

Self-Analyzing Conversational Performance: Teaching EFL Students to Construct and Analyze their BEFORE and AFTER Conversations

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Abstract

This paper describes a teaching method for English oral communication that is based upon the students' 'self-noticing' particular structural features of their own language use during dialogic conversation. Specifically, it shows how EFL learners can be taught to record, transcribe and analyze two of their own dyadic English conversations: one recorded before the teaching phase, and the other recorded after the teaching phase. Through quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data from the students' own analyses and a questionnaire administered at the conclusion of the course, the teaching phase is evaluated in terms of the BEFORE-AFTER changes in their individual dialogic contributions, thereby providing support for the hypothesis that these changes occurred because they 'noticed' where their performance needed adjustment. The teaching phase encompasses both how to structure an English conversation, and also how to analyze it. The results show that the students did notice particular features of their conversation and did indeed make adjustments in their AFTER conversations. Moreover, the teaching and analytic methodology trialed in the study proved itself valuable in raising the students' consciousness of these features and their personal usage of them.

keywords: EFL, teaching, methodology, analysis, conversation, structure, discourse

1. Introduction

When it comes to learning how to speak in a second or foreign language, one of the key facilitators to increasing or improving an EFL learner's English proficiency, is believed to be the ability of the individual to 'notice' his or her deficiencies - be they inadequacies in dialogic knowledge and skills, an insufficient lexical repertoire, or lack of linguistic knowledge - then study to decrease or eliminate an occurrence of that erroneous item or, vice versa, supplement, improve or increase frequency or usage of a desired item or behavior. The 'noticing hypothesis' (Schmidt, 1990; 2002) posits that noticing is the essential starting point for language acquisition, because nothing is learned unless it has been first noticed. Extrapolating on Schmidt's hypothesis, it follows that an 'aware' learner - that is, one that has 'noticed' - is likely to become more proficient than one with little or no awareness of his or her deficiencies. Leaving aside the issues of acquisition vs learning and proficiency, the question is how a learner notices or becomes aware of a deficiency in their receptive and productive spoken language skills? As teachers, we know that a learner either notices something either by him- or herself, or it is pointed out by an interlocutor or a teacher. Whether or not the learner then adjusts performance to address what has been 'noticed,' remains largely unknown without post-testing.

This paper describes a teaching method for English oral communication that is based upon the students 'self-noticing' particular structural features of their own language use during dialogic conversation. Specifically, it shows how EFL learners can be taught to record, transcribe and analyze two of their own dyadic English conversations: one recorded before the teaching phase, and the other recorded after the teaching phase. Through quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data from the students' own analyses and a questionnaire administered at the conclusion of the course, the teaching phase is evaluated in terms of the before-after changes in their individual dialogic contributions, thereby providing support for the hypothesis that these changes occurred because they 'noticed' where their performance needed adjustment. The teaching phase encompasses both how to structure an English conversation, and also how to analyze it. This is predicated on the belief that a conversation, as a distinct genre of spoken discourse and in contrast to it being labelled as largely unpredictable and therefore difficult to teach, does in fact encode constituent structures that are predictable in both their occurrence and structures, and hence 'teachable' in the classroom.

2. Background and context

At tertiary level in Japan, all universities, whether public or private, require all students – irrespective of their major course of study – to take at least two semesters of some type of oral English classes. Current popular course names include 'English Communication', 'Oral Communication', and 'Communicative English'. There is no choice for undergraduate students at the time of writing, and as a result the motivation of learners varies significantly. The vast majority are non-English majors, who have little or no pragmatic need or motivation for studying English. Put simply, English is a requirement of the state, and only a small percentage of students are expected to use English on a daily basis after their graduation. Compounding these conditions is the fact that, for EFL learners, opportunities for wide-ranging interaction with native speakers (NS) of English are all too infrequent and almost impossible (Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos & Linnell, 1996: 60), and the classroom - in which the learners experience greater contact with other learners than with their teachers - remains the basis for the vast majority of interaction in English. Learners are frequently and increasingly the language resource for other learners.

In such an environment, there is a great variation in the content and methodology of English communication courses. Knowledge-oriented content that focuses on increasing the linguistic competence of students is usually imparted via the 'chalk-and-talk' methodology. This is more often the case when courses are taught by less-confident English-speaking faculty. Among native Japanese English teachers, bilingual textbooks are also heavily utilised, and the grammar and

vocabulary emphases, tends to ‘continue’ on the high school English education. That said, since the turn of the millennium, a more skill-based content approach that is designed to concretely address the acknowledged ‘lack of people able to carry on even a simple conversation in English’ has taken root. This approach focuses more on the strategic and actional competencies, variously known in the literature as ‘communication strategies’ (glossed here as the micro- or local skills of conversation which include such things as how to hold, yield, and take turns, add more information to utterances, ask for clarification, among others) and ‘negotiation of meaning strategies’ (glossed here as devices used to avoid or repair communication breakdown).

