Action Research Final Report 2016

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1. Title: How teachers reinforce learners' confidence in using English and improve their English competence through integrating four skills

2. Teaching context

- 1) Level: First year students of a public senior high school
- 2) Subject: Communication English I (8) (Extensive Reading, Communication, Essays)
- 3) Class Size: 20students * 3classes
- 4) Supplementary textbooks: Speech Navigator2 (Matsuka Phonics Inc.), Extensive Reading "Dokusyo Kiroku Techo" (SEG), Data Base 3000 Kihon Eitango Jyukugo 4th Edition(Kirihara Shoten)

5) Problems:

Most of the students who have entered my high school got very low English scores on high school entrance exams and have low motivation to study it in general. It is quite obvious comparing it with other subjects. Also, they don't have basic English vocabulary nor know grammar rules, though they believe English grammar is important. They have already become weaker learners of English at junior high school or have not been good at English. They have believed English is a difficult subject. Their attitude is not so bad, but it is obvious that their motivation to study English is low.

As for the students' goals, they only study English not to lose the credits or only to pass the tests. They just remember some points for very limited terms, such as during an exam week. When they study English, they just copy the right answers or just do what they must do, and they do not think about the answers nor express by themselves.

Drawing attention to the teachers' work, some teachers still continue to give written tests to students, focusing mainly on rote memory; students are trained not to think and express themselves. The teachers and their students believe that grammar is the most important thing. Those classes are naturally teacher-centered, not student-centered, learning. The problem on this point is that teachers do not have enough time to discuss how we modify our materials to our students, including performance tests. Mostly, they like to help each other make the materials and exams, however, some of them do not understand the procedures, and the purposes of timed-writing and performance tests properly. Same as other schools' situations, we need to make time to build a closer teacher-collaboration system.

3. Goals:

Students will be active learners through the several types of activities, such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading, including extensive reading and listening. Also, they will

improve their English proficiency through collaboration in pair work. They will become wonderful partners for each other by pair work in each lesson.

As an English teacher, I try to improve an English program for first year of senior high school in a Communication English I, through the method of integrating four skills; reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

4. What I did:

- 1) Extensive reading and listening
- 2) Reforming the communicative activities (pair work, group work)
- 3) Reforming the written test
- 4) Introducing the conversation strategies
- 5) Conducting the performance test and self-evaluation sheet
- 6) Introducing the timed-writing
- 7) Vocabulary building
- 8) Encouraging the students to take the challenge of the English Step Test

The four big challenges this year are reforming the communicative activities including the conversation strategies, conducting performance test, introducing timed writing, and reforming the written test. Also, the most important point this year among teachers was actually if we could link the materials teachers had made for several years and the new textbook which we have adopted. At the same time, I would like to connect the activities with students' interest and their English level. Organizing those points, I constructed the order and contents of the communicative activities.

To do these things effectively, I talked about them to all the students in the gymnastic hall in the period for integrated study in the beginning of the year. Students could understand how they can start to study English as a high school subject. Through my guidance, they could know they have several kinds of opportunities to learn English; I mean not only reading or grammar. So, I mentioned they could reset the feeling that they hate English or they are not good at it and start with the way they are interested in, such as extensive reading or listening. At that time HR teachers got know them naturally, and they often face the problem, which is that their students cannot keep studying English well. Many of the students talked their family about them, so even their parents got know what are important to learn English at high school.

Through the whole academic year, we have always faced the problem of shortage of time. However, I could somehow combine the new textbook and the original materials at school. Teachers have satisfied and decided to continue to use the textbook next year, too. Even in the very limited time, I could continue the performance tests once in every term encouraging the students to use conversation strategies, and keep timed-writing in the beginning and end of each term, which were the first step of progress.

