.9	59.2
Dec	42.4	44.6	60.2	52.1	66.1	58.9	60.6
Feb	41.1	51.6	63.2	53.1	60.6	60.2	63.2

Figure2. The graph of the summary of the result of the survey

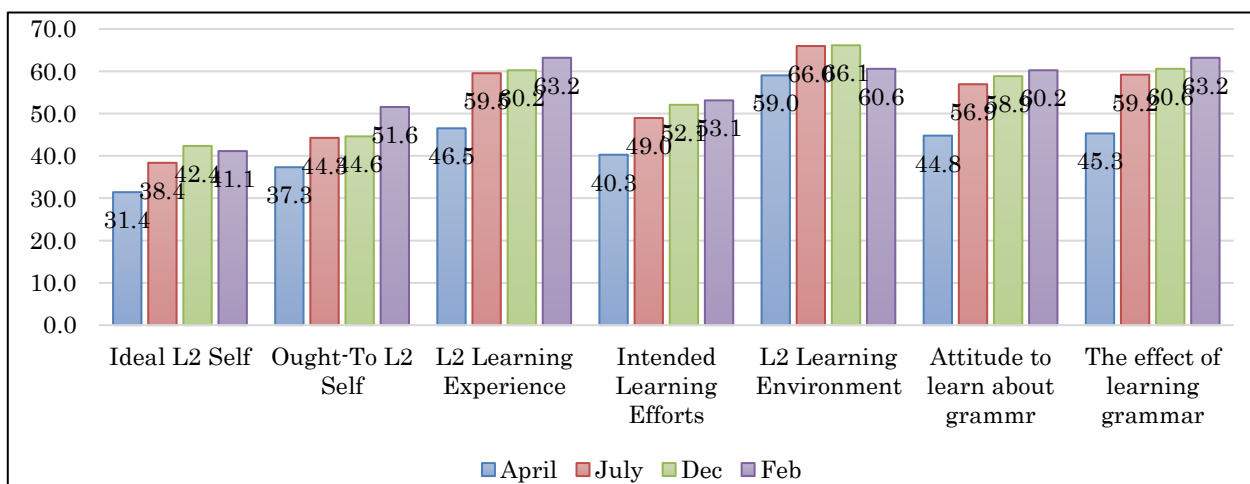


Table 5 shows the result of the survey based on the theoretical framework of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). And, Figure2 is made according to Table5. Except for Ideal L2 Self and L2 Learning Environment, the numbers are slightly increased. L2 Learning Experience shows the highest score, which describes how students think of learning English.

(e.g. English Activities are fun or I really enjoy learning English.) And, the effect of learning grammar (e.g. I can speak or write with the target grammar which I learned in the class) got the same score.

Table6. Categorization of students' comments "Do you have a positive attitude toward this class? Why?"

Categories of students' comments	The number of the students	
	July	February
Desire (e.g. want to, try to)	2	3
Pleasure (e.g. enjoy, happy)	2	6
Preference (e.g. like)	1	2
Progress (e.g. can speak, improve skills)	4	6
Total	9	17

Table6 is a summary of students' comments on whether students have positive attitude toward this class and the reason for it. 14 students out of 16 answered that they are positive for this class. Students found the class interesting and they know the reason why they felt so. Through this class, students have been internalized to enjoy learning English.

Table7. Students' comments, "Do you think learning English grammars through activities are effective?"

<p>Benefit from their friends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When my friends are using target grammar, I also try to use it. That is why pair work is important. ➤ I think this is very effective because we can check each other and sometimes I can discover new things. ➤ If I talk with a close friends, I can tell my partners' mistakes. ➤ I can understand better. Using English grammars, I can understand when and where to use them. And, I can discover new things from my friends. ➤ Through the communication activities, I can learn from my students. ➤ When I have a problem, my friends help me and I can learn from my friends. ➤ When I have grammar mistakes, my friends pointed it out and I can do that to my friends. ➤ We have different ideas so I can find new things from my friends' ideas. ➤ I can learn each other. ➤ Yes, I do.
<p>Benefit from using English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I can learn because I talk many times. ➤ It can be a practice for speaking test. ➤ I can learn grammars naturally. ➤ I can memorize because I talk many times. ➤ Through pair work, I can learn new words.