The teaching of these types of strategies, is grounded within a pedagogical approach that is influenced by notions regarding the value of interaction (Long's 'Interaction Hypothesis', 1983; updated 1996) in the acquisition process. A growing body of evidence from primarily native speaker non-native speaker (NS-NNS) dialogue, but also to a lesser extent NNS-NNS research, suggests that learner-learner interaction could play as important, if not more important, a role in the acquisition process by assisting learners to obtain comprehensible input and feedback (Gass & Varonis, 1985; Hatch, 1978; Long, 1983; Varonis & Gass, 1985), as well as providing ways to modify and adjust their output beyond their current interlanguage capacity (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Swain, 1985; 1993; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Pica, 1994; among others).

However, in the shift towards teaching micro-level (or bottom-up) language-in-use strategies, pedagogy has neglected to teach these strategies within a full discourse context. That is, there is a marked absence of pedagogy oriented towards teaching what is termed here ‘macro-conversational discourse proficiency’ - the ability to use language to construct and structure entire conversations in the target language. Arguably, this is perhaps because there has long been the perception that casual conversation is largely unstructured and as a result cannot be taught to EFL learners beyond ‘opening’ and ‘closing’ structures.

Language teaching has tended to regard casual conversation as unstructured and therefore unteachable in any explicit sense. As a consequence there has been a general assumption that all one can do is get students "up talking". Such an attitude dooms students to a hit-or-miss approach.

(Eggins & Slade, 1997: 315).

One of the major assumptions of this paper is the belief that EFL conversation pedagogy, despite Swales' (1990) contention that conversation is a ‘pre-genre’ and cannot be taught, can (and should) be taught if a ‘conversation-as-a-genre’ approach to pedagogy is adopted. That is, teach a basic conversation as being composed of a specific macro-generic structure and, at the same time, teach explicit structures within the macro-structure framework, that learners can internalize and reproduce when in conversation: in other words, provide them with a ‘road map’ from the beginning through to the end of the conversation. So, what are the components of the ‘road map’ of a conversation?

3. Potential Components of the Conversation

In casual conversation, research has shown that ‘genre’ exists at two levels: the macro-generic structure of the interactional or functional elements of the conversation itself (Ventola 1979), as well as the generic stages of internal story-telling structures such as narratives, recounts, anecdotes, gossip, jokes, and exemplums (Eggins & Slade, 1997). In other words, there is an generally predictable overall structure that through socialization has been ingrained in people of a particular culture. We will deal with this macro-generic aspect first, and discuss the personal story sub-genres below.

There are two types of ‘talk’ within the structure of a conversational dialogue itself. There are the short, quick exchanges of greetings and ending talk, inquiries about well-being, and the type of talk that goes on as the interlocutors ‘search’ for a topic of interest that can expand beyond a single exchange. In addition to the short exchanges, are occasions when one speaker might dominate the talk for a time as s/he goes into greater depth about a topic. For EFL educational

purposes with our students, we have labeled these two distinct types of talk as ‘chats’ and ‘chunks,’ however, in discourse analysis they are known as ‘exchanges’ and ‘personal stories.’

‘Chats’ are parts of the conversation where the speaking turns of each person are quite short and interlocutors change turns fairly quickly. Each person generally talks for about the same amount of time. The dialogue moves quickly and information is exchanged as if two players having a game of table tennis. Each person only has a turn for a short time and they keep hitting the ball back to each other immediately.

On the other hand, ‘chunks’ are those parts of the conversation where one interlocutor talks for a longer time. In a basketball game, one person may hold the ball for a long time, bouncing it on the floor as he or she goes down the court looking for a person to pass the ball to. Finally, the person with the ball passes it off to another player. ‘Chunk’ sections of conversation are like these times when one speaker holds the turn for a longer time. Research (Plum, 1988; Eggins & Slade, 1997) has shown that often these longer turns are composed of personal narratives of the speaker. Together, these two types of components are intertwined throughout a conversation, and create comprise the macro-generic structure.

3.1 Component 1 - Macro-Structure elements

Based on research on the macro-generic structure of dialogue (Ventola, 1979; Eggins & Slade, 1997; Burns & Joyce, 1997), L1 exchange structures (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Hinds, 1976; Coulthard & Brazil, 1981; Stubbs, 1981, among others), L2 negotiated exchange structures (Long, 1983; Varonis & Gass, 1985; Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, and Linnel, 1996; Shehadeh, 1999, among others) and personal narratives (Labov & Walestzy, 1967, Szatrowski, 1987; Plum, 1998; Maynard, 1989; Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Eggins & Slade, 1997, among others), the following ‘default’ conversation structure for a casual conversation was constructed. Note that the labels for each component have been ‘de-jargonized’ for use with EFL learners. Each sub-element has further been labeled by type-of-talk as a ‘Chat’ (i.e. exchange) or ‘Chunk’ (personal story).

