

# Speak Up! Learners' Perceptions of an EFL Communication Course and its Cultural Implications

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## Abstract

Communicative Language Teaching has been a part of the Japanese secondary education system for 25 years, and yet the majority of first year students starting their university courses struggle to have a basic conversation in English. Conducting action research is one way we can discover ways to improve our teaching and gain a better understanding of both our teaching environment and our learners (Burns, 2010). To this end, a communication course was developed which incorporated several strategies with the purpose of enabling EFL learners to speak more naturally and for longer periods of time. This article investigates the findings of the communication classes in which the course was taught, and asserts how the role of communication styles from the L1 culture cannot be overlooked.

According to Wong and Waring, (2010, p. 2), “learning to engage in ordinary conversation is one of the most difficult tasks for second language learners”. There are oral communication classes in Japanese universities which focus predominantly on formal speaking proficiency through teaching presentation skills, yet many Japanese students lack the ability to have an informal conversation in the target language for any length of time.

In spite of having undertaken a minimum of six years of English study prior to commencing their tertiary education, Japanese learners often lack confidence in having a conversation in the target language. For almost 30 years, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has instigated ideas to enhance the English language communicative abilities of Japanese students. One MEXT goal stated: “On graduation from a senior high school, students can conduct normal

communication with regard to topics, for example, relating to daily life” (MEXT, 2003). Communicative language teaching (CLT) was officially incorporated into the high school curriculum, although little time has been given to the teaching of practical oral communication skills, thereby making the implementation of the MEXT initiatives a demanding task. The main focus of high school English classes is on producing grammatically correct structures and being able to memorise wordlists. This is largely due to the prominence of grammar-translation skills required in university entrance exams (Takanashi, 2004, p. 1).

Because informal speaking is usually unstructured, some question the validity of teaching it. As Nation and Newton (2009, p. 121) point out however, “most of our speaking tends to be informal ... (and therefore) deserves attention within the classroom”. To this end, a communicative course was developed for learners who were not studying English as their major. Since this was not an elective class, there were a few factors which the instructor took into account.

## Reducing Anxiety

Without a doubt, anxiety affects students speaking in the target language. As Brown and Douglas (1999, p. 8) maintain, “Anxiety is quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process”. The issue of anxiety within the L2 classroom, and specifically how it can inhibit the learning process, has been well documented (Brown 2007; Cutrone 2009; Dörnyei 2005; Gudykunst and Lee 2003; Lightbrown and Spada 2013; Williams and Andrade 2008). Research conducted by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) revealed that of the four skills, speaking resulted in the highest levels of anxiety for learners.

The learners in the present study initially felt

apprehensive, although this could have been because the subjects had never recorded themselves speaking in English before. In order to increase their levels of receptivity, the instructor explained two important factors. First, in order to reduce students' anxiety levels, the communication assignment was conducted outside the classroom in a place where both speakers felt comfortable. This ensured there would be no classroom audience and no teacher watching or listening in. Some participants chose to sit in a cafeteria, and others would talk as they were walking outside on campus. The crucial aspect was that the learners themselves chose the surroundings. Second, in order to minimise further anxiety, pressure and the fear of failure, learners were to speak for as long as they could manage before either they were at a loss for words, or reverted to their L1. Thus, if they could only speak for 50 seconds in the first assignment, that was acceptable. Cutrone (2009, p. 58) discusses how EFL learners in Japan feel more anxious because of the "Western-style" of teaching employed, so it was hoped that the subjects in the current study would develop a sense of enjoyment and accomplishment, rather than apprehension.

### Reluctance to Speak

出る釘は打たれる (*deru kugi wa utareru* = "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down") is a well-known proverb which helps explain the reluctance some students have about speaking in front of others. Japanese learners are often described as being shy or quiet in the classroom. It is clear that they often feel uncomfortable about attracting attention and Cutrone (2009, p. 60) explains how there is a reluctance "to talk in situations where they will stand out in front of their peers" or where they might be "put on the spot" (Thompson, 2001, p. 309).