Chart1: Topics for communicative activities and writing

	1	Term	Topics
	1	~Midterm test	Introducing the place I live
1st term	2	~Term test	Recommending the favorite books and movies
	3	Performance test	Asking and answering on 1 & 2
Summer	4	Assignment	Making a poster or an essay on a extensive reading book
	5	~Midterm test	Researching a country and presenting on it
2 nd term	6	~Term test	Challenging debate
	7	Performance test	Asking and answering on 5 & 6
Winter	8	Assignment	Making a diary on the most memorable event with a picture
Ord Amour-	9	~Term test	Dream / Future job
3 rd term	10	Performance test	Asking and answering on 9

Research Design

I gave a self-evaluation sheet every after the performance test and analyzed data. I could collect forty to sixty sheets every time. In addition, I gave the students a questionnaire in Japanese and students wrote their answers in Japanese. I analyzed the numerical data using descriptive statistics and textual data using thematic analysis.

5. Results:

1) Extensive reading

Generally, students had an extensive reading class once a week, however, depending on the school schedule, sometimes they had less number of times, or some students had more chances during their club activities. Also, some students borrowed books from the library and read books at home, on the other hand, others did not do it. Consequently, there are big gap in the total numbers of word, which students read in a year. We can see the difference in chart 1. I think the result of this year is lower than the one of last year, and I need to explore more the effective ways of extensive listening and reading.

Students' comments on extensive reading and listening

[First term]

- · I need more effort.
- I could learn the way we started reading with easy level then gradually higher level. Thanks to it, I could enjoy reading English books.
- I could estimate the meaning of the words or sentences which I could not understand by the context or the story or pictures.
- · I have gotten used to estimate the meaning of many difficult words which I do not understand while reading.
- · I came to read a little faster.
- · I feel I came to understand the contents with listening the audio materials.

[Second term]

- · I could gradually read difficult books.
- · I have achieved reading more than 20,000 words. And I feel the number of books I can understand has increased.
- · I think using speaker-phone is good.
- · I still read slowly but I feel pleased that I have come to read more difficult books.
- · While listening to CDs, recently I can read faster than CDs.
- · Now I can read books of about 1,000 pages.
- · I can read longer books because my vocabulary has increased.
- · I have got used to read with predicting.

[Third term]

- · I have accomplished reading over 50,000 words.
- · Comparing to the last term, I do not mind reading longer English books.
- · Now I can read books of YL1.0 with good understanding.
- · I can read books of YL1.2 and I can understand longer books.
- · I can listen to English with faster speed than before.
- · I have been poor at reading English, but I have got used to reading quite a lot.

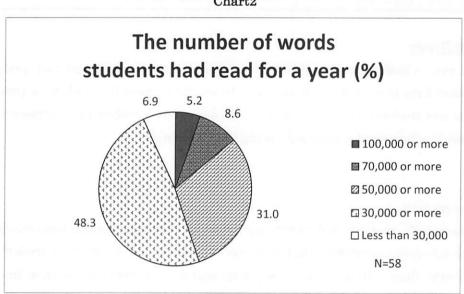


Chart2

2) Timed-writing

Students challenged to write freely on the given topic within five minutes. They did their best to write as many words as they could. They did in the beginning and the end of each term. The first topic was their self-introduction and the second one was what they had learned in the class during the first term, which were "The place they live" and "Their favorite books and movies." In the second and third term, I tried to use the same topics related to the topics of communicative activities during the class, which were "The countries they want to go" and "Their dream (future jobs)." for both beginning and ending term in order to see their difference.

In the first term, the average of word length rose sharply, but as the topics got more difficult, the improvement rose slowly. Throughout the year, the average varied from 33.7 words to 54.1 words. The higher improvements of the year are 49 words, 46words, and 42 words.

Unfortunately, in March we had to conduct it after the term exam, when most students were very relaxed and do not feel like doing anything. Therefore, some students did not try hard and seven students wrote only less number of the word, which they wrote in April.