Excerpt 1 – Constructed Conversation for use in classroom

1. Greeting (chat)
2. Well-Being Inquiry (chat)
3. Initial topic (chat)
 - *Secondary topic (chat)
 - *Tertiary topic (chat)
4. Speaker A Story (chunk)
5. Redirection (chat)
 - *Secondary topic (chat)
 - *Tertiary topic (chat)
6. Speaker B Story (chunk)
7. Pre-Closing (chat)
8. Closing (chat)

In Part 3, an initial topic might not develop beyond the exchange level, so the speakers move onto a second topic. Similarly, after Speaker A has concluded his/her story, in Part 5 there is either a return to the initial topic with an expressions such as “How about you?” or further short exchanges until Speaker B settles on a topic to spend longer turns on.

An example of the above structure in action is the following dialogue.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Greeting | A: Hi Ken.
B: Hi Toshi. |
| 2. Well-being | A: How’s it going?
B: Great!
How about you? |

A: Not bad.

CHAT

3. Initial Topic

What did you do on the weekend?
B: The weekend?
 Nothing much. Stayed home mostly.
 What about you?
A: Well...let's see..

4. Story 1

CHUNK

I had a pretty interesting Saturday.
 [B: Great]
 My girlfriend and I went and saw that new Harry Potter movie at Miyoshi iMall.
B: Uh-huh.
 How was it?
A: Pretty good - lots of special effects. The story was a bit hard to follow though.
 [B: Really]
 Anyway, then we had lunch at Mr Curry..you know, on the second floor.
B: Oh yeah...yeah. Not bad.
A: After that I bought a couple of CDs.
 [B: Uh-huh]
 I got home about 5. It was a good day but I spent too much money.
 [B: Too bad]

5. Redirection MOVE

How about you? Did you just stay home the whole weekend?

6. Story 2

CHUNK

B: No..I got bored just watching TV, so I went to jMall too on Sunday.
 [A: Uh-huh]
 Yeah.. I got there about 10, just as they were opening up Mr Donuts. And guess what?
A: What?
B: You know that cute girl in history class,
 [A: Yeah?]
 she works there.
 [A: Really!]
 I ate about six donuts just so I could stay there longer.
 [B: Uh-huh]
 Anyway, about 11 the staff started looking at me kind of strangely. You know..they
 wanted me to leave.
 [B: Oh..Okay]
 So, she came over and said...Hey...Katoh-san could you please leave?
 Wow! I couldn't believe it! She knew my name!
 [A: That's great.]
B: Yeah. I can't wait for history this week.

7. Pre-closing

{B looks at his watch}
 Anyway. I've got to go. Tony hates
 anyone being late for class.
A: Yeah..I know. I'll see you at lunch.

CHAT

8. Closing

B: Catch you later. Save me a seat.
A: Yeah, okay. Bye.

3.2 Component 2 - Exchange moves

In regard to the chat exchanges, the learners were taught that exchanges were potentially constructed of six basic moves. Just like in basketball or soccer, each time that a speaker takes a turn, he or she can potentially do more than one thing. Some dialogic turns have only one move (the interlocutor passes the turn back quickly). Some turns have more than one (where the interlocutor keeps the turn). Below are the six basic moves in a chat exchange.

Initiation	(I)
Response	(R)
Cleaning-Up	(C)

Follow-up Information	(FI)
Pay-Back Initiation	(PBI)
Stallers	(S)
Register-Feedback	(R-F)

Initiation (I) moves occur at the start of the conversation itself with an initial greeting (e.g. ‘Hello’) or are used to introduce a new topic to the dialogue. *Pay-Back Initiation* (PBI) moves are used to push the turn back to the speaker by the use of (a) devices such as “How about you?”, or (b) questions that ask for further information about the current topic. *Response* (R) moves are replies to both Initiations and Pay-Back Initiation moves and contain information that directly addresses the question. *Follow-up Information* (FI) moves are added information that extrapolates on information in the response or initiation type moves. Due to cultural differences in conversational practices, it is considered impolite to both overly-question speakers or add what is considered superfluous or unnecessary further information to their own talk turns when speaking, so there is a marked hesitation and reluctance to add follow-up information in the dialogue of beginner Japanese speakers of English. *Cleaning-Up* (C) moves refers to clarification checks when communication breakdown, non-comprehension or misunderstanding has occurred. They consist of questions (such as “What?”), para-verbal expressions (“Huh?”) or non-verbal indicators (shrug, gaze). Paraverbal or verbal hesitation devices allowing the speaker to gain processing time before talking, are labeled *Staller* (S) moves. Register (or Feedback) moves consist of paraverbal, verbal and gestural (e.g., head nods) acknowledgements made by the listener whose function is to let the speaker know they have been heard.