It is not uncommon to read about Japanese learners' reticence to speak in the target language and Cutrone (2009, p. 58) points out, "this may have more to do with the learners' social and cultural codes for speaking". For example, when Japanese are conversing in their L1, as Takanashi (2004, p. 9) notes, there is "less overt interaction" required between the speakers.

### Typical Communicative Patterns in Japanese

While it is unwise to make generalisations about cultures, the communication patterns displayed by Japanese people when speaking their L1 and native English speakers conversing in their respective L1 have several distinct differences. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explain these distinctions in detail, however, for the purpose of this study it is important to highlight aspects which play a role in the classroom setting for EFL instructors in Japan.

The communication patterns employed by Japanese "focus on inferring what a person means, based not only on what has been said but also on what has not been said" (Takanashi, 2004, p. 9). Singhal and Nagao (1993, p. 5) explain how "nonverbal, implicit and indirect communication patterns are preferred" in Japan. Research conducted by Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Loomey, Nishida, Kim, and Heyman (1996, p. 521) revealed a particularly high score for the Japanese respondents regarding their perceived ability to infer others' meanings when communicating in their L1.

### Communication Strategies

When discussing ways to help English-language learners negotiate misunderstandings and progress in their oral communication, Dooley (2009) and Thornbury and Slade (2006) emphasise the importance of creating a list of formulae, echoing Nation and Newton's (2009) recommendation to memorise stems. Some examples of recommended formulae include fillers, negotiation and requests for clarification. One particular formula which Nation and Newton (2009, p. 120) consider of great value is Q->SA+EI. This is where a question (Q) is followed by a short answer (SA) to which extra information (EI) about the answer is given (Nation & Newton, 2009). In the classes in the current study, the more common abbreviation 3As (Ask a question > Answer + Add information) was used to help the students comprehend the same concept. Learning how to give extra information helped transform many of the subjects' conversations, and as Nation and Newton (2009) recommend, the mastering of this strategy should be given ample time in the classroom environment.

## Classroom Procedure

Some advocate that planning before speaking is ideal for L2 learners (Nation & Newton, 2009) and this is how the initial homework assignments were conducted in the instructor's communication classes. Students were required to "plan" what to talk about, write down questions they could ask their partner during their conversations and then talk. After using this method for a few semesters, the author questioned whether the planning in itself might be restricting the learners' dialogues. The format was changed and the students spoke "spontaneously" from the first assignment, so they were asked to have a conversation without making notes or using a dictionary. The subjects spoke in pairs and were free to choose with whom they completed their weekly assignments.

During class time, students used the target language as their main method of oral communication, and in each class, a different communication strategy was introduced. Previous research regarding the learners' perceptions of the efficacy of these strategies revealed them to be beneficial in this speaking context (Yue & Provenzano, 2010; Provenzano & Yue, 2011). Below is a list of the main communication strategies which were taught:

- Asking friendly questions
- Returning questions
- 3As (ask a question > answer + add extra information)
- Follow-up questions
- Listening sounds
- Thinking sounds
- Conversational shadowing

After each assignment, the learners listened to their recorded conversation and completed a noticing paper (see Appendix E for a sample paper) where they transcribed a few sentences. For most subjects, the average recording for the first speaking assignment lasted one minute. Learners were unable to think of what to say to each other and abruptly ended their conversation, however I wanted them to listen and hear what they said and how they spoke. The noticing papers were updated throughout the course to incorporate new strategies that were studied. Each week, the learners submitted their noticing papers at the beginning of class, in addition to sending audio files of the conversations to the instructor. In the past, sharing the files had been

complex and time-consuming and was therefore only conducted two or three times a semester. In recent years however, the majority of the students have used iPhones meaning the files could be airdropped to the instructor easily. For the minority who had a different type of smartphone, the audio files were sent by email attachment. Thanks to the ease with which the files could be sent, the instructor was able to listen to the conversations while checking the noticing papers. Any grammatical mistakes were corrected and feedback was given on the conversations.

