Methods for fluency development in first year non-English majors

Seth Wallace

Abstract
Communication strategies (CSs) (Selinker 1972) are tools employed by speakers to maintain communication even when faced with gaps in their L2 knowledge. In this context, they represent building blocks upon which non-English majors can structure confidence with practice in speaking English. This paper will describe the first semester of a one-year oral fluency development course based upon communication strategy instruction and its effects on learner beliefs and performance. Areas discovered include fluency and disfluency along with students’ developing beliefs and verbal output resulting from an Action Research study conducted over fifteen weeks with 18 first-year English majors in a freshman oral communication program. Following a mixed methods approach, the researcher collected and analyzed both quantitized and qualitative data (Dörnyei, 2007) as available at time of publication. Data included pre- and post-questionnaires, learner feedback forms, interview and conversation transcriptions from oral proficiency tests.

At this stage, the inferences that can be drawn from the quantitized data are limited by sample size. However, they may suggest that lower-level university students learn to use communication strategies through explicit tuition and pair conversation practice. There are indications that the participants are both more comfortable speaking for longer in English and better prepared to do so. It would be interesting to see how much of the conversation time is used up in pauses as an indicator of fluency or disfluency. Further, turn taking analysis against duration of conversation could give a clearer indicator of conversation quality in terms of fluency. I hope to be able to undertake some level of study in this during the fall semester and to analyse accruing data. With oral-communication ability defined by increasing communicative competence, at this stage there are indicators that students are speaking more in class using a wider range of explicitly taught CSs. The questionnaire results indicate that the participants do link CS learning and use to longer conversations. I would be interested in future to interview deep data students about their beliefs on the quality of their conversations and how they perceive their own performance and that of their conversation partner(s) with relation to this.

The results of this research indicate that CSs instruction has at least a short-term impact upon verbal output and student beliefs. They indicate that CSs can form a backbone for oral fluency development and learner confidence. The results also indicate that near peer teaching is an important factor in oral fluency development in a classroom group, one which could be an area for further study. One more area of study might be the long-term effects of CS instruction on use over time and their resulting impact on fluency.
**Methods for fluency development in first year non-English majors**  
(Seth Wallace)

**Introduction**

Communication strategies (Selinker, 1972) can be introduced as a counterbalance to the “yakudoku” educational style of Japan. Similar in form to a synthesis of the grammar translation (GT) and audio-lingual methods (ALM), “yakudoku” emphasizes accuracy over all, eschewing decision and error making in conversation. The introduction of CSs allows students at first year university level tangible start points from which to converse, whilst developing confidence from their ability to communicate. The instruction was undertaken within the framework of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The author is part of a Master’s programme in TESOL at a Japanese university and is continuing a field of research begun by his advisor and mentor, Dr Kazuyoshi Sato. The idea is not to recondition young Japanese English speakers but rather to draw on both Japanese (accuracy and clarity) and native English (negotiation and discovery) beliefs and traits in order to increase output, confidence and pleasure in oral production. Data collected seemed to indicate that the young Japanese English speakers could sense an easing of tension, develop confidence in performance and converse in English with a range of partners on both chosen and open topics in a classroom setting with English-only instruction.

**Issues**

**Single Group.** As is commonly the case with studies involving action research, the data collected in the spring semester of 2017 is relevant only to the teaching group itself. Ideally, data would have been comparable to a control group, one which did not undergo the conversation strategies treatment. However, due to the classroom context of this study, data and inferences drawn will need to be considered as they are. This constraint could well be revisited in future studies.

**Recursive practice.** The number of recursions within pair conversations emerged as a key factor in determining fluency development and student beliefs around it. It would be highly beneficial to refer to current papers in similar contexts which deal more specifically with recursive practice alone. Kindt Bowyer 2017 is a fine example of such a paper from a similar context.