Excerpt 1 shows how the moves interact in a series of exchanges.

Turn	Speaker	Discourse	Move
A1	A:	Hi _____	(I)
B1	B:	Hi _____	(R)
		How're things?	(I)
A2	A:	Not bad...	(R)
		And you?	(PBI)
B2	B:	Great...	(R)
		Did you have a good weekend?	(I)
A3	A:	Uh..well...	(S)
		it was okay...	(R)
		I didn't do much..stayed home and watched movies mostly.	(FI)
B3	B:	Oh yeah?...	(R)
		What did you see?	(PBI)
A4	A:	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	(R ₁)
B4	B:	Huh..Harry Potter what?	(C)
A5	A:	The Chamber of Secrets...	(R ₂)
		You know..the second one.	(FI)
B5	B:	Oh yeah.. etc.	(R)

3.3 Component 3 - Personal story structures

The third component of the content was the structures of the story sub-genres. In regard to story structures, learners were taught the following three types, adjudged by prior research (Labov & Walestzy, 1967; Labov, 1972; Clancy, 1980; Sztatrowski, 1987; Plum, 1998; Maynard, 1989; Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Eggins & Slade, 1997, among others), to be the most common in casual conversation: Recount (told by Speaker A in Excerpt 1); Anecdote (told by Speaker B in Excerpt 1), and, Narrative. Their potential structures (again utilizing classroom language rather than the linguistic terms) are as follows:

Recount stages:

1. Theme 2. Setting 3. Step-by-step Events 4. Summary

Anecdote stages:

1. Theme 2. Setting 3. Step-by-step Events 4. Remarkable Event 5. Reaction 6. Summary

Narrative stages:

1. Theme 2. Setting 3. Step-by-step Events 4. Problem Event 5. Events After 6. Resolution 7. Summary

Students were given multiple examples (transcribed by the researcher from students in previous courses) of each type for analysis and discussion, and then given stimulus questions in order to generate their own personal stories of each of the types. Next, they wrote out their own, and took part in conversations with random partners to whom they related their stories. The students were directed not to talk with their BEFORE conversation partner.

3.4 Component 4 - Speech interacts

The final component of the content (though taught second in the progression) were the Speech Interacts. In this course, the term ‘Interacts’ (Halliday, 1994) was used to denote the pragmatic speech actions of the interlocutors. Research on ‘speech acts’ (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1965) argues that speakers perform actions when speaking, just as a person does physically, for example, when opening or closing a door. In other words, our words perform ‘actions’ such as requesting, rejecting, informing, and accepting, among many others. Paltridge’s (2000) compilation of a basic list of speech actions (hereafter, interacts), with several additions by the author, forms the fourth component of the content of this course. Table 1 includes (but is not restricted to) the following:

Table 1. List of Basic Interacts

Greeting	Information Seek	Information Provide	Information Check
Feedback	Information Confirm	Opinion Seek	Opinion Provide
Clarification Seek	Clarification Provide	Invitation	Acceptance
Rejection	Comment	Acceptance	Leave-taking

This section has outlined the major components of the conversation and their structures. The above formed the knowledge content for the teaching phase of the course. Next, we look at the research questions, the method of the study and how the analytical skills were taught.

4. Research Questions and Method

The following research questions were formed.

RQ1: What features or aspects of their own contributions did the students notice in their before and after analyses of their conversations?

RQ2: Was the methodology and delivery of the course, beneficial in achieving RQ1?

In this pilot study, 12 dyads from a cohort of 24 EFL learners (21 female speakers labeled F1, F2, through to F21; 3 male speakers labeled M1, M2 and M3) undertook a 6-Step process over a 14-session course over a seven-week period. The students ranged in age from 19-23 and were sophomore through to senior students at a private university in Japan. Most of the students were majoring in English-language related courses but not all. The course methodology was divided into 5 phases.

4.1 Phase 1

In Phase 1, in the first part of the first lesson, the students paired off at random and audio-recorded a 5’30 to 6’00-minute English conversation on their cellphones. The participants were given no instructions as to what topics to talk about: they were just asked to record an English conversation discussing anything they liked. The dyads were dispersed to various regions of the campus and asked to return after 15 minutes with a recorded conversation. It should be stressed that this course was a multi-year elective and many of the students did not know other members of the class when they joined. This conversation was labeled the ‘BEFORE’ conversation.

4.2 Phase 2

In this phase, the learners were taught how to transcribe their conversation into an Excel file. This involved each speaker individually transcribing their own utterances and then transmitting their own transcriptions to their interlocutor. The dyad then worked on ordering the dialogue by numbering each line, resulting in each student having a copy of the combined transcription, and thus the entire conversation.