In the penultimate class, the students recorded their final conversation and transcribed it in its entirety for homework. Learners who spoke in excess of 12 minutes were allowed to omit transcribing some parts of the conversation since the process of typing was time-consuming. During the last class of the semester, the students read through their transcript in pairs and highlighted any communication strategies which they had used. In addition, any grammatical or lexical mistakes they discovered were corrected. Lastly, if the learners felt that part of their conversation sounded too stilted or changed topic unnaturally, they wrote suggestions of what could have been said to improve their communication [ ✳ see the sample in Appendix F].

## Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were to assess:

- (1) the subjects' perceptions of the speaking activity;
- (2) whether the instruction of communication strategies had helped learners speak for longer periods of time in the target language; and
- (3) whether students had reflected on their L1 communication patterns as a result of studying this English course.

## Methodology

### Context and Participants

Two types of research instruments, one qualitative and one quantitative, were used in the present study. Data was collected through a survey which investigated the learners' perceived efficacy of different aspects of the course. The qualitative research data consisted of feedback written by the

subjects in Japanese, which was then translated into English. Since the subjects were not restricted in what they wrote, it was hoped that the feedback would provide ideas on how to improve the content of the course.

In total, 159 first year students, aged between 18 and 20, enrolled in the instructor's non-elective oral communication classes. The subjects were from 6 different departments: Architecture, Economics, Japanese, Language and Culture, Law and Sports Science. In each of the classes, the instructor taught primarily in English, with the L1 only being used to clarify points causing difficulty. None of the learners had been on study abroad programmes or lived in English-speaking countries, and the levels of English varied within each class from false beginner to low intermediate.

### Instrumentation

Respondents in the current study were asked to complete an anonymous survey in the final class of the semester. The survey comprised 15 items and was written in Japanese and English. The learners were asked to rate perceptions regarding their communication skills and habits by selecting a five point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, to (5) strongly disagree.

Some of the statements had been adapted from ones used in previous research (Yue & Provenzano, 2010, Provenzano & Yue, 2011, Yue, 2013, and Yue, 2016). In addition, after studying the results of qualitative research conducted on students in previous classes, the instructor incorporated additional statements to assess students' observations about intercultural aspects of their language learning process. The statements evaluated students' perceptions in four main areas:

- (1) their own ability and improvement;
- (2) their noticing skills;
- (3) the possible intercultural relevance of the homework assignments; and
- (4) the efficacy of the homework assignments.

### Results and Discussion

In total, 148 respondents (65 females and 83 males) completed the survey for this study. A

comprehensive list of the survey results can be found in Appendices A-D.

### Students' Perceptions Regarding their own Ability and Improvement

During the first class of the semester, students had been asked to have a conversation in English for one minute during class time. This had proved challenging, so the results for Statement 1 (*Before I started this course, I could communicate in English easily.*) were expected. Under 5% agreed with the statement, while over 85% disagreed.

The results for Statement 12 (*Compared to the beginning of the course, I find it easier to speak in English.*) were promising, as 81% of respondents agreed that speaking English had become easier, while less than 5% disagreed. This data correlated with that from Statement 14 (*By the final speaking assignment, I could speak in English for much longer than at the beginning of the course.*) where more than 92% of respondents agreed, and 4% disagreed.

### Noticing Skills

Statement 2: *Since starting this course, I started to think about how I communicate in English.*

After analysing previous research data, I believed that helping the students identify different aspects of their conversations aided their oral communication skills. Over 82% of respondents noted that since starting the course they reflected more on how they communicated in English, and less than 1.5% disagreed with this statement.

In order to encourage greater learner autonomy in their L2 journey, an important part of the speaking assignments was listening to their recorded conversations. It was hoped that by doing this they would become more aware of how they spoke and reacted in their English communication. Almost 84% of respondents agreed with Statement 3 (*When I listened to the recordings of my conversations, I noticed how I communicate.*), which lent some support to my confidence in the efficacy of this part of the activity. Furthermore, 85% of respondents agreed with Statement 5 (*Listening to my conversations helped me try to improve my English communication skills.*), demonstrating that the practice of reflection was perceived to be of worth. The positive attitude

towards this aspect of the course may be explained by the common practice of *hansei* 「反省」 or self-reflection, which is used to talk about one's mistakes and is a central tenet of Japanese culture and education (Nelson, 1995; Peak, 1991).