**Imposed curriculum.** The writer was fortunately allowed not only to collect data but also to interpret the selected and tested curriculum in flow for the class group. Resulting from this administrative support, the attached data and conclusions drawn could be reached. This being the case however, the textbook-based curriculum did require some modification. The researcher and tutor sought to find balance between the students’ personalized interests and the topics featured in the corresponding textbook lessons. This balanced set of activities was selected in order to maximize fluency, negotiation for meaning and self-expression in the Japanese context with reference to the “honne” or real perspective of the national character.

**Literature review**

**Communicative Language Teaching.** The recent reform of the educational system in Japan is driven by the underlying belief that speaking and understanding English is essential for the country to
remain competitive in a globalized economy. In response to this, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) implemented a new course of study in April 2013. Its stated objective was to develop the communicative abilities of Japanese students of English within state schools. This has led to interest in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Japan, leading instructors at all levels to reflect on teaching methods but the need to have students use English to learn English.

CLT can broadly be described as an approach with communication as both the focus and vehicle through which learning occurs. Savignon (1997) describes communication as “the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning” (p. 225) in context specific communication. On the theoretical level, Savignon (2002) states: “The essence of CLT is the engagement of learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence” (p.22). Brown (2007) refers to CLT as “an approach to language teaching methodology that emphasizes authenticity, interaction, student-centered learning, task-based activities, and communication for the real world, meaningful purposes” (p. 378).

The development of CLT can be viewed as a response to the limitations of its notable predecessors, the GTM and the ALM. It could be suggested that CLT is most useful in learning contexts where interaction is limited, or authentic conversations are not taking place. Thus, at the time of writing, this approach is considered the most effective for Japanese learners of English as it provides them with the opportunity to improve their conversational skills through conversing. What is more, CLT moves students away from the memorization and reproduction of language components in favour of learning the language through active and meaningful engagement with interlocutors (Sato & Takahashi, 2008). In short, a key thrust is to develop communicative competence. Savignon (1972) was amongst the first to evaluate the effects of CLT in a classroom case study. Savignon (1972) concluded from her study that “students who had been given opportunity to use their linguistic knowledge for real communication were able to speak French. The others were not” (as cited in Brown & Yule, 1983, pp. 78-79). She also found that these increased communicative abilities didn’t replace but rather complemented similar levels of linguistic accuracy. Savignon (2002) was later to affirm that “CLT is properly seen as an approach, grounded in a theory of intercultural communicative competence, that can be used to develop materials and methods appropriate to a given context of learning” (pp. 22-23).

**Communicative Competence.** Hymes (1972) was one of the first to recognize the value of contextual appropriateness. He proposed that learners required the tools to practice the use of correct forms during real-life interactions. This growing belief led to the notion of communicative competence (CC), the development of which is a core objective of CLT. Hymes initially defined CC as comprising two sub-competences, linguistic (form-based) and socio-linguistic competence (application of how forms are used to communicate). These two core competences were soon further explained by Canale and Swain’s model (1980) (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986) which expanded the definition to include: “grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence”(p. 71). Both Savignon (1997) and Canale & Swain (1980) agree that “all the components are interrelated” (Savignon, 1997, p. 23) indicating that learning about the language is important, though
their strategic competence in interaction. This indicates that communication should be a priority in the second language classroom.

With relation to Communication Strategies (CSs), Canale and Swain (1980) refer to strategic competence as “verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that can be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication” (p. 30). One of the ways to structure this is to provide learners with communication strategies (CSs) to complement a CLT-based curriculum. We will find that amongst the varied definitions of CSs is the use of verbal strategies (for example asking for clarification when unsure) that can be used to lengthen or improve a conversation (Canale & Swain, 1980). Further, the use of these CSs in the appropriate context may also allow students to overcome communication breakdowns (Ellis, 1985). This key term and its implications will be developed within its own section below.

Communication Strategies. The communication (or conversation) strategy as a term has contrasting definitions and interpretations. According to Nunan (1999) “a [communication] strategy [is] a strategy used by a second language learner to get his or her meaning across with a limited amount of vocabulary and grammar” (p. 303) whilst Cohen (1990) states that “a major trait of successful speakers is that they use strategies to keep the conversation going” (p. 56). Bialystok (1990) suggests “communication strategies overcome obstacles to communication by providing the speaker with an alternative form of expression for the intended meaning” (p. 35).

