

Final Action Research Report 2015

Terumi Yoshida

1. Title: Developing English Competence Through Speaking Tests

2. Teaching Context

(1) Class size: 3-2,3,4 liberal arts class(8 boys and 12 girls each)

(2) Subject: English Conversation (2 lessons a week)

(3) Textbook: Hello there! English Conversation (TOKYO SHOSEKI)

(4) Level of the students: Low level third year students in senior high school

(5)Problems I face:

- 1) Most students are not motivated to learn English. .
- 2) The textbook does not provide activities based on conversation strategies.
- 3) Students have not experienced speaking tests in pairs.

3. Goal:

- (1) To make a positive English environment in the classroom for students to use English and help each other through pair or group work.
- (2) To acquire basic conversation strategies.
- (3) To enable the students to talk about familiar topics with a partner in English for two minutes.
- (4) To help students improve their speaking competence and other skills through pair activities.

4. What I did:

- (1) The activities students did in every class using the required textbook.
 - ①Listening activity in the textbook and the workbook: Students listen to “Break the Ice” and “Let’s Listen!” parts in the textbook and the workbook.
 - ②Conversation activities : Students have pair activities using “Dialog”, “Try It Out!” and “Communication Workshop” parts.
 - ③Practice for speaking tests: Students talk about a topic related to each lesson and practice a dialog for a speaking test with three different partners at the beginning of the each class.
 - ④The Classes are with an ALT or a student teacher from Chili

3 – 2	3 – 3	3 – 4
13 times	5 times	11 times

(2)The special activities Table 1

	Category	Title	Points
April	Questionnaire	About four skills	
	Writing/ Speaking	About myself	I am ~. I like ~.
May	1 st Speaking Test	What do you like? When is your birthday?	Hi. How are you doing? How about you? Nice talking with you. You too.
	1 st Transcription		
	Writing	What did you do during the holidays?	Comments & Questions (group work)
June	2 nd Speaking Test	What kind of music do you like?	+ Rejoinders (I see. Great. Really? Sounds nice...)
	2 nd Transcription		
July	Writing	My favorite music	Comments & Questions (group work)
	Questionnaire	About four skills	
October	3 rd Speaking Test	My favorite food	+ Shadowing, One follow up question
	Writing	Recipe	(pair work)
November	4 th Speaking Test	Where do you want to go?	+ Fillers (Well, Let me see.)
	Writing	Japanese Culture	(pair work)
	Questionnaire	About four skills	
January	5 th Speaking Test	What is your favorite thing?	All CSs students have learned 2 mins
	Writing	My favorite thing	
February	Questionnaire	About four skills & pair work	

① Questionnaire:

• In order to know students' current ability to command English, I asked them to answer a questionnaire about conversation strategies and the four skills in April, July, November, and February. In February I conduct another questionnaire to research the effect of pair work.

② Speaking Test:

• Students had five speaking tests with each term test. The topics of the first speaking test were "What do you like?" and "When is your birthday?" This test was conducted as a part of self-introduction in May. Conversation strategies, opener, closer, and "how about you?" were introduced then. They had practiced pair talk many times at the beginning of each class. I showed them the criteria before the test to make sure that they understood the focus of the speaking test. After each speaking test students filled in the self-evaluation sheet. Each performance was recorded by using an iPad mini. In the next class they transcribed their

speaking test and reflected on their performance.

- The topic of the second speaking test in June was “What kind of music do you like?” which was related to the topic of the textbook students used. A new conversation strategy, “Rejoinders” was introduced. Students experienced the second transcription. This speaking test was followed by a writing activity.

- The third speaking test was held in October. Its topic was “My favorite food,” which was also related to the textbook. Here new conversation strategies, shadowing and follow-up question, were introduced. This speaking activity led to a pair writing activity.

- The fourth speaking test on “Where do you want to go?” was performed in November. This time another conversation strategy, “Fillers,” was added. For the first time, students experienced evaluating the performance conducted by another pairs, filling out the same evaluation sheet, which their teacher actually used. I tried to make pairs with a strong student and a weak student so that the strong student could help the weak student speak in English.

- The fifth speaking test in January was about “What is your favorite thing?” Students evaluated others’ performances in the class as they did the last time. They also wrote an essay of the same topic.

③ Recording and Transcription:

In the first and the second speaking tests, all performances were recorded by 10 iPad minis. In the next class all the students experienced transcribing what they had said during the test for the first time. They wrote down their words enthusiastically and then corrected the errors they made looking at their scripts. They also transcribed the second speaking test.