### Intercultural Relevance

Regarding Statement 4 (*Before starting this course, I was aware of cultural differences when speaking in English and Japanese*), it was evident that the students were divided between those with prior knowledge of cultural differences, 32%, and those without, 30%. 83% of the respondents agreed with Statement 9 (*Through this course, I became aware of differences in communication styles between Japanese and English*). When the course was planned, the main focus was on communication, not culture. However, cultural aspects instinctively developed into an important part of the learning process as the subjects became mindful that some Japanese communication patterns could cause misunderstanding when speaking in the target language with a non-Japanese speaker. In total, 87% of the students noted agreement with Statement 15 (*Communicating in another language helps us understand a different culture*). Throughout the course, the instructor had reinforced the importance of listening carefully to what one's partner said in order to ask appropriate follow-up questions, thereby ensuring the conversation did not end too quickly. It was encouraging to find that 88% of people agreed with Statement 6 (*Through what I have learnt in this class, I realise in a conversation it is important to listen carefully to what the other person says to me so I can communicate more effectively in whichever language I speak.*), which demonstrated a clear understanding of how essential it is to listen for cues from your partner in order to help the conversation flow as smoothly as possible. An interesting finding was that for Statement 11 (*Since starting this course, I sometimes think about how I communicate in Japanese*) over 41% of the subjects noted that studying the L2 had resulted in their reflecting on communication patterns in their first language. This was of particular interest since it indicated a similar opinion to one student's written feedback at the end of the previous semester:

*"I have found that even when I speak in Japanese, I am now thinking about how I communicate*

*because of what I learnt in class."*

### Perceived Efficacy

As in previous research (Yue & Provenzano, 2010), the respondents in this survey overwhelmingly agreed (89%) with Statement 7 (*The strategies I learnt in this class helped me to speak in English for longer periods of time.*). Similarly, research conducted by Nakatani, (2012, p. 774) on EFL tertiary students in Japan concluded that the learners used strategies in order to keep "the conversation flowing". More than 90% of the learners agreed with Statement 10 (*In the future, if I need to speak in English to someone, I would like to use the strategies I learnt in this class.*). Prior to this class, most of the students in this survey had very little experience of communicating in English, so these were promising findings. The results of Statement 13 (*I think this class is beneficial for learning more natural English.*) show that 87% believed in the value of their current study. Majd's (2013, p. 3) assertion that, "teaching Communication Strategies to EFL learners is a useful way to develop their strategic competence and so to enhance their communication ability" supports the data from the current study.

### Qualitative Research Results

At the end of each semester, students are asked to write comments they have about the course which can help improve the way it is taught. Appendix G includes some of the feedback I received from students in the final class of the semester of the current study. The majority of the observations were written in Japanese, but have been translated into English for the purposes of this paper.

In the first class of the semester, the subjects were told that by the end of that semester, the goal was to have an unrehearsed conversation in the target language for ten minutes. Some learners doubted they would be able to achieve the class goal, as can be seen from the following student feedback (see Appendix G) :

- *When I look back at the beginning, I never would have thought that I would be able to speak in English for such a long time.*

Several other learners noted how surprised they were at being able to speak for a long time (see Appendix G) :

- *The speaking assignment at the beginning of the semester lasted for only one minute, but we spoke for 21 minutes by the end of the semester!*
- *At first I felt it was challenging to speak even for a couple of minutes, but each time I could speak for longer and felt a sense of accomplishment.*
- *It was hard to speak only in English at first, but the more I did it, the more fun it became. By the end, I was able to speak for a long time and I even thought it might be difficult to speak for a short period of time.*
- *In the beginning, I even had a hard time speaking for a minute and I was bad at the assignment. But as time went on, I got used to using the communication strategies and speaking in English became fun.*

### Conclusion

Canale and Swain (1980, p. 25) advocate that L2 learners need to learn the necessary skills so they can manage in an “authentic communicative situation” which is what the current study attempted. As has been stated, the focus of the class was to help the subjects have a more natural-sounding conversation in English. One of the drawbacks of this course however, was the lack of focus on grammatical slips. Any incorrect structures on the noticing homework papers were amended, yet it was not feasible to give detailed feedback on errors in the recorded conversations.