Recent studies that relate to my research area include Nakatani (2005). Nakatani chose to research the effects of awareness-raising among students in using CSs. She was seeking to establish a link between awareness of CSs and oral test scores. Her sample consisted of 62 female learners placed into two separate groups for a 12 week EFL course within a classroom setting. The treatment group learned and trained with CSs whilst the control group received a regular communication course. Nakatani also devised her own assessment system that focused on “how strategies were used for the purpose of communication and on how this use represented the extent of discourse in the oral proficiency test”. The findings showed marked improvement for the CS group in oral test scores in comparison to the non-strategy CS. In her conclusion, Nakatani added that CSs needed more published studies to strengthen findings. She also expressed regret that her study was time limited due to context meaning she could not investigate CS use over longer time periods.

Dörnyei (1995) sought to establish a teaching approach for performance problems in speaking. In his study, he focused on the teacher’s role and the teachability of CSs as solutions. Dörnyei’s sample consisted of 109 students (72 girls and 37 boys) spread across 5 different secondary schools in Hungary and split into 8 classes. CS training for the 4 treatment groups was implemented 3 times a week for about 20-40 minutes. His results suggested that “The CSs treatment was successful in improving the quality of the definitions the students generated as confirmed by the difference between the treatment and the non-treatment conditions” (Dörnyei, p.73). Generalisability of results are mitigated by two main cautions, notably that CS training was limited to three kinds only and that results were measured in words per minute alone.

Notably to contextualize for Japan, Sato (2005) investigated the teachability and usage of CSs in class. He found that explicit training in CS use was “useful to raise learners’ awareness but not enough
for them to be able to use those CSs in their conversation (Sato, 2005, p.5). He also concluded that “Learners need continuous opportunities to actually use English and to evaluate their use of CSs” (p.5) and notably that students were strongly peer influenced in their usage of CSs.

Performance Tests for Assessment

When focusing on classroom oral output and fluency, it is necessary to encourage students to perform the desired tasks both in practice and in formal test situations. In order for students to be aware of and maintain the class goal of speaking fluid English with confidence, the teacher must evaluate specific criteria of performance when testing. The performance test performs precisely this role. It is an assessment that requires an examinee to perform a task or activity, rather than answering questions referring to specific parts. The performance test is closely related to the issue of authenticity. The authentic task within assessment implies that the test-taker “must engage in actual performance of the specified linguistic objective” (Brown, 2007).

Sato and Takahashi (2008) sought to address a perceived lack of fluency amongst students in a Japanese public high school. The goal of the study was to revitalize a public high school program in line with national educational objectives and reforms. As part of the national curriculum, the teaching team (advised by Sato) was required to enter their students for the usual standardized testing from second year on. However, the teachers were able to integrate 20% of the overall grade into a speaking test in the second year, giving students the necessary incentive to focus on oral fluency using conversation strategies. Meanwhile, the first year students were able to observe and self-evaluate their progress in oral fluency which allowing them to both improve and notice their improvement. The Sato and Takahashi rubric for oral evaluation is the base for evaluation in this study as it encourages students to use conversation strategies for fluency without being required to use specific structures. This both allows and requires that students partake in authentic conversations, preparing them for oral proficiency both inside and outside of classroom-based situations.

The students involved in the second year of this study were encouraged to both interact with the rubric and hold longer conversations. For the purpose of this narrow study, it was necessary to isolate disfluency from length of conversation. In order to accomplish this, the performance tests of selected students were followed throughout years one and two of the study. Their conversations were transcribed and analysed for length of pauses in order to adjust for this perceived disfluency.