4.3 Phase 3

In this phase the teaching of the content (See Sections 3.1 to 3.4) was undertaken. As a component was taught, the participants then analyzed their own transcriptions for that component. For example, in the first session of the week, the content was taught and the students practiced analyzing example conversations for the particular feature that was being focused upon that week. In the second session of the week, the students worked together with their interlocutor to analyze and label their own dialogues for 5 features: Word Count; Interact Usage; Exchange Moves; Story Structures; and the Macro-Structure. Table 2 shows the progression of the content and analysis process.

Table 2

	Session	Session
Week 1	Introduction & Recording of BEFORE conversation	Transcription
Week 2	Macro-Structure	Analysis
Week 3	Speech Interacts	Analysis
Week 4	Exchange Structure	Analysis
Week 5	Story Structure	Analysis
Week 6	Recording of AFTER conversation	Transcription & Analysis
Week 7	Analysis	Comparison and Reflection Report

4.4 Phase 4

In this phase, the students recorded an ‘AFTER’ conversation of approximately the same duration (5’30 to 6’00-minute) with the same interlocutor as in the ‘BEFORE’ conversation, then transcribed and analyzed the data for the same features: Word Count; Interact Usage; Exchange Moves; Story Structures; and the Macro-Structure.

4.5 Phase 5

Finally, in Phase 5, the students completed a two-part report (see Appendix). Part 1 of the report asked the students to compare the data of their BEFORE and AFTER conversations and comment upon their own performances in terms of each of the components. Part 2 of the report asked them to reflect upon the course and self-rate their interest in the course, its usefulness or lack thereof, and whether or not they felt the course had been beneficial to their ability and confidence levels when speaking English.

5. Results

In their comparison reports, the students were asked to comment upon the analyses of their BEFORE and AFTER conversations in terms of the following 5 categories: (a) Word Counts (b) Interact Usage (c) Exchange Moves (d) Stories, and (e) Macro-Structure. This section does the same. For convenience, the conversations are capitalized BEFORE and AFTER.

5.1 Word Counts

Across the total of 12 BEFORE conversations, the 24 participants transcribed a total of 4619 words for an average of 193 words per speaker. The range varied between a low of 76 words for speaker F21, to a high of 325 words for Speaker F1. The top 12 speakers in the BEFORE conversations used a total of 2,835 which represents 61% of the total.

In the AFTER conversations, a total of 6263 words were spoken, representing an average of 261 words per speaker, an increase in the average of 68 words per person. In the case of the AFTER conversations, the top 12 speakers spoke 3611 words or 58% of the total. Among all, 22 of the 24 speakers improved their word counts in the AFTER conversation, with one of the two exceptions contributing the exact same amount (325 words), and the other student using 17 words less. Unsurprisingly, the top 12 contributors in the BEFORE conversation were also the top 12 contributors in the AFTER conversation.

The word count increase is not in itself surprising over the course of a communication course, given that the students were unknown to each other at the start of the program and had become more acquainted with each in the meantime. Naturally, any interlocutors would increase the volume of talk as they decrease the social distance between them, and it can be argued that the majority of communication courses would show similar increases. That said, while a learner's individual word count is not a particularly salient factor in judging the value of a course to a particular student, a significant increase in the comparison of word counts between the BEFORE and AFTER conversations, is perhaps best an indicator of how the reluctant or reticent speakers in the BEFORE conversation became less reticent, more confident and verbose over the length of the course. Thus, it is an indicator of 'value' in that sense. Table 3 shows some reflections from the students in regard to their Word Counts. Please note that the comments are listed here as written by the students.

Table 3 Reflections on Word Counts

Student	Comment
F19	In terms of Word Count, in the AFTER conversation (238), I increased my output by 95 words from the BEFORE conversation (143). This represents an increase of 66% in terms of the contribution I made in the AFTER conversation. This result shows that I have been able to understand the inner workings of a proper conversation so that it is both stimulating and challenging to me and my partner. An interesting result was it was evident that I was recalling my BEFORE conversation and consciously avoiding my mishaps from that time. Thus, in terms of Word Count, I am very happy and thoroughly pleased with these results because I found out that I only needed to learn how to structure my speaking so that I can successfully utilize my English vocabulary.
F4	In terms of Word Count, in the AFTER conversation (310), I increased my output by 111 words from the BEFORE conversation (199). This represents an increase of 56% in terms of the contribution I made in the AFTER conversation. This result shows that I could speak more words within the same time limit after taking this class. Thus, in terms of Word Count, I am satisfied with these results because I could speak 310 words within 5 to 6 minutes, in other words, I could speak about one word per second.
F10	In terms of Word Count, in the AFTER conversation (204), I increased my output by 51 words from the BEFORE conversation (153). This represents an increase of about 33% in terms of the contribution I made in the AFTER conversation. This result shows that I was more involved in the AFTER conversation than BEFORE. An interesting result was my partner also increased word count by about 37%. Both of us talked more than BEFORE conversation, so it can be said that we became more active to talk. Thus, in terms of Word Count, I am happy with these results because I made progress to be active in the conversation even though the time for talking was the same, 5 minutes.
F5	In terms of Word Count, in the AFTER conversation (301), I increased my output by 39 words from the BEFORE conversation (262). This represents an increase of 14% in terms of the contribution I made in the AFTER conversation. This result shows that I was trying to participate in the conversation more actively.