Furthermore, it is essential to examine whether the advantage of learning the communication strategies in this way lasts for a long time and whether what they learned is retained for future communicative situations outside the classroom. It is also important to note, that in this study there was no control group, therefore any results presented should be considered suggestive rather than conclusive.

The current study revealed that the majority of the subjects believed the speaking activity helped develop their L2 skills, in addition to having intercultural relevance. In Japan, we often hear the term “global” citizenship (Hicks, 2010). Similarly, MEXT (2003) talks about the significance of globalisation, which becomes increasingly important as people travel more than ever before, in addition to the explosion of online communication. I believe that in order for this to be realised, students need to understand how to communicate effectively. This

sentiment is echoed in MEXT’s 2003 directive:

The acquisition of English is greatly related to students’ abilities in their mother tongue, Japanese. It is necessary to foster in students the ability to express appropriately and understand accurately the Japanese language and to enhance communication abilities in Japanese in order to cultivate communication abilities in English.

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**Appendix A**

Results of survey as percentages for total number of respondents\* (N=148)

	STATEMENTS	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Before I started this course, I could communicate in English easily.	0.68	4.05	8.78	41.89	44.59
2	Since starting this course, I started to think about how I communicate in English.	16.22	66.22	16.22	0.68	0.68
3	When I listened to the recordings of my conversations, I noticed how I communicate.	43.93	50	4.73	1.35	
4	Before starting this course, I was aware of cultural differences when speaking in English and Japanese.	6.76	25.67	37.16	23.65	6.76
5	Listening to my conversations helped me try to improve my English communication skills	31.08	54.05	14.19	0.68	
6*	Through what I have learnt in this class, I realise in a conversation it is important to listen carefully to what the other person says to me so I can communicate more effectively in whichever language I speak.	37.68	50.72	8.70	1.45	1.45
7	The communication strategies I learnt in class helped me to speak in English for longer periods of time.	58.11	31.76	8.11	1.35	0.68
8	I do not think this class helped me to speak better English.	2.70	3.38	6.08	35.81	52.03
9	Through this course, I became aware of differences in communication styles between Japanese and English.	26.35	57.43	14.86	1.35	
10	In the future, if I need to speak in English to someone, I would like to use the strategies I learned in this class.	50.67	40.54	7.43	0.68	0.68
11	Since starting this course, I sometimes think about how I communicate in Japanese	10.13	31.08	31.76	21.62	5.40
12	Compared to the beginning of the course, I find it easier to speak in English.	25.67	56.08	13.51	3.38	1.35
13*	I think this class is beneficial for learning more natural English.	43.83	43.83	10.27	1.37	0.68
14	By the final speaking assignment, I could speak in English for much longer than at the beginning of the course.	65.54	27.03	3.38	3.38	0.68
15	Communicating in another language helps us understand a different culture	52.03	35.81	9.46	2.03	0.68

\*Statement 6: total of 69 respondents

\*Statement 13: total of 146 respondents



**Appendix B**

Results of survey as number respondents\*. (N=148)

	STATEMENTS	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Before I started this course, I could communicate in English easily.	1	6	13	62	66
2	Since starting this course, I started to think about how I communicate in English.	24	98	24	1	1
3	When I listened to the recordings of my conversations, I noticed how I communicate.	65	74	7	2	
4	Before starting this course, I was aware of cultural differences when speaking in English and Japanese.	10	38	55	35	10
5	Listening to my conversations helped me try to improve my English communication skills	46	80	21	1	
6*	Through what I have learnt in this class, I realise in a conversation it is important to listen carefully to what the other person says to me so I can communicate more effectively in whichever language I speak.	26	35	6	1	1
7	The communication strategies I learnt in class helped me to speak in English for longer periods of time.	86	47	12	2	1
8	I do not think this class helped me to speak better English.	4	5	9	53	77
9	Through this course, I became aware of differences in communication styles between Japanese and English.	39	85	22	2	
10	In the future, if I need to speak in English to someone, I would like to use the strategies I learned in this class.	75	60	11	1	1
11	Since starting this course, I sometimes think about how I communicate in Japanese	15	46	47	32	8
12	Compared to the beginning of the course, I find it easier to speak in English.	38	83	20	5	2
13*	I think this class is beneficial for learning more natural English.	64	64	15	2	1
14	By the final speaking assignment, I could speak in English for much longer than at the beginning of the course.	97	40	5	5	1
15	Communicating in another language helps us understand a different culture	77	53	14	3	1