Research Goals and Objectives

Given the current approach to EFL in Japan at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, student beliefs tend to accept lack of oral fluency as a matter of nationality and context rather than of learning style. Students are unaware that the yakudoku method forestalls their development and that with the correct methods and related beliefs, they would become able to speak with proficiency. The researcher then has sought to develop an open methods and open-minded approach as developed by Sato (2005). Replacing this with explicit communication strategy tuition and recursive conversations is a way to overturn these negative believes and not only increase but also release inert fluency. Thus there
are three main goals of this paper: (1) To improve fluency in the proficiency test data, and (2) To effect learner beliefs in such a way that notice is taken of such increases in fluency and reported as such. (3) To report the initial findings from data collected during the first semester of 2017 and analysed, in order to set a path for a future paper to report on the data and findings accruing from the second.

The following action research questions will be addressed:

(1) How will lower-level university students learn to use communication strategies (CSs) during the academic year?
(2) What are the effects of teaching CSs on the students’ interactions over time?
(3) What effects will teaching CSs have on their oral-communication ability?

Course and Learner Characteristics

All participants were non-English major university first-years. The 17 student sample were all Japanese females from the Chubu area of Japan (Aichi, Mie, Gifu) and enrolled in a private university. None of the participants had participated in a study abroad program. Participants were provided with nicknames for the purpose of the study. Six deep data students (two advanced, two middle and two beginner) were selected on the following criteria: (1) Entry test performance. (2) Character and consent. (3) Personal organization. This sample is seen to represent the population of non-English major Japanese university students who spend only a few hours per week studying English formally and who have few opportunities to use English to communicate formally. The classroom context reflected a weekly 90-minute oral communication class at a Japanese university. The course was based upon the allotted textbook Touchstone 1, with its focus on the improvement of interactional competence enhanced by pair conversations with explicitly taught conversation strategies. A sample lesson plan is to be found in Appendix A.

Classroom Procedures

In order to focus the student group on oral communication and on the research goals above, the following macro-procedures featured in each class. Students were asked to record the number of communication strategies used in each pair conversation and the length of their discussion. They were also asked to reflect upon the ease of the conversation and its relative success. The goal in this action research (AR) was to answer the dual questions: (1) Can the students hold an unplanned conversation on a given topic for 5 minutes without script or sheets? (2) Do they come to believe that they can?

Data collection and research schedule

A multiple-perspective triangulation design, as displayed in Table 1 was used in order to collect and organize both quantified and qualitative data. Due to privacy issues at the all-girls school, audio-recordings only could be taken, transcribed and analysed. Recordings were taken using cellphones and uploaded to the university cloud sharing website. Data presented here was sets available at time of publication.
Research Design. Data collection in preparation for the drafting of this report and the action research final project was undertaken during the spring semester 2017. This sequential-triangulation mixed methods design was selected in order to best address the research questions within the available time period. All students gave consent to participate in the study on the premise that their conversations would be audio and not video recorded and that their pseudonym would be used throughout.

The 15-week course was structured around two main speaking tests with primary data gathering structured around these. Students were provided with a speaking test rubric (see Appendices and prompted at two-week intervals to refer to it. Surveys were conducted in April and July as per the semester AR plan (see Appendix A) yielding both qualitative and quantitative data. Two questionnaires, with mostly Qual/quan questions (see Appendix B) were carried out in July along with interviews of four deep data students in July. All practice speaking and tests were recorded by the students. Students didn’t have access to class sheets during the final speaking test.

The questionnaire data presented below refers to a comparative of two questionnaires administered in April and July, weeks three and 15 of this 15-week study. All quantitative items were presented on the Likert scale.