	An interesting result was it was not the quantity of interacts, but the content that had increased since the last time. Thus, in terms of Word Count, I am satisfied with these results because it was not something I was aware of, but it was because I was able to bring the other person's conversation out of me and communicate what I wanted to say to them.
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5.2 Interact Usage

In regard to interact usage, complete quantitative data sets were gathered from 20 of the 24 subjects. That said, not all the interact types were represented in the conversations. The major data types used and the numbers of students that used each is in Table 4. Note that the figures in parentheses represent the total frequency of each as reported by the students.

Table 4 Major interacts used and numbers of users

Interact	No. of BEFORE users	No. of AFTER users
Information Seek	20 (148)	20 (125)
Information Provide	20 (356)	20 (467)
Opinion Seek	2 (3)	2 (2)
Opinion Provide	3 (19)	3 (12)
Clarification Seek	6 (10)	10 (18)
Clarification Provide	3 (6)	11 (11)
Comment	13 (57)	16 (80)
Greeting	18	20
Leave-Taking	11	16
Feedback	18 (272)	19 (206)

In discussing this category, it is more relevant to focus upon the numbers of learners that reported usage of the particular interacts in the BEFORE and AFTER conversation. For reasons related to the inexperience of the learners as analysts (see the discussion below in the conclusion section), the raw scores for each category (in parentheses in the above table), cannot be relied upon with 100% accuracy. That said, it is clear that particular learners had noticed deficiencies in their BEFORE conversations and increased their personal use of particular interacts. For example, in the AFTER conversations, 4 more learners used ‘Clarification Seek’ interacts and 8 more used ‘Clarification Provide’ interacts, which suggests that some learners were more inclined to question their interlocutors when misunderstandings arose. Table 5 shows selected comments.

Table 5 Reflections on Interact Usage

Student	Comment
F6	The analyses of Interacts in the BEFORE and AFTER conversations show that I increased my use of Information Seek (+4), Information Provide (+8), Comment (+1), Feedback (+4), Opinion Provide (+12), Clarification Seek (+4), Discourse Marker (+3). However, It also shows that I decrease my use of Invitation (-2). This result shows that I provide more information and my opinion to the other person on a single topic. Thus, in terms of Interacts, I am very happy with these results because I was able to express many of my opinions to my partner.
F20	The analyses of Interacts in the BEFORE and AFTER conversations, show that I increased my use of Information Seek, Information Provide, Opinion Provide, and Feedback. This result shows that I gave my information and opinions more and gave turn to my partner more times. An interesting result was that I also increased the number of Feedback, so I reacted what she said more. Thus, in terms of Interacts, I am very happy with these results because our interaction became more active and, we exchanged more information.
F8	The analyses of Interacts in the BEFORE and AFTER conversations, show that I increased my use of Information Check and Clarification Seek. This result shows that I could check what my partner said. An interesting result was I could include more kinds of interact in the AFTER conversation. Thus, in terms of Interacts, I am satisfied with these results because I could clarify what my partner said when I had some questions.
M3	The analyses of Interacts in the BEFORE and AFTER conversations, show that I increased my use of responses with Information Provide. This result shows that I can now react to what my partner has spoken. An interesting result was that I didn't find it harder to continue talking than BEFORE despite the decrease in the number of words. Thus, in terms of Interacts, I am very happy with these results because I became good at conversation catchball.

5.3 Exchange Moves

As mentioned above, the students were asked to analyze their exchanges and identify the number of times they used Initiation (I), Response (R), Pay-Back Initiation (PBI), Follow-up Information (FI) moves. In particular, the idea was to assist the students to become aware of and notice how they could manage the conversation and keep an exchange active before introducing a new topic. In this respect, the key moves were the FI and PBI moves. As identified by the students themselves, Table 6 shows the BEFORE and AFTER figures for each of the key exchange moves. Note that these figures are based on 23 of the 24 students (one did not submit complete data) and also that the figures refer to frequency and not word counts.

Table 6. BEFORE and AFTER Exchange Moves

Move	BEFORE	AFTER
Initiation (I)	84	89
Pay-Back Initiation	119	110
Response	241	258
Follow-up Information	201	287

As can be seen in the table, PBI moves showed a slight decrease from 110 to 119, and Initiations and Responses increased slightly. On the other hand, Follow-up Information moves increased by 86. The raw score data shows that this increase can be attributed to 14 of the 23 students, which suggests that these students paid particular attention to the importance of adding extra information to their responses.