\*Statement 6: total of 69 respondents

\*Statement 13: total of 146 respondents

**Appendix C**

Results of survey as number of female respondents\* (N=65)

	STATEMENTS	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Before I started this course, I could communicate in English easily.		2	4	27	32
2	Since starting this course, I started to think about how I communicate in English.	11	44	9	1	
3	When I listened to the recordings of my conversations, I noticed how I communicate.	27	36		2	
4	Before starting this course, I was aware of cultural differences when speaking in English and Japanese.	1	19	29	13	3
5	Listening to my conversations helped me try to improve my English communication skills	15	40	9	1	
6*	Through what I have learnt in this class, I realise in a conversation it is important to listen carefully to what the other person says to me so I can communicate more effectively in whichever language I speak.	14	18	1	1	
7	The communication strategies I learnt in class helped me to speak in English for longer periods of time.	35	22	7	1	
8	I do not think this class helped me to speak better English.	1		6	24	34
9	Through this course, I became aware of differences in communication styles between Japanese and English.	14	41	10		
10	In the future, if I need to speak in English to someone, I would like to use the strategies I learned in this class.	34	26	4	1	
11	Since starting this course, I sometimes think about how I communicate in Japanese	7	24	23	11	
12	Compared to the beginning of the course, I find it easier to speak in English.	13	37	13	2	
13	I think this class is beneficial for learning more natural English.	24	35	6		
14	By the final speaking assignment, I could speak in English for much longer than at the beginning of the course.	40	20	4	1	
15	Communicating in another language helps us understand a different culture	25	32	6	2	

\*Statement 6: total of 34 respondents

**Appendix D**

Results of survey as number of male respondents\* (N=83)

	STATEMENTS	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Before I started this course, I could communicate in English easily.	1	4	9	35	34
2	Since starting this course, I started to think about how I communicate in English.	13	54	15		1
3	When I listened to the recordings of my conversations, I noticed how I communicate.	38	38	7		
4	Before starting this course, I was aware of cultural differences when speaking in English and Japanese.	9	19	26	22	7
5	Listening to my conversations helped me try to improve my English communication skills	31	40	12		
6*	Through what I have learnt in this class, I realise in a conversation it is important to listen carefully to what the other person says to me so I can communicate more effectively in whichever language I speak.	12	17	5		1
7	The communication strategies I learnt in class helped me to speak in English for longer periods of time.	51	25	5	1	1
8	I do not think this class helped me to speak better English.	3	5	3	29	43
9	Through this course, I became aware of differences in communication styles between Japanese and English.	25	44	12	2	
10	In the future, if I need to speak in English to someone, I would like to use the strategies I learned in this class.	41	34	7		1
11	Since starting this course, I sometimes think about how I communicate in Japanese	8	22	24	21	8
12	Compared to the beginning of the course, I find it easier to speak in English.	25	46	7	3	2
13*	I think this class is beneficial for learning more natural English.	40	29	9	2	1
14	By the final speaking assignment, I could speak in English for much longer than at the beginning of the course.	57	20	1	4	1
15	Communicating in another language helps us understand a different culture	37	33	10	2	1