Chart3

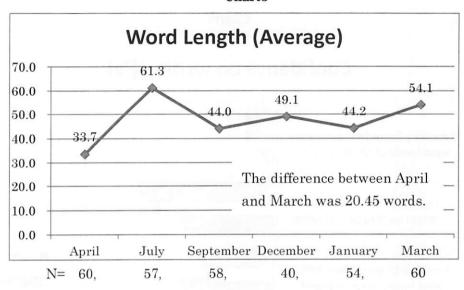
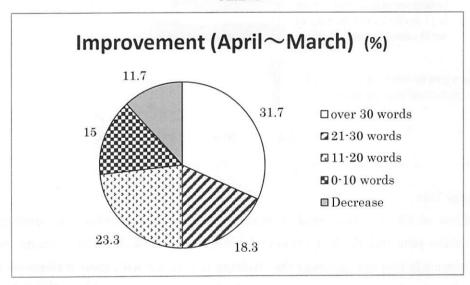


Chart4



Students' comments on writing

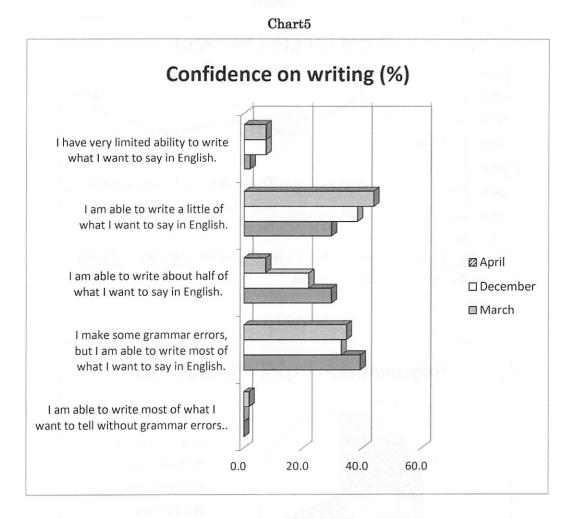
[First term]

- In the beginning of the year I felt writing was difficult and I hated it, however, I had gotten used to doing it gradually.
- · I felt the time is too short.
- · It was difficult when I wanted to write what I thought of.
- · I was too nervous to write English sentences.

[Second term]

- · I have come to write longer sentences by using conjunctions.
- · I could get used to writing without looking at anything.
- · I could accustomed to writing and do not feel writing is difficult.

- · I feel the shortage of vocabulary and could not write English sentences.
- · I cannot write well yet but I have come to mind what I want to write.
- · I could use more varieties of expressions.
- · The number of expressions I can use has been increasing. I could express what I wanted to say.



3) Performance Test

First of all, it was a kind of miracle that we could conduct the performance tests throughout the year and all the teachers who taught this class did it in the same way. To do it, teachers obviously had to encourage the students to interact with their classmates a lot during the class. As a result, the class became more students-centered in learning English. In addition, the tests made the students' motivation up and the self-evaluation sheet helped them to see their achievements and feedbacks.

As for the details of the result of performance test, the topic for the third term was more difficult than the ones in other terms. Therefore, the score of delivery was not good in the third term. They got familiar of the topic for the second term, and they did the presentation on the topic. Then, the score of delivery and smile / eye contact in the second term were highest. Most students looked confident on this topic. Meanwhile, comments, which are parts of conversation strategies, and accuracy of both question and answer were highest in the third term. Comparing

to those scores of the first term, I could see more students' confidence.

Chart6: Self-evaluation of the performance tests

	POV	There has a disconnections		%	
		Evaluation	1st	2nd	3rd
		I spoke clearly in a loud voice.	40.8	52.1	38
	Delivery	I spoke in a small voice, pronounced Japanese way or used Japanese.	59.2	47.9	62
Speaking	T01	I kept talking for 3 minutes fluently.	31.3	29.8	30.2
	Fluency	I needed more effort.	68.8	70.2	69.8
	Smile	I made a good eye contact and smiled.	71.4	75	73.5
	Eye Contact	I needed more effort.	28.6	25	26.5
	Fillers	I used over 2 kinds of fillers.	63.8	81.3	70
G1-:11	r mers	I used only 1 filler or I did not use every time.	36.2	18.8	30
Skill	G	I used over 2kinds of different rejoinders.	47.8	67.4	74.5
	Comments	I used only 1 rejoinder or I did not use every time.	54.3	32.6	25.5
	Accuracy	I asked enough questions on the topic correctly.	75.0	79.1	80.9
Comtout	(Question)	I did not ask enough questions correctly.	25.0	20.9	19.1
Content	Accuracy	I answered correctly in a sentence.	53.2	56.3	58
,	(Answer)	I answered incorrectly or in a word.	46.8	43.8	42