Table7 shows the students' comments on learning grammars through activities. 15 students wrote what was the benefit from this class. Some students felt the value of learning from their partner. Others felt the one from having chances to talk.

Table8. Students' comments, "Do you have a positive attitude toward small talk?"

<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I think I can learn and improve. ➤ Yes, I do. ➤ I can learn words and grammars and I can enjoy it. ➤ It is important because I can learn through talking many times. ➤ After the free writing, I can choose my favorite topic so I can talk a lot. ➤ It can be a preparation for speaking test and I think my communication skills would improve, which is useful after getting job. ➤ I think the more I speak, the more I can write. And, I can use the Conversation Strategies and grammars here. ➤ Yes. I try to ask questions and I try to make my partner understood. ➤ Even my English were broken, when my partner understand me, I am very happy. And, I can learn expressions from my partner. ➤ I think I can talk better than in April. ➤ Small Talk is very effective because I can practice for speaking test and I can talk with friends who I rarely talk with. And, I can learn grammars and words. ➤ I am not good at talking with others but in small talk I do not feel like that. Thanks to this activity, my speaking skills have improved. ➤ We talk every each class, which enable me to talk in English gradually and I can have confidence. ➤ I have to talk because if not, my partner would be in trouble. I can talk with friends who I rarely talk with. And, I can learn what I did not know.
<p>No</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I am not positive because I am not sure whether the grammars are right.

Table8 has students' comments about Small Talk. Small Talk is a timed conversation where students talk about one specific topic. 14 students are positive to this activity and they wrote the reasons. Students have three major reasons, progress, developing friend ship, and responsible. The example of progress is "I am not good at talking with others but in small talk I do not feel like that. Thanks to this activity, my speaking skills have improved." As for developing friendship, students wrote "Small Talk is very effective because I can practice for speaking test and I can talk with friends who I rarely talk with. And, I can learn grammars and words." Last major reason is responsible. "I have to talk because if not, my partner would be in trouble. I can talk with friends who I rarely talk with. And, I can learn what I did not know."

Table9. Students' comments, "What do you think of using Conversation Strategies (CSs)?"

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I become happy when my partner use rejoinders. ➤ I think my partner understand me.

- I think it is important to react to my partner.
- I think my partner is listening carefully.
- I can understand what my partner think.
- **I think CSs are the signals that shows we understand each other.**
- I can understand that I could make my partner understood.
- **Using CSs, I can show that I am listening and I also understand that my partner is listening, which makes me happy.**
- When my partner uses shadowing, I feel my partner is listening to me.
- When my partner uses the CSs, I become happy so I try to use them.
- When my partner uses the CSs, I become happy, which makes me try to talk more.
- Nothing.

Conversation Strategies (CS) are the strategies that compensate communication problems. From students' comments (See Table 9), they use the CSs to make sure if the partner is following the conversation. A student commented "I think CSs are the signals that shows we understand each other." Students could understand each other with CSs. Using CSs makes more benefits. Students identified what the partner think. As a student commented, "Using CSs, I can show that I am listening and I also understand that my partner is listening, which makes me happy," Students confirmed that they are interested in the partner speech and listening to them.

Table10. Students' comments, "What do you think of the atmosphere in this class?"

- I think everyone smiles and the atmosphere is very good.
- The classroom sounds fun.
- It has good atmosphere.
- I enjoy this class and I am rarely sleepy.
- The classroom has good atmosphere.
- The atmosphere is good and it keeps me awake.
- The classroom has good atmosphere. And we enjoy it.
- Everyone enjoy this class. We enjoy Small Talk. So, the atmosphere is good. I think my English skills would improve.
- Everyone can enjoy this class. I can ask my friends if I do not understand.
- I think the atmosphere is better than other classes and it makes me feel that I want to study more.
- Since we have many pair works, we can enjoy sharing opinions.