\*Statement 6: total of 35 respondents

\*Statement 13: total of 81 respondents

**Appendix E**

Sample of Speaking Homework

<p>What did you say to <b>start your conversation</b>?</p> <p>A:</p> <p>B:</p> <p>A:</p> <p>B:</p>	<p>Did you <b>return questions</b>?</p> <p><b>YES / NO</b></p> <p>If yes, what did you say?</p>	<p>How did you <b>end the conversation</b>?</p> <p>A:</p> <p>B:</p> <p>A:</p> <p>B:</p>
<p>Did you <b>show your partner you were listening</b>?</p> <p><b>YES / NO</b></p> <p>If YES, what did you say?</p>	<p>Did you ask any <b>follow-up questions</b>?</p> <p><b>YES / NO</b></p> <p>If YES, write one example:</p>	<p>Did you give <b>extra information</b> in your answers?</p> <p><b>YES / NO</b></p> <p>If YES, write an example of what you said:</p>
<p>Did you speak Japanese?</p> <p><b>YES / NO</b></p> <p>IF YES, write an ENGLISH translation of what you said in Japanese.</p>	<p>Did you use <b>SHADOWING</b>?</p> <p><b>YES / NO</b></p> <p>If YES, why did you use shadowing? Circle the reason.</p> <p>To check information.</p> <p>To show surprise.</p> <p>To get thinking time.</p>	<p>Did you <b>show your partner when you were thinking</b> what to say?</p> <p><b>YES / NO</b></p> <p>If YES, what did you say?</p>

Appendix F

Sample of two students' conversation transcript

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> Period

A: Hello.

B: Hello.

A: What's up?

B: I'm fine. And you?

A: I'm fine. Today is humid.

B: Yes, so hot.

A: So hot.

B: So what will you do after school?

A: Let me see... I あ I go part time job.

B: Yes. well

A: 5p.m... 5p.m to 10p.m.

B: Oh I see

A: 5 hours. How about you?

B: Oh me too. Hahahaha.

A: Hahahaha.

B: I have part time job. え <sup>will go</sup> 4p.m. to 9p.m. 5 hours. <sup>Hmm</sup>

A: 5hours. Me too. So am I.

B: But, I will eat ice cream before part time job.

A: I see. So I ... I'm hungry now.

B: Oh Hahaha now!!!

A: hahaha... And so me too. Part time job before ice cream or so... sweets.

B: あ Yes. I eat ice cream or sweets before part time job.

A: I love sweets and... what kind of sweets do you like? the best?

B: Oh... sweets... Hmm... Let me see... I, I like hmm sweets? あ! roll cake. <sup>X</sup>

A: Roll cake!! So very good!

B: Roll cake... Lawson... Lawson's roll cake. Hahaha

A: hahaha... Very nice!

B: Very very delicious.

A: Hahaha

B: Hahaha

A: I work seven

Thinking Sounds

Showing You're Listening

Returning a Question

Shadowing

Showing Agreement

Asking for News

Follow up Question

mistake

## Appendix G

Excerpts of some comments from students  
(translated into English)