Results and Analysis

Table 1. Student responses to survey on 4-point Likert scale comparing April/July 2017 beliefs about conversations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>April/July</th>
<th>April/July</th>
<th>April/July</th>
<th>April/July</th>
<th>April/July</th>
<th>April/July</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4pts.</td>
<td>3 pts.</td>
<td>2 pts.</td>
<td>1 pt.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSs help me to communicate well</td>
<td>12%/47%</td>
<td>35%/53%</td>
<td>29%/0</td>
<td>24%/0</td>
<td>2.4/3.5</td>
<td>0.99/0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to start and end a conversation in English</td>
<td>12%/71%</td>
<td>41%/29%</td>
<td>35%/0</td>
<td>12%/0</td>
<td>2.5/3.7</td>
<td>0.87/0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can speak for 4 minutes with my partner in a pair conversation</td>
<td>0/23%</td>
<td>0/77%</td>
<td>35%/0</td>
<td>65%/0</td>
<td>1.4/3.2</td>
<td>0.49/0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can ask the questions I want to in English</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>12%/59%</td>
<td>41%/41%</td>
<td>47%/0</td>
<td>1.6/2.6</td>
<td>0.70/0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have confidence speaking English</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>0/41%</td>
<td>17%/53%</td>
<td>83%/6%</td>
<td>1.2/2.4</td>
<td>0.39/0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy speaking English more than before</td>
<td>12%/35%</td>
<td>47%/65%</td>
<td>17%/0</td>
<td>24%/0</td>
<td>2.5/3.4</td>
<td>1.01/.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Questionnaires p. 1 – April 24, July 10, 2017; n=17; Likert scale maximum possible score 4.
Methods for fluency development in first year non-English majors (Seth Wallace)

Table 1 records data drawn from the semester one surveys administered during class time on April 24 and July 10 2017 (see Appendix B). The surveys comprised three sections and questions related to both ability to use CSs and beliefs about overall oral ability drawing both qualitative and quantitative data. The surveys sought to discover a change in student beliefs after the explicit tuition of CSs with relation to oral fluency. The results could indicate that students believe their oral fluency has improved, as defined by the ability to hold a pair conversation for more than 4 minutes. The 4pts response indicates strongly agree with agree, disagree and strongly disagree for 1 pt.

Table 2. Student responses on 5-point Likert scale on CS use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Results: April/July Survey</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>April</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 pts</td>
<td>4 pts</td>
<td>3 pts</td>
<td>2 pts</td>
<td>1 pt</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you doing?</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice talking with you!</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How about you?</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0/0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardon me? Could you say that again?</td>
<td>0/6%</td>
<td>0/41%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let me see.</td>
<td>0/6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh really?</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh yeah? Sounds great</td>
<td>0/29%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadowing</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking follow-up questions</td>
<td>0/12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me, too! Me, neither!</td>
<td>0/29%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really? I don’t! Really? I do!</td>
<td>0/18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Questionnaires p.2 – April 24, July 10, 2017; n=17; Likert scale maximum possible score 5

Table 2 is a record of data drawn from part 2 of the survey which relates to CS use. It is noticeable that nearly all students have become familiar with all of the CSs during the April-July teaching course. The 5pts response this time indicates I can use it naturally, 4 pts is I know it and often use it, 3 points is I know it and sometimes use it, 2 points is I know it but have never used it and 1 point is I don’t know it. With reference to use in both small talk practice conversations and speaking tests, results indicate that shadowing and rejoinders show the most significant increase in student use in the April to July period. Further, results indicate that students are having most difficulty with follow-up questions. As a result, I may focus some class time to the formulation and answering of follow-up questions, potentially using Jean Kirschenmann’s 5-finger rule in order to simplify the task and make it more accessible for students.

In order to corroborate the above findings, here are some short excerpts from class interviews carried out with a high-level deep data student on July 24th.
The interview was carried out during a pair conversation class activity as the student group is an uneven number. The transcript can be found in Appendix C.

T. indicates teacher and A. indicates student.

1. T. so when you talk to your partner, if your partner has a problem, you don’t understand, what do you do
2. A. mmmm, easy English cover with friends
3. T. mmm ok, yes good I heard it, it’s good ok yes yes good so which is the hardest communication strategy for you
4. A. mmm follow up question
5. T. why
6. A. no word and follow up question is difficult for me
7. T. which do you think is the most difficult conversation strategy for everybody
8. A. everybody difficult
9. T. yeah
10. A. mmmm everybody follow up questions everybody difficult is
11. T. so what is the easy strategy that you use with low level
12. A. easy strategies
13. T. yes for low level rejoinder or
14. A. mmm rejoinder and a follow-up question and study the strategies talk my partner

(Interview excerpts taken from July 24th Interview Transcription 1:1 – See Appendix D)

This excerpt indicates that the Student A (high-level student) is comfortable with using rejoinders in order to extend pair conversations. Student A also mentions that in order to avoid conversation breakdown with lower level students, she uses rejoinders which she considers easy to use (and by inference to understand). Student A indicates that in order to prepare for conversation practice, she studies CSs before entering into the pair discussion.