IX. Discussion

(1) How will high school students learn grammar through Focus on Form?

As for learning grammar in the classroom, students used the target grammar in several ways and times. In both speaking and writing activities, students produced the target grammar and their classmates received it. (See Table 7.) From their comments about effectiveness of learning grammar in the class, they think it is effective. When students use the target grammar, they think

they can use it and when their partner use the target grammar they can notice the partner's using the grammar. According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), "the learners need to notice how their language use differs from that of a more proficient speaker." Students can interact with other students and they use the target grammar in this class. Moreover, through Small Talk, students got the chances to use the grammar they learned. A student commented on Small Talk, "I think the more I speak, the more I can write. And, I can use Conversation Strategies and grammars here." As VanPatten (1990) suggested, "in particular early stage learners, have great difficulty in attending to both form and content." However, Focus on Form enables students to learn target grammar in a meaningful content.

(2) How will Focus on Form motivate students?

Students who learned grammars through communicative language learning think that the atmosphere is good for learning. Fourteen students out of sixteen students wrote positive comments and students in February wrote more reasons than in July. Because students saw other students participate in this class positively, they also want to enjoy in this class. Students' thoughts or feeling can impact on other students. Seeing students try hard, other students also feel like trying hard. Murphey (1998) presented Near Peer Role Models and he concluded that "even more valuable is knowing how to create generative learning structures that allow for quality interaction in which students can learn from and inspire each other." One student wrote "I think the atmosphere is better than other classes and it makes me feel like studying more." And, another student commented "Everyone enjoy this class. We enjoy Small Talk. So, the atmosphere is good. I think my English skills would improve." Students see other students have good feeling to the class and they also feel comfortable. Their feeling are influenced each other and students have been internalized to enjoy learning English.

From the aspect of the 'vision', Dörnyei & Kubanyiova (2014) pointed about the observational learning for creating the learners' vision, "modeling is known to be highly effective in changing people's attitudes." In Japan, it is rare for students to contact with people who use English. Thus, their model would be their friends or teachers. Bandura (1994) also write about it. "Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort raises observers' beliefs that they too possess the capabilities master comparable activities to succeed." Focus on Form is one of the communicative language approach where students interact each other. Students know the content of the class and they also perceive inspiration from other students.

(3) How will Focus on Form change high school students' believes in learning English and develop their communicative competence?

The table3 shows the students' thoughts, what they should have done for the speaking test. In October, 8 students commented that they should have memorized what they would talk. From that comments, half of the students in this class relied on memorization. Their conversation was so limited because they could not talk what they had not thought before the test. They thought their goal was keep talking for one and a half minutes. It did not matter how meaningful talk they had. On the other hand, 12 students commented about asking questions in February. They said that they should have asked more questions. To talk for two minutes, it is not enough to memorize what they talk. They need to have more authentic conversation. From this, it can be said that students tried to make the conversation comprehensible and meaningful. Students need to understand the partners' utterance to ask more questions to their partner. Thus, comparing to

October, students got to have more meaningful conversation.

Figure1 shows students' beliefs of how fluently students talk. In October and November, the percentage of the students who said they could talk fluently was dropped from June. Students tried to memorize the conversation but the goal of the minutes were extended. That is the reason why some students felt they could not talk fluently. However, in February, the percentage of the students who think they could talk fluently grow. Furthermore, Table4 shows that 10 students (out of 16) wrote that they felt improvement on fluency. The more they have meaningful conversation, the better they talk.

X. Conclusion

As we have seen, Focus on Form provides students chances to use English, where students interact each other. In this class, students have positive attitude toward this class and they try to use target language. Students improved their speaking ability such as speaking fluently. Students see other students using target grammars or new expressions. They can learn from other students. Moreover, through this theoretical instruction, students feel comfort and it provides a good atmosphere. This atmosphere lets some students try to use English and other students see their classmates using English, it makes students feel that they also want to try participate in the activities. When students notice that the other students show the positive attitude, he or she want to try to be the same attitude. Students have psychological impacts through communication. In this way, Focus on Form instruction can be an approach in which students can learn English positively and effectively.

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