N= 55, 55, 51

Students' comments on the performance test

[First term]

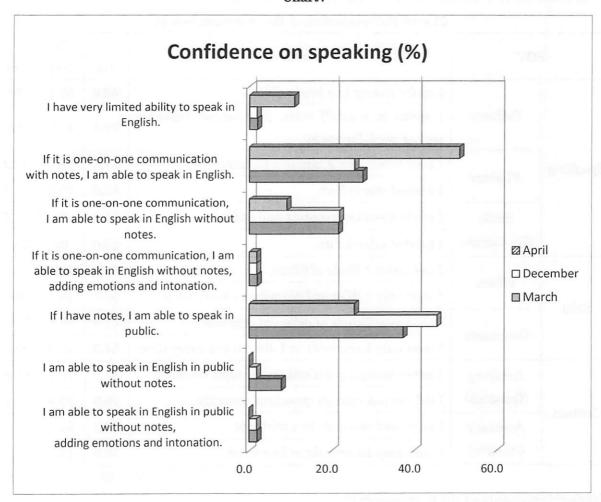
- · I could speak well during the practice, but I could not find the words in the test.
- · Three minutes were a little long for me to talk.
- · Three minutes were long for me to talk.
- · I could feel the importance of fillers and rejoinders.
- · Once I stopped talking, it was difficult for me to continue to speak.

[Second term]

- · I still feel three minutes is a little long.
- · The silence became shorter than before.
- · Once started, I could enjoy and I did not feel three minutes were long.
- · After the performance test, I could feel accomplishment a lot.
- · When silence even happened, I could use fillers and continue the conversation.

[Third term]

- · Silence never happened and I am so satisfied.
- \cdot I feel achievement and I think it was the best test of three times.
- I felt accomplishment a lot when I finished. I felt three minutes passed so quickly and could speak fluently.
- Every time before the performance test, I do not feel like doing it, but when started I could enjoy talking in English and felt the time fried.



Students' comments on the communicative activities

[First term]

- · My voice is small and I would like to improve this point.
- In the beginning of the year I often used Japanese, but recently I came to communicate only in English with some gestures. Now I enjoy talking in English.
- $\boldsymbol{\cdot}$ Sometimes I could use fillers and rejoinders unconsciously.
- · I could speak English more actively than in my junior high school days.
- · I enjoyed speaking with different partners. Talking with different classmates was fun.

[Second term]

- · I have come to use rejoinders naturally.
- · I am glad that I have come to understand what the ALT says.
- · I have come to be confident to speak in English.
- · I have come to speak without notes. Debate was a good experience for me.
- · I have come to enjoy speaking in English and use gestures while talking.
- · Silence has decreased and I am getting used not to using Japanese.

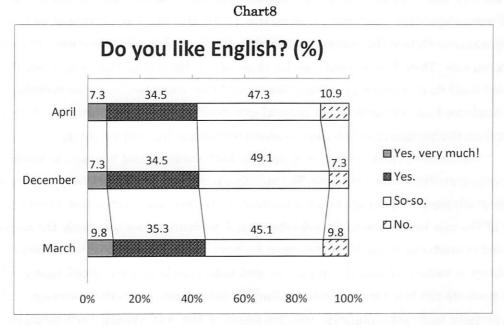
[Third term]

- When I saw the ALT outside the classroom, I could talk by using the expressions that I have learned in the class. I feel I can talk more what I want to say than before.
- I think speaking is important at any rate, even in only words. Keeping the communication is important.

- · I got known not making silence is important even if people cannot speak well in English.
- · While I was talking to ALT, I used fillers naturally and I could express what I wanted to say.