④ Writing:

Students experienced various kinds of writing from answering questions to essay writing. The writing topics were mostly related to the speaking ones. Students were provided five or six topics to write about including pair writing.

- The first trial: Students didn’t think that they could express their ideas in English. So, first I encouraged them to write a single English sentence like “I am ~” or “I like ~”. To make students get used to writing English, I prepared lots of questions to answer.

- The second trial: As students thought that they were weak at writing English, I started to have my students write about daily matters like what they did during the holidays. Based on this writing, they had questions and answers in groups of four in order to make this activity communicative and to have my students hit upon new ideas to write on.

- The third trial: Students wrote about the same topic as the second speaking test, “My favorite music.” After writing an essay, they wrote comments and questions to three classmates in group work. Many students wrote them in Japanese because they couldn’t put their words into English.

- The fourth trial: I made writing activities pair work to provide students with the opportunities to help each other. The topics were “Recipes” and “Japanese Culture” to introduce to the ALT and the student-teacher from Chili. I tried to make pairs with a strong student and a weak student so that the strong student could help the weak student write

English compositions.

- The fifth trial: As the last writing activity, students wrote an essay about “My Favorite Thing,” which was the same topic as the fifth speaking test. In order to encourage and help them write a longer essay, many questions and a model essay written by their teacher were provided.

5. Results:

(1) Speaking

① Students’ comments on the fifth speaking test in January

- Target for speaking test n = 54

CSs: opener, closer, shadowing, rejoinders, a follow-up question, fillers

3Qs: What is your favorite thing? Why do you like it?

One follow-up question

- What competence was improved after five speaking tests?

(): the number of the student

Positive comments

My English competence has improved.(2)/ I could speak English more clearly and fluently.(9)/ / I came to interact with my partner in English. / I came to understand what my partner said.(2)/ / I could speak easy English.(4)/ I could memorize English more easily./ I came to use openers and closers fluently./ I could ask three questions./ I came to use rejoinders. (7)/ I could use three different rejoinders.

- Students’ comments on the speaking tests through the year.

Positive comments

I could answer difficult questions./ I came to be able to memorize English words.(2)/ I enjoyed speaking test with making good eye contact.(10)/ My speaking competence was much improved.(8) /I could help my partner when he was stuck./ I could cooperate with my partner when we interacted with each other. / I could speak English in a loud voice.(2)/ I finally could speak English perfectly./ I remembered my words better than I had expected./ I want to speak English more fluently.(3)

Negative comments

The script was difficult this time.(7)/ I am not used to using fillers./ I can't talk with my partner making good eye contact still./ I forgot to use rejoinders./ I can't use fillers yet./ I couldn't ask three questions./ I couldn't speak well/ I didn't remember my words.(4)

(2)Students' comments on the transcription

①Second transcription

• Things I improved this time

n=54

Positive comments

I could transcribe what I said more rapidly./ I could support my partner when he was stuck.(2)/ I did well./ I could ask three questions to my partner./ I could speak English fluently.(7)/ I could speak English more accurately.(2)/ I could write English more accurately.(2)/ I could speak English in a louder voice.(15)/ I could improve my English pronunciation./ I could make good eye contact this time./ I could understand what my partner said./ I could memorize English sentences.(5)/ English words came to me smoothly./ I could use rejoinders./ My speaking ability was improved.(2)/ I improved various English competence.

Negative comments

Memorizing English was difficult./ When I put my feelings into sentences I was at a loss as to what I was saying.

(3)The result of the questionnaire about the four skills

Table 3 n=56 in April, 54 in July, 52 in December and February

1 Speaking					
①How long can you talk about daily topics?					
	2~3mins.fluently	2~3mins.with pause	1~2mins.	1minute	2 or 3 words
April	0%	2%	0%	13%	85%
July	2%	2%	17%	28%	49%
December	4%	4%	24%	20%	48%
February	14%	14%	22%	16%	34%
2 Conversation Strategy					
②Can you use "openers" and "closers"?					
	Every time	Almost	Sometimes	One of them	None
April	2%	6%	7%	9%	76%
July	24%	15%	15%	9%	37%
December	29%	22%	10%	8%	31%

