The Support System to Encourage the Students Growth as English Learners and The Original Evaluation System of English Communicative Abilities : Part 1

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1. Introduction

This paper is about a special plan to encourage the students to learn more positively and autonomously.

There are a lot of classes by taught English native speakers in the curriculum of The English Language and Literature Department. The students are encouraged to express their own feelings and thoughts freely. To help the students try to use English positively, the native speakers endeavor to create a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere and give the students abundant opportunities to feel ready to speak English positively.

Most of the students are quite satisfied with the classes taught by English native speakers. This is evident from the results of the questionnaires on the classes. Most students say they like the classes and are seldom absent from them.

There are, nevertheless, some frustrations which remain. These phenomena do not occur as a consequence of the students’ idleness or apathy but rather, result from cultural differences in the styles of communication and the intrinsically instilled attitudes towards learning methods.

Those differences probably originate from a particular personality trait, which is characteristic of Japanese people and a lack of self-confidence. Some of the students may not have been very good at subjects in high school or didn’t get good marks in the tests. But it is unclear whether the evaluation is always accurate with regard to communicative skills.

The current authors believe the students will be able to overcome these two kinds of problems making use of a specially devised plan of action. Firstly the students, who are
quite mature, could understand the cultural differences and their own Japanese styles of communication. Then they could try to encourage themselves to express their own thoughts in English.

Secondly, they could improve their ability if they realize that the more experiences they have, the better they will be able to use English, and they become aware of more useful and helpful learning strategies to improve their English communicative abilities. In other words, they should adopt more effective learning methods and come to believe that there are great possibilities for their development towards becoming more autonomous and positive learners.

In the next section, the present conditions of the students are explained. In the third and fourth sections, tests are discussed, and in the final section the special plan to create a learning environment more conducive to the above goals is introduced.

2. The Present conditions

As was stated in a previous report (Nagakura et al., 2014), the English department has been aiming for two main goals; to help the students improve their English communicative ability and mature into competent ‘human resources’ who can get suitable jobs or fulfill other appropriate roles in society after graduation.

In the curriculum the students can take a lot of English communication classes taught by English native speakers, and a number of innovative classes to support their growth as individuals with a pleasant personality and a good grasp of common sense.

Although the curriculum has been working reasonably well, some other steps are deemed appropriate to make the effects more successful.

2.1 The Qualities and Characters of the students

Almost all the students really want to become able to speak English fluently. They all take the communication classes and are largely satisfied with them. They are all polite and generally obliging. Some are diligent and positive. On the other hand, some are quiet and passive and sometimes look unsure of their own abilities.

The students responded to Questionnaire 1, which encouraged them to consider and even discover for the first time, their own language learning strategy preferences. Selective results are presented below:

The following figures show what kind of learners they are, why they learn English, and what their favorite learning strategies are.

2.1.1 What Kind of Learners They Are

Table 1 What kind of learner are you?
英語学習者としての成長を促す支援体制と独自の「英語スピーキング能力評価基準」の構築<1>

Read the expressions, choose a response (4 through 1), and circle the number most appropriate for you.

On a scale of 4 to 1, a response of 4 would mean the statement on the left most suits you, and a response of 1 would mean the statement on the right most suits you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I feel cool when I speak English in front of others.</th>
<th>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</th>
<th>I get embarrassed when I speak English in front of others.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I speak in a loud and clear voice.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>I speak in a small and weak voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I prefer to work in groups.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>I prefer to work alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I study English outside class, on my own.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>I study English in class only, when the teacher tells me to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I often ask questions.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>I seldom ask questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I like open-ended essay tests.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>I like multiple-choice tests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I want to study abroad.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>I want to understand grammar and acquire a greater vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I like to do various activities in class.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>I like to do similar activities in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I like teachers to give me a lot of freedom to choose what I can do.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>I like teachers to tell me exactly what to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I like slightly difficult tasks.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>I like easy tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I like a friendly atmosphere.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>I like a slightly tense atmosphere.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL

37 ~ 44 → You are motivated and active.
25 ~ 36 → You are motivated, but not active.
11 ~ 24 → You are not motivated or active.

What Kind of Learners

■ The Number of Students