6. What I learned

Individually, most students have positive attitudes in the classroom in general. This is in in spite of the very low English scores on high school entrance exams. Also, a high percentage of the same students responded to the effect that they are not good at English, that they fall behind others in the classroom or that they are concerned about studying English.



To be honest, I hesitate to mention about this result. Their generally positive attitude is good but there is no big change through the year. What I can see is that the percentage of the students who chose "Yes, very much." has slightly increased and that the one of those who chose "No." has slightly decreased, which were gladsome though I know options were not so good.

They understand how important our activities such as pair work for communication and extensive reading. However, some students' feeling is often a lot of ups and downs. Sometimes they really like to talk in English and do their best, but other times they are tempted to slack off or goof off and just talk in Japanese. Obviously they have a short attention span.

Regarding the performance test, which we gave in the end of the first term, students did great job. Even it was right after the term test, most students prepared well. Even students who could not perform well wrote the positive comments in their reflection. Therefore, I could continue it once in each term through the year. To conduct the performance test, I made and shared the rubrics with other teachers every time, and ask them to give the students beforehand. I think it is important for the students to see how they improve their speaking competence in order to be confident to speak in English. Thus, I have continued the same style of the performance test for one year; which is a three – minute –pair –conversation. Instead of it, I included other styles during the class and students had several experience, such as speech,

presentation, debate, and kind of skit.

Since students have believed a textbook is important and the dialogues on in it are the best, many students thought it was their goal and tried to master it. As a result, in the first performance test, many students tried to memorize it, which I did not imagine. Then, I could know how much they can input and imitate the model. In the second performance test, the textbook do not have exactly the same type of dialogue for it. They had to think and talk by themselves. As they trained themselves for the presentation and debate, most of my students could do very well. Unfortunately, I got known that some teachers had shown the model and it might encourage their students to memorize it. In the third performance test, I took the extemporaneous style of the conversation. Students were not decided their roles like interviewer or interviewee. They had to continue by themselves. By trying this way, I could know our students could do it, which was amazing for us, and they could feel more achievement after that. Some students had very unique but natural questions and answers. Next year, I would like to take it from the beginning in order to liquidize their originality and creativity.

As for the Timed-writing, it is clear for both students and teachers to know how much their writing abilities have improved. To reach this point appropriately, I have taken some steps. And the main parts of them are to use a textbook and reform the written test. Until last year, the topics of the test were announced beforehand and students asked somebody the correct essays and tried to memorize them. From this year, we have adopted a textbook, which includes enough vocabulary, a variety of useful expressions and both simple and advanced models. Thanks to them, students can learn more, including English essay forms and writing strategies. Then they could prepare more meaningfully, and the result of the test showed they could improve the quality and quantity of their writing.

For the next step, I hope we can add the point for creativity and originality. In the Timed-writing, reviewing what they had learned in the first term, they could write whatever they would like to mention without worries on mistakes. Not all, but the numbers of most student wrote have increased. Through the year, teachers felt the positive washback effect of the students' essays.

Fortunately, by reading students' feedback sheets, I could find the improvement of their confidence of both speaking and writing.

7. Future issues

Over view the year, I could try as many things as possible, thinking of students' and teachers' situation at my school. I have reformed little by little.

Regarding speaking activity, since my students' level and motivation are low, we used not only pair work, but also speech style in a small group during the class. After a lot of pair work, students were familiar with the topic, then in the speech they could talk what they wanted to say, at suitable timing when they wanted to mention. Also listeners did not have to suffer from the pressure they had to ask, therefore they could enjoy listening. Thanks to it, they could know

how much other students thought and wrote on the topic before the test. Then, in the end of the term, they could talk about the topics in the performance test, in which they had both roles of interviewer and interviewee in conversation style.

As a next step of speaking and writing activity, we did a poster session and debate in the second term. In both activities, they have to interact with other classmates, and obviously they need to think and write as preparation. Adjusting the procedures appropriately, I could somehow see the improvement of their speaking competence. Then, in the end of the term, students could see their improvement of speaking in the term of the length and contents.