February	42%	13%	16%	7%	22%
③I can use different kinds of rejoinders.					
	More than 5 kinds	3~ 4 kinds	2 kinds	1 kind	None
April	0%	2%	7%	24%	67%
July	11%	24%	15%	21%	29%
December	17%	22%	22%	17%	22%
February	20%	35%	9%	16%	20%
④I can shadow what my partner said.					
	Many times	Several times	3 times	1 or 2	None
December	14%	16%	10%	37%	23%
February	20%	38%	11%	11%	20%
⑤I can make follow up questions.					
	More than 3Qs	2 Qs	1Q	Sometimes	None
December	24%	20%	10%	22%	24%
February	31%	29%	11%	7%	22%
3 Writing					
⑥I can write English compositions about daily topics.					
	About 80 words	About 50 words	About 30 words	About 15 words	None
April	0%	0%	2%	21%	77%
July	2%	6%	21%	38%	33%
December	4%	4%	27%	25%	40%
February	5%	7%	37%	14%	37%
4 Listening					
⑦I can understand what my partner said.					
	All	Almost	Half	Some	A little
April	0%	6%	4%	59%	31%
July	7%	11%	35%	35%	12%
December	3%	17%	27%	41%	12%
February	13%	16%	29%	31%	11%
⑧I can understand what both the teacher and ALT said.					
	All	Almost	Half	Some	A little

April	0%	4%	11%	36%	49%
July	6%	15%	15%	46%	18%
December	3%	24%	20%	24%	29%
February	9%	27%	18%	27%	18%

5 Reading

⑨I can understand the textbook.

	All	Almost	Half	Some	A little
April	0%	0%	18%	38%	44%
July	6%	8%	18%	52%	16%
December	0%	15%	33%	27%	25%
February	7%	20%	29%	27%	17%

6 Others

⑩Do you like English class?

	Yes	Yes, somewhat	I'm neutral	No, not so much	No
April	0%	10%	13%	15%	62%
July	2%	10%	23%	20%	45%
December	0%	16%	20%	20%	44%
February	5%	12%	21%	19%	43%

⑪What activity do you like?

	Small talk	Pair activity	Speaking test	Writing	Reading
April	2%	4%	2%	2%	24%
July	8%	6%	6%	6%	32%
December	5%	8%	10%	20%	23%
February	9%	11%	11%	11%	25%

⑫Do you eagerly participate in pair talk?

	Yes	No
April	26%	74%
July	56%	44%
December	56%	44%
February	59%	41%

⑬Do you enjoy English class?

	Yes	I'm neutral.	No
April	4%	42%	54%
July	8%	48%	44%
December	5%	49%	46%
February	11%	48%	41%

In all categories students improved their competence somewhat. As for listening 10 % of the students could understand half of what their partner said in April, and 58 % of the students could in February. As for reading 18 % of the students could understand half of the textbook in April and 56% in February.

(4)The result of a questionnaire about the conversation strategies and peer teaching and learning held in February

①What conversation strategies have you acquired? n=44 (%) Table 4

	Average	3 - 2	3 - 3	3 - 4
Opener	82	89	83	71
Shadowing	68	67	58	79
Rejoinders	80	83	58	93
Fillers	64	61	58	71
Closer	86	94	67	79
Asking in English	55	56	42	64
Answering in English	59	50	50	79
Eye contact	59	50	50	79
2 mins conversation	45	39	42	57

②Have you ever helped your partner speak in English? (%)

	Average	3 - 2	3 - 3	3 - 4
Yes	43	22	67	50
No	57	78	33	50

I could tell my partner English words he/ she forgot.(10) I could tell my partner the Japanese meaning of my question.

③Have you ever been helped by your partner while speaking in English? (%)

	Average	3 - 2	3 - 3	3 - 4
Yes	52	50	58	50
No	48	50	42	50

My partner could tell me the English words I forgot.(13) My partner made me memorize the script. My partner taught me how to pronounce English words.(2) My partner taught me how to make English sentences.(3) My

partner could tell me the Japanese meaning of his/her question.

④ Which kind of partner would you prefer to have for a speaking practice or test? (%)

	Average	3 - 2	3 - 3	3 - 4
Higher Level	44	29	33	57
Higher level partners help me.(7) I can rely on them. They understand English. I try hard for them.(2) I can talk more with them. We can help each other. It is easy to keep talking.(2) I can get higher score with them.				
Same Level	49	59	33	36
As my friends are the same level as I am, I can relax with them.(9) I can enjoy talking with them. If my partner is a higher level student, I will bring him/ her trouble.				
Lower Level	2	0	0	7
I have a sense of responsibility that I must teach a lower level student. It is difficult to keep talking with lower level students.				
Anyone	5	12	33	0
Anyone is OK for me.				