Nine of the 23 students increased the number of Initiations (I) they made, 10 increased their Response (R) moves, and 8 improved their Pay-Back Initiation (PBI) moves. Overall, two male students (M1 and M2) showed no increase in frequency across any of the four main move types. Of the remaining 21, all increased frequencies in at least one category. Student F24 increased usage across all four move types, 6 increased usage across three categories, 5 across two categories, and the remaining 9 across at least one category.

Table 7 Reflections on Exchange moves

Student	Comment
F2	The analyses of Exchanges in the BEFORE and AFTER conversations, show that I increased Clear-up Question. This result shows that I started to make sure what my partner said if I didn't understand it. An interesting result was that my partner also increased Clear-up Question. Probably, that was because we became more friendly and we were not afraid of saying "what?" in the AFTER conversation. Thus, in terms of the roles I played in the Exchanges, I satisfied with these results because I realize that I stopped leaving what I don't know.
F20	The analyses of Exchanges in the BEFORE and AFTER conversations, show that I increased Initiations (I), Response(R), and Payback-Initiations (PBI). This result shows that I gave more new topics as well as information about myself. An interesting result was that I increased Response(R) the most, so [my partner] asked me more questions and, I answered them. Thus, in terms of the roles I played in the Exchanges, I am satisfied with these results because I gave more topics and some questions related to these topics.
F7	The analyses of Exchanges in the BEFORE and AFTER conversations, show that I increased Initiations (I), Response (R), Payback-Initiations (PBI), Follow-up Information (RFI and FI), Register (backchannel; feedback) (Rg), Clear-Up Question (CQ), Clear-Up Response. This result shows that most of the numbers in the exchange category went up. An interesting result was there were no Payback initiation and no Clear-Up Question in BEFORE conversation, but there were 4 Payback Initiation and 3 Clear-Up Question in AFTER conversation.
F16	The analyses of Exchanges in the BEFORE and AFTER conversations, show that I increased / decreased.... Initiations (I) -1, Response (R) +4, Payback-Initiations (PBI) +2, Follow-up Information (RFI and FI)+7, Feedback (F) +11, Cleaning-Up (CQ and CR) -4, Stallers (St) +5. This result shows that as a result of the increased information and concreteness of the conversation, there is less need for Cleaning-Up.

5.4 Story Incorporation

In regard to the inclusion of story structures in their conversations, 7 of 24 students reported telling a story in the BEFORE conversation, while 20 of the 24 reported they did in the AFTER conversation. The most common type of story told (as reported by the students) in the AFTER

conversation was the Recount (10), followed by the Anecdote (4) and Narrative (1). The remaining 5 did not identify the story by type in their reports.

Table 8 Reflections on Stories

Student	Comment
F11	In terms of stories, in the BEFORE conversation, I didn't tell a story, but on the other hand I told a story in the AFTER conversation. In the AFTER conversation, we told each other what we plan to do in summer vacation.
M2	In terms of stories, in the BEFORE conversation, I didn't tell the story in order. I didn't tell the "STEP BY STEP EVENTS". In other words, I told the fact, but I didn't tell the process and the reason why the things happen. Therefore, I think it was hard to understand my story. Furthermore, I couldn't entertain the listener. On the other hand, in the AFTER conversation, I could tell the story in the right order. I could explain my stories.
F3	The conversation changed from being self-centered to being conscious of the other person. What is interesting is that I am now able to talk from the other person's point of view. I used to talk about what I wanted to talk about as much as I wanted to talk about, but in the AFTER conversation, I started to talk concisely, and the pace of the conversation became more comfortable. I could have a more engaging conversation.
F2	In terms of stories, in the BEFORE conversation, I talked about just an event in order. In the AFTER conversation, I also told a problem event and how I solved it.

5.5 Macro-Structure

Various reports were given by the students in regard to their adherence to the macro-structure. While adhering to each of the elements in the basic macro-structure (above) was not a pre-requisite in the AFTER conversation (and the students were told this), the most-commonly reported use of a 'new' element was that of the 'Pre-Closing' feature. While only 6 dyads had reported use of this in the BEFORE conversation, 8 dyads reported its incorporation into the AFTER conversation. While this difference of 2 dyads is by no means a strong indicator of difference, an inspection of the transcripts showed that some dyads had in fact incorporated some of the pre-closing techniques (e.g., giving reasons to end the conversation by saying that they had to go to the next class, their part-time job or their train was coming) used during the course. Excerpt 2 is an example used by F13 and F14 in their AFTER conversation. Lines 110 through 113 shows the Pre-Closing stage, and lines 114-115 the Closing stage.

Excerpt 2

Line 110 F13: I have to go.
 Line 111 F14: Oh. You have next class?
 Line 112 F13: No. I have to go to the part-time.
 Line 113 F14: Actually, I have next class.
 Line 114 F13: OK. Bye.
 Line 115 F14: Thank you. See you later.