Discussion

I will center this section on my three action research questions, based upon data gathered and analysed during the spring 2017 semester.

(1) How will lower-level university students learn to use communication strategies (CSs) during the academic year?

At this stage, the inferences that can be drawn from the quantitative data are limited by sample size. However, they may suggest that lower-level university students learn to use communication strategies through explicit tuition and pair conversation practice. This is partially corroborated here by the interview results and also by the shift in student beliefs over the April to July period. Further, through interview, there are indications that higher level speakers may adjust their CS choice for level when paired with lower level speakers.
(2) What are the effects of teaching CSs on the students’ interactions over time?

At this stage, the data presented here indicate that participants tend to use more CSs in pair conversations over time. The result of this usage tends to indicate increased fluency through extended length of conversations. The influence of the course rubric on both practice and assessed conversations could also be a lead factor in students usages of CSs. Class pair conversations would need to be analysed and compared longitudinally in order to have a clearer picture of the change in student understanding and use of CSs. Again, at this stage, there are indications that the participants are both more comfortable speaking for longer in English and better prepared to do so. It would be interesting to see how much of the conversation time is used up in pauses as an indicator of fluency or disfluency. Further, turn taking analysis against duration of conversation could give a clearer indicator of conversation quality in terms of fluency. I hope to be able to undertake some level of study in this during the fall semester and to analyse accruing data.

(3) What effects will teaching CSs have on their oral-communication ability?

With oral-communication ability defined by increasing communicative competence, at this stage there are indicators that students are speaking more in class using a wider range of explicitly taught CSs. The questionnaire results indicate that the participants do link CS learning and use to longer conversations. I would be interested in future interviews to ask deep data students about their beliefs on the quality of their conversations and how they perceive their own performance and that of their conversation partner(s) with relation to this. Maybe I could ask them to rank the oral ability of the class members and justify why they select this ranking, or at least group their peers. This may require scaffolding.

Adjustments for the fall 2017 semester

I have learned the following from my Action Research project so far this year.

From Professor Heigham’s class observation of July 3rd, I realized that I need to get into student CS practice and use earlier in the class time. This will allow students more time to understand, practice using in context and eventually become productive using CSs. Less teacher talk time would also free more time for further recursive practice and negotiation for meaning between students.

The written homework preparation could maybe be valorized more in class time in order to create further sets of ideas and areas of discussion.

Students are mostly comfortable with the 13 groups of CSs in three sets that we have learned and practiced so far. I could valorize their knowledge more by having them model and demonstrate the CSs they have learned and personalised. Perhaps we could have three or four groups to demonstrate each time.

Small talk is useful to practice grammar points and questions students need to practice. But when it came to performance tests, it is best if they are free with no instructed questions to ask.

It is necessary for me to refer more regularly to the rubric in order to clarify the task and speaking test goals for students.

I will need to review the CSs after the summer vacation as students may have forgotten them or how
to use them correctly in context. I will need to pay particular attention to those they have identified as difficult in the qualitative data.

References


Kindt, D., Bowyer, D. S., (2017) A working paper exploring the effects of recursive conversations on participants’ fluency development in a first-year EFL oral communication course


Methods for fluency development in first year non-English majors (Seth Wallace)

94, 475-477.