⑤ You made pairs with various classmates. What is a good point in having conversation with different partners?

I was motivated to speak English. I could speak English. I could speak with a new friend.(11) **My partner taught me how to pronounce English words.**(2) **My partner taught me English. We could help each other. I could communicate with my classmates.**(2) I could listen to various ideas.(6) It is enjoyable.(2) It is a good practice to be asked many questions.(2) **I was impressed by fluent speakers of English. I tried to be a good speaker of English.**(2) **I could make good eye contact.**

⑥ In what part were you impressed by your partner? Who was the partner you were impressed by?

My partner spoke English fluently.(12) My partner memorized all their words.(8) My partner could answer my questions.(2) Her pronunciation was good.(2) My partner spoke in a loud voice.(2) My partner made good eye contact. My partner had a wide vocabulary. My partner used various rejoinders. My partner spoke difficult English sentences.(3) My partner spoke like a native speaker.

⑦ You had two writing activities in pairs. One was about “Cooking” and the other was about “Japanese Culture.” Please write a good point of pair work writing.

We built a good relationship.(2) My partner taught me English words and sentences.(3) We could discuss the topic. We could share the work.(2) I enjoyed the pair work.(6). We could create new and good idea.(6) We could teach English to each other.(7) My communicative competence was improved.

6 What I learned

(1) Speaking

At first, students hesitated about telling their thoughts in English to their classmates and changing their partners every time. But gradually they got used to talking in English and began to enjoy exchanging their real information.

① Speaking Test

- Even the boys who didn't practice speaking English during the class did well in the speaking test. On the other hand, some lazy boys didn't memorize their lines for the test.
- Generally, girls, whose English level was rather low, tried to memorize their words and did their best in the speaking test compared to the boys of the same level.
- Good students tended to evaluate their competence lower and others higher.

② Conversation Strategies

- Most students came to use "opener," "closer," "rejoinders," and "shadowing." I introduced "follow-up questions" from the third speaking test. Making questions with interrogatives was difficult for them. I should have had them practice making wh-questions in every class in order to master the use of who, what, where, when, and how in sentences.
- Two speaking tests weren't enough for students to acquire "fillers." In order to get used to using a new conversation strategy, at least three speaking tests were required.

③ Transcribing

- Through the transcription students realized both what they could do and what they couldn't, and they set their new goals for the next speaking test. Actually in the comments of the second transcription positive comments, which referred to fluency, accuracy, and memorization, increased. Furthermore, the comments that they supported their partners during the speaking test could be found.

(2) Writing

- Students had seldom had an opportunity to express themselves in English. So precise and detail instructions including lexis, grammar, structure, and so on, were required. In order to provide some ideas for the students to write longer essays, many questions were given and sample essays written by teachers and senior students were shown. Two writing activities were done as pair work so that students could remove their negative image toward English compositions. As I expected, students appreciated writing activities in pairs, saying "we could cooperate with each other." Students also enjoyed reading classmates' compositions.

(3) Four Skills

- Speaking: All the students could keep talking for two minutes in the last speaking test. They could command the conversation strategies they had learned somehow.
- Writing: Three students wrote essays of more than 100 words. Students actually wrote essays around 40 words, but they still think that they are weak at writing English sentences.
- Others: Comparing the number in April with the number in February, students came to like English and English class, and they participated in pair talk more eagerly. More students came to like small talk, pair activity, speaking test, and writing and reading activities even if the increase rate was small.

(4) Questionnaire about pair activities

- As a whole, the students of 3-2 and 3-4 acquired conversation strategies better than those of 3-3. 3-2 and 3-4 had more classes with an ALT and a student-teacher from Chile.
- Students actually had a great influence on each other. Almost half of the students taught their partners and learned from them. I witnessed peer teaching and learning happening during the class and the speaking tests. As there were more unmotivated weak students in 3-3, more peer teaching and learning occurred in that class.

(5) Classroom Dynamics

- Through all kinds of pair work, such as small talk, five speaking tests, and essay writing, stronger students helped weaker students, and weaker students appreciated the support from the stronger students. Stronger students actually brought good effects on the learning of weaker students. Peer teaching and learning, which was happening among students, transferred classroom dynamics. The atmosphere of the English class became encouraging and the relationship among the students became closer. The change in classroom dynamics occurred through pair work.