Table 9 shows some of the student reflections on their attempts to create a more structured conversation.

Table 9 Reflections on Macro-Structure

Student	Comment
F10	In terms of structure, in the BEFORE conversation, I did not tell Pre-closing. On the other hand, in the AFTER conversation, we had time for Pre-closing. Thanks to Pre-closing, our AFTER conversation was more natural than BEFORE.
F11	In terms of the overall structure of the conversation, I think we had a relatively good conversation because we had all sections we learned: Greeting, Well-being, Initial Topic, Story, Redirection, Pre-Closing, and Closing. I think we had a relatively well-constructed conversation in terms of Macro-structure.
F16	In terms of the overall structure of the conversation, I think we came to continue the conversation about one topic. In BEFORE conversation, the topic did not last and we changed topic 3 times in 5 minutes. On the other hand, AFTER conversation had 3 Story. Macro-structure shows that our conversation became a little more consistent than BEFORE.

F8	In terms of the overall structure of the conversation, I think we could talk about many topics and deep into each story. When we were talking, we thought about the structure of story, so we enjoyed taking conversation!
F4	This result shows that I was talking a lot about each story in after conversation. In before conversation, there was not very much content, the conversation was like a tennis rally. However, we could talk a lot in after one, the conversation was like a basketball.

6. Conclusion

This was a pilot study of the teaching methodology - the first attempt by the researcher to teach these concepts - and the researcher himself did not analyze each of the 24 conversations. Thus, at this early stage of the project, no great confidence can be placed in the quantitative data as reported by the students. In regard to RQ1 about the features noticed about their conversational skills, it is clear from the written reflections that a great many adjustments were made to the AFTER conversations on the basis of the data from their BEFORE conversations. That said, while there were no doubt students that analyzed the data with greater accuracy than others, the fact remains that there is a large degree of inexpertness in the analytical results. However, as mentioned in the introduction, the production of quantitative data showing increases in frequency of particular features, was not the point of the course, nor was it a research question of this paper. In regard to RQ2 and whether or not the course was beneficial, the over-riding goal was to teach conversation in such a way so as to assist the students to become more aware of their language usage and their conversation management skills, and by doing so, hopefully lead them to adapt their skills as needed. It is clear that each of the 24 students in this pilot project noticed at least one feature that they adjusted. In fact, it is possible to say that most noticed multiple features. Therefore, on the basis of the results, the course has been adjudged successful in raising the students' consciousness of the features of conversation and their own performances. Finally, since this paper was written, three more cohorts (i.e., another 76 students) have undertaken subsequent iterations of the course. In these later versions, the researcher-teacher has adapted particular aspects of the content, and how it is taught. Additionally, the comparison and reflection report survey document has undergone a transformation to include more specific questions about the features they noticed, as well as the students' confidence levels in their English conversation ability. It is hoped that this data will generate greater support for the teaching methodology and the findings of this pilot research project.

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Appendix

Name: _____

Number: _____

COMPARISON of BEFORE and AFTER CONVERSATIONS

Word Count

In terms of Word Count, in the AFTER conversation (*e.g. 207 WC), I increased my output by *e.g. 76 words from the BEFORE conversation (*e.g. 131 WC). This represents an increase of *e.g. 58% in terms of the contribution, I made in the AFTER conversation.

This results shows that....

An interesting result was....

Thus, in terms of Word Count, I am very happy / unhappy / disappointed / slightly disappointed / satisfied with these results because.....

Interacts

The analyses of Interacts in the BEFORE and AFTER conversations, show that I increased /decreased my use of,,, (see your results to do with 'Information Seek, 'Information Provide' etc.

This result shows that

An interesting result was....

Thus, in terms of Interacts, I am very happy / unhappy / disappointed / slightly disappointed / satisfied with these results because.....

Exchanges

The analyses of Exchanges in the BEFORE and AFTER conversations, show that I increased / decreased.... Initiations (I)..... Payback-Initiations (PBI),Follow-up Information (RFI and FI)....

This result shows that

An interesting result was....

Thus, in terms of the ROLES I played in the Exchanges, I am very happy / unhappy / disappointed / slightly disappointed / satisfied with these results because.....

Stories

In terms of stories, in the BEFORE conversation, I told / didn't tell.....

On the other hand/In the AFTER conversation, I told / didn't tell

I am very happy / unhappy / disappointed / slightly disappointed / satisfied with these results because.....

Macros-structure (pair)

In terms of the overall structure of the conversation, I think we.....

SELF-EVALUATION score:

(a) I rate my understanding in this class at 5/5, 4/5, 3/5, 2/5, 1/5 because.....

(b) I rate my effort in this class at 5/5, 4/5, 3/5, 2/5, 1/5 because.....