### Students' Feedback

- I've only learnt formal English until now and I always hated English, but this class was fun and the things she taught us were techniques that I can use directly in English speaking countries, so I learnt with a positive attitude.
- English class was a lot of fun. The speaking assignment in the beginning only lasted for a minute, but it was 21 minutes by the 14th class!
- At first, I felt it was challenging to speak even for a couple of minutes, but each time I could speak for a longer time, and I felt a sense of accomplishment.
- When I look back at the beginning, I never would have thought that I would be able to speak in English for such a long time. I felt less and less uncomfortable speaking in English.
- 21 min 49 sec was the longest I spoke. I felt it's difficult to continue having a conversation in English. My grammar was terrible, but I somehow made myself understood in English, which was fun. It was very hard to type my conversation, but by doing so, I noticed my grammatical errors.
- It was a fun conversation. Even when the grammar was wrong, we were able to communicate most of the time, and I thought that the speaking ability is different from what schools test in exams.
- The more we did the assignments, the longer we were able to communicate with each other. I felt the joy of telling others about myself in English.
- Compared to the beginning we were able to speak for longer, which was fun. I also felt that our English has improved. I want to memorize many communication tools so that I can speak more naturally and smoothly.
- I think we got better and better at using conversation tools which I didn't learn in my junior or senior high schools. In the beginning, the conversation time was short and sometimes we stopped in the middle, but later we were able to speak for a long time; moreover it was fun. If I have a chance to speak with a foreigner in the future, I want to make use of what I learnt in the class.
- We were able to speak for much longer compared to when we first recorded our conversation, which surprised me. But I want to improve more so that the content of the conversations becomes better.
- I think I became good at English conversation through this course. I want to keep studying to improve what I learnt in the class.
- Through this course and by doing this speaking activities, I think my speaking ability has improved. I was really happy that conversation techniques and F-U-Q came out of my mouth smoothly.
- It was hard to speak only in English at first, but the more I did it, the more fun it became. By the end, I was able to speak for a long time and I even thought it may be difficult to speak for a short period of time. I want to continue looking for an opportunity to speak and improve my English.
- I hated English from when I was in high school, so I was really worried about speaking with a partner. It was challenging in the beginning, but as time went on it became less difficult than when I first started. By the end, I was even nervous thinking that we were speaking for too long. There are still many grammatical errors in the conversation, but if there's another chance, I would like to speak using English.
- In the beginning, I even had a hard time speaking for a minute and I was bad at this assignment. But as time went on, I became accustomed to the communication strategies and speaking in English was fun. I felt that I learnt English more by studying English through conversation.
- At first the conversation didn't last, but towards the end, more words came out of my mouth, and I felt that I was communicating in English naturally. I want to make use of the conversation skills I learnt in this class in the next semester.
- Through this class I was able to feel the hardship and enjoyment of speaking in English for the first time. The process of how to put what I want to say into words and make myself understood by my partner was a really good experience. I want to make use of what I learnt in this class in my next English class.

- It makes me laugh looking back at the time when I did the first speaking assignment I felt that my conversation would not last for even for a minute. For my last assignment, though we stopped during the conversation sometimes, we were able to speak for more than 10 minutes, which really surprised me. It was good to learn how to have a conversation.
- By learning how to speak naturally, how to connect one sentence to the next, and the grammar that helps us during the conversation, I was able to speak for a long time in the last assignment.
- This class was really meaningful for me because I learnt some interpersonal communication and conversation which I didn't learn in junior or senior high schools. I want to make use of different conversation techniques I learnt in this class in the Freshman English class next semester. I want to be able to speak with foreigners smoothly.
- Thanks to the speaking assignment each week, we are now able to continue the conversation for a long time. If I have a chance to travel abroad, I want to use English proactively.
- It was really hard to do the speaking assignment at first, but in the end it was fun. The time passed by quickly when I used the communication techniques I learnt in the class. I want to continue using those when I have a chance to speak with a foreigner. I want to remember what I learnt in the class and try communicating in English.
- I couldn't speak at all at first, but I learnt new words and grammar gradually, and I was able to enjoy the conversation in the end.
- I'd never spoken in English for 5 or 10 min before, but I was glad to be able to do so through the class and assignments. My grammar still needs to improve, but I learnt some conversation skills.
- Knowing that some expressions we as Japanese use in our daily lives aren't actually good was very helpful.
- In the beginning I was not used to saying "Tell me," or "So," and I made the conversation sound like a police invterrogation, but I got used to using those expressions, and I began to speak more naturally. I want to acquire more conversation skills.
- Through this class I learnt the difficulties of telling my opinions and thoughts to my partner. I learnt some conversation techniques such as asking Friendly Questions. I am more interested in speaking in English now. Being able to speak in English will be very useful when I get a job, so I want to continue studying English.
- By typing the conversation, it was good to clearly see whether my grammar was correct or not, or whether the techniques I learnt in the class are being used or not. I think I can speak better than at the beginning, so I want to use English abroad.
- In the beginning, our conversation lasted for only 2 or 3 minutes and the use of F-U-Q and Extra Information were less, so the conversation may not have been that good. Towards the end we spoke for more than 10 minutes, and the final assignment was longer than 15 min. I could really see our growth. I think English conversation doesn't improve unless I practice a lot. By doing this assignment 10 times, and also recording them, it helped me with my English-speaking ability. I want to make use of what I learnt in the future.