(6) Good students worked on each task enthusiastically and improved their English competence. Even the weak students could improve their four skills if they tried hard. Actually a learning environment has been created and the attitude of weak students has turned positively. But some unmotivated weak students needed more private support to develop their English competence. Much time and continuous private support are needed for the weakest.

7 Future issues

- (1) I should show students a clear goal in every class.
- (2) Asking wh-questions should be practiced in every class.
- (3) Making pairs intentionally is important, especially for weak students.

(4) Making not only a yearly syllabus, but also a three-year's syllabus is important.

Lesson Plan: English Conversation

Terumi Yoshida

- 1. Level: Third year, Senior High School**
- 2. Class size: 3-2,3,4 (8 boys and 12 girls in each class)**
- 3. Textbook: Hello there! English Conversation (TOKYO SHOSEKI)**

Lesson 10 Helping Each Other

4. Goals & Objectives

- (1) Students try hard to convey their thoughts and understand their partners' ideas.
- (2) Students can use basic conversation strategies.
- (3) Students can speak and write about their favorite thing.
- (4) Students can build good relationships with their classmates helping each other in English class.

5. Procedure of the activity

- (1) Day one: Small talk with basic conversation strategies. Students do a listening activity (Break the Ice) and a speaking activity (Dialog) from the text book.
- (2) Day two: Small talk. Students write about themselves and complete the script for a speaking test. They have a speaking activity (Try It Out) from the textbook.
- (3) Day three: Speaking practice in pairs. Students do a listening activity and a speaking activity (Dialog, Sound and Try It Out) from the workbook.
- (4)Day four: Speaking practice in pairs. Students do a listening activity (Let's Listen, Communication Workshop) As for practice, students evaluate others' performance according to the criteria which teachers use for the test.
- (5)Day five: Speaking test. Students have a speaking test in pairs and evaluate their performances by themselves. (this period)
- (6)Day six: Students write about their favorite thing answering some questions.

6. Today's objective

- (1)To create a classroom climate whereby students can promote the proposed behaviors such as helping, sharing, cooperating, and collaborative problem solving with peers.
- (2)Each pair has a speaking test and tries to use as many conversation strategies as possible that they have learned. This time, opener, closer, shadowing, rejoinders, one follow-up question, and fillers are included.
- (3)Students are encouraged to keep talking for two minutes.

7. Today's lesson plan

- (1)A teacher draws a number and decides pairs and the order on the spot.

- (2) Each pair tries to do their best in performing without looking at the script.
- (3) Students reflect on their performance and complete the evaluation sheet.

Speaking Test ⑤

“What is your favorite thing? /

Who is your favorite person?”

I love ice cream!



1A: Hi,

2B: Hi,

3A: How are you doing? *(opener) あいさつから始めよう

4B: I'm How about you? *いろいろな答え方をしてみよう

5A: I'm So, let's talk about “My favorite thing.”

☆ “What is your favorite thing?”

6B: Well, *(考え中) My favorite thing is

7A: Your favorite thing is *(shadowing)繰り返し

..... *(rejoinders) つなぎ言葉

☆ “Why do you like it?”

8B: Let me see, *(つなぎ言葉) I like because

9A: You like because *(shadowing)繰り返し

..... *(rejoinders) つなぎ言葉

☆ “Where/ When/ Who/ How did you ~?”

10B: I

11A: You *(shadowing)繰り返し

..... *(rejoinders) つなぎ言葉

B: 3つの質問をする。

A: Nice talking with you!

B: You, too!



*(closer) 終りの挨拶

Fillers

Well...えっと Let me see...そうだな~ Let me think...

Rejoinders

Terrific! Great! Sounds nice. Wonderful! Super! Cool!
Really? I see, Interesting, Exciting, That's too bad.

Signatures of your classmates you had a practice with

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | ⑧ |
| ⑨ | ⑩ | ⑪ | ⑫ |

My favorite thing / person



お気に入りの物 or 人を英語で説明しましょう。

My favorite thing is animation.

I like animation because it is very interesting and

I like voice actors!

When I was a very young child, I came to like it

I have liked ^{it} for nine years.

My favorite voice actor is Kaji Yuki.

He plays ^{the role of} the voice of the chief character in the "Attack of Titan"!!

The animation has the world of various works and continues giving us a dream.

Super!!

(64) words

どうして好き?いつから好き?何色?どこで買ったの?どんな思い出?などを書こう!

Picture



Class 3 No. 1