### Appendix A

**Semester 1 2017 Research Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Class Activities</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Apr 10</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>Greeting Ready</td>
<td>Class introductions and objectives explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Apr 17</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>All about you (1)</td>
<td>Greetings and icebreakers. Introduction to the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Apr 24</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>All about you (2)</td>
<td>Personality tests and group activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>In class (1)</td>
<td>Student feedback on the first week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>In class (2)</td>
<td>Group work and discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>In class (1)</td>
<td>Group work and discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>May 29</td>
<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>In class (2)</td>
<td>Group work and discussion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 May 22</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Misusing of CIs set 1, Students mispronounce own CIs (Sheet2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 May 29</td>
<td>Speaking Test 1</td>
<td>3 minute recorded conversation on ‘In class topic’ with 3 new partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Jun 5</td>
<td>Class Section</td>
<td>Writing topics for the week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Jun 12</td>
<td>Class Section</td>
<td>Writing topics for the week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Jun 19</td>
<td>Class Section</td>
<td>Writing topics for the week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Jun 26</td>
<td>Class Section</td>
<td>Writing topics for the week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods for fluency development in first year non-English majors (Seth Wallace)

Appendix B

Questionnaire 2 – 2017.7.10

Dear student,

As you know speaking English is important for communicating your ideas with clarity and ease. Therefore, I would like to know how you feel about this process.

Instructions

• Please answer this questionnaire as much detail as possible. Please be honest.

PART 1: Your English

1. Which grade?

2. How is the most difficult skill for you? (Listening, reading, writing or speaking) Please. say why.

3. What is the most challenging skill for you? (Speaking, reading, writing or speaking) Please, say why.

PART 2: Conversation strategies

How well do you know each strategy? How often do you use it? Circle your answers for April, July.

1. I do know it, I know it has been more than one year long, and I have used it. 
2. I do know it, but I know it has been more than one year, and I have used it. 
3. I do know it, I have ever used it, I have never used it, and I do not use it. 

(a) April  (b) July

1. How are you doing?

2. Nice talking with you?

3. How about you?

4. What are you thinking?

5. Let me see? 

6. How do you feel?

7. Tell me your name, please.

8. Shading

9. Asking follow-up questions

10. Hey, how are you?

11. Really? I don’t think so!

Thank you.

Questionnaire 1 – 2017.4.24

Dear student:

As you know speaking English is important for communicating your ideas with clarity and ease. Therefore, I would like to know how you feel about this process.

Instructions

• Please answer this questionnaire as much detail as possible.

Remember, please write your honest feelings.

There are 20 questions divided into two main parts,

Part 1: About you

Part 2: Your feelings about speaking

Thank you for answering this questionnaire. Eventually, this will help you reflect better, and to help you find new ways to improve your speaking skills.

PART 1: About you

This section helps me to know who you are.

1. Name

2. Student No.

3. Have you ever studied English abroad? (If yes, please specify where you studied it, e.g. the US or England)

4. Why, are you learning English?

5. What is the most challenging skill for you? (Listening, reading, writing or speaking) Please, say why.

6. What is the most comprehensible skill?

7. Listening, reading, writing or speaking) Please, say why.

PART 2: Developing your speaking

Please circle what is true for you now.

1. Communication strategies help me to communicate well.

2. I know how to start and end a conversation in English.

3. I can ask questions I want to in English.

4. I enjoy speaking English more than in April.

Thank you and well done this semester.
Appendix C

Deep data student interviews
KSD Interviews - 2017.7.24

Transcription 1.1

Teacher: Seth Wallace
Date: July 24th 2017
Single item: KSD Audio
Interview Length: 7m 56s

Amelie: High Level Student

In a classroom with 16 students sitting in pairs doing recursive conversation practice using conversation strategies. There are 17 students so the teacher interviews one student.

1. A: my name is Amelie
2. T: good and how are you today?
3. A: everyone, pretty good.
4. T: that’s good please have some questions about our class and about your English
5. A: yes yes
6. T: so what was the usual conversation strategy to use
7. A: paired strategy remains opener.
8. T: why.
9. A: in high school student, everyday hello with friends
10. A: good so it is the same in Japan.
11. A: everyone, see more
12. T: so is it a high school you are English
13. A: yes
14. T: good now what is the most useful conversation strategy
15. A: opener
16. T: good ok oh really
17. A: yes (laughs)

—116—