On the subject of integrating the four skills, while students do pair work, the speaking, listening, and writing skills are integrated on the whole. In extensive reading class, some students listened and read comfortably, but others did not. In the next year, I would like to encourage them all the students can do both effectively. Furthermore, I want to see the correlation among the four skills. This year, among half of the students who have improved their writing skills most, I could see the most achievement of extensive reading.

In the way of teachers' cooperation, we could have meetings sometimes to exchange our ideas for the procedure or test. And I made complaisant notes for each teacher who teaches this subject in each step when we were too busy to have a regular meeting. Every time I provided the notes, I set a certain time for them to read it and ask any question or suggest their idea. Mostly they worked well. However, some teachers do not understand well or just lack of common sense, he / she started to say he / she wanted to change after all the teachers had already started. To avoid this kind of situation and build a coalition, I would like to do my best to set a regular meeting.

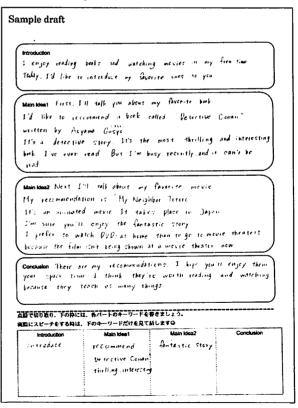
Finally, through this action research, I could find the next perspectives. To examine learners' confidence carefully, I would like to improve my research skills qualitatively and quantitatively. Besides, to reinforce integration of four skills, I will look at the correlation of written and performance tests.

Lesson Plan: Books and movies

(from Monthly Report of July)

- 1. Level: First year students of Senior high school
- 2. Subject: Communication English I (β) (Extensive Reading, Communication, Essays)
- 3. Class Size: 20students
- Supplementary Test books: Speech Navigator2 (Matsuka Phonics Inc.), Extensive Reading "Dokusyo Kiroku Techo" (SEG), Data Base 3000 Kihon Eitango Jyukugo 4th Edition(Kirihara Shoten)
- 5. Goal & Objectives:
 - 1) Students can talk and write about their favorite books and movies.
 - 2) Students can write about the books and movies they would like to recommend.
 - Students can use more conversation strategies.
- 6. Procedure:
 - 1) Day one: JTE and AET Introduce the topic. Students write "Talk about yourself" as homework.
 - 2) Day two: Students have a Book Talk using English books which they have borrowed for the extensive reading and using the conversation strategies. Students interview each other basic questions using the conversation strategies with three different partners, do comprehension listening and check the answers in pairs orally. Teachers show the tips for writing and speaking, using a model speech. Students write their speech draft as homework
 - 3) Day three: Students have a Book Talk using English books which they have borrowed for the extensive reading and using the conversation strategies. Students talk in pairs, help each other for practicing the presentation (ask questions) with different partners, and teachers make sure the listening and presenting tips. Students make presentations in a small group (help the members by asking questions when the speaker stops). In the end of the class, representatives from each group make presentations in class and get some oral questions and comments by ALT.
 - 4) Day four: Students review all the conversation strategies which they have learned in this term. They talk in pairs to review the whole Unit 1 and 6 twice each with different partners. Students write a five-minute-essay using the same topics as the last writing activity in this term.
 - 5) Day five: Students talk in pairs as practice for the performance test. Students draw for their partners. The Performance Test is held. While students are not having the performance test, they enjoy a board game in a group and with AET taking a conversation style; Question-answer-comments (including the conversation strategies).
- 7. Lesson plan of Day one:
 - Review the week's vocabulary, using the word book above.
 Teachers give some advice about some expressions on the weekly target pages. Students learn

- some tips for memorizing and pronouncing. Students practice and check the vocabulary in pair orally.
- 2) Students have a Book Talk using English books which they have borrowed for the extensive reading, trying to use the conversation strategies as much as possible.
- 3) Warm-up activity: AET shows the covers of the book and the posters of the movie which he would like to recommend, on the screen, asking the students some questions. Students try to answer them. It ends up the style of the conversation, like a model conversation.
- 4) AET/ JTE introduce the Basic Sample Talk and vocabulary for the topic.
- 5) Students try to memorize useful expressions, and check each other in pairs.
- 6) Students practice questions and answers in pair, using the several kinds of the pictures of the book covers and movie posters on the screen. To make their partner guess the title, they have to use the vocabulary which they have learned in 4.
- 7) Try to interview each other using the sample speech and questions, pretending the model person, and use the conversation strategies.



3学期も授業でやった内容を、クラスメートと英語で話してみましょう。 Enjoy speaking with your classmates!!

■ トピック:自分の職業について (授業と同じく卒業から10年後の同窓会で久しぶりに会った同級生と話す場面です)

■ 形式と内容: クラスメートと1対1の会話形式。

※今回はどちらかが質問者・回答者と分けません。授業と同じく、質問も回答も自然な形で続けよう!

■ 時間:二人で3分。

■ 評価:下の評価基準表に従い評価する。

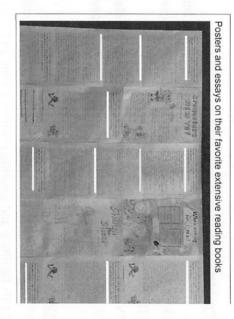
Preparation 準備 教科書の参照ページを見て、しっかり準備しよう! 友達とペアで、練習するといい ですよ♪

- 1. まず、相手の人に聞きたい質問を、少なくとも5問は聞けるように、練習する。→52~55ペー ジや授業でやった表現を参照。
- 2. それらの質問を含め、様々な質問に、答えられるように、練習する。→同ページ参照。
- 3. なめらかな会話になるよう、声に出して練習する。→61ページ Fillers (Umm…, Well…, Let me see など) & Comments (55ページ)
- ★マナーとして、アイコンタクトや最初と最後の挨拶も英語でしよう!→61ページにあります。

Di Ibrio 顶価甘進丰 10点港点

観点		評価	基準
		3	大きな声ではっきりと、非常に流暢に話せた。
	Fluency/Pronunciation 流暢さ/発音		流暢に話せたが声が小さかった/大きな声で話せたが、流暢さに 欠けた大きな声で、おおむね流暢に話せた。
沉જΩ⊂	2/元百	1	声も小さく流暢さに欠けた/カタカナ発音だった/日本語を使った。
会	Em	2	2種類以上かつ、ほぼ毎回自然に使えた。
話の	Fillers	1	1 種類しか使えなかったり、毎回使えなかったりした。
ス		2	2種類以上を、ほぼ毎回自然に使えた。
キル	Comments	1	1種類しか使えなかったり、毎回使えなかったりした。
		3	質問をする時も答える時も、間違いがほとんどなかった。
Gram	nmatical Accuracy	2	質問は間違いなくできたが、答えには間違いが多かった/答えは
正確さ	3	2	間違いなくできたが、質問には間違いが多かった。
		1	質問をする時も答える時も、間違いが多かった。

SE O		## EM	経済
		ω	大色な声ではっきりた、非常に演奏に話せた。
1			演繹に話せたが声が小さなった/大きな声で話せたが、演繹さに
E	Fluency/Pronunciation	12	欠りた大きな声で、おおむね治療に移せた。
20	光報の/光田		声も小さく演奏さに欠けた/カタカナ発音だった/日本語を使
		_	o
411	-	2	2 種類以上かつ、塚塚毎回自然に使えた。
8 8	rmers	-	1種類しの使えなかったり、毎回使えなかったりした。
K		2	2 種類以上者、學樣等國自然に使えた。
# 4	Comments	-	1種類しの使えなかったり、毎回使えなかったりした。
		ω	質問をする時も名える時も、問題いがほとんどなかった。
Gra	Grammatical Accuracy		質問は問題いなくできたが、答えには問題いが多かった/答えは
正確さ	ĈŔ.		理師い好へら呼ばな、異語自言語師いな切りった。
		-	質問をする時で紹える時で、問題しびあかった。





Rubric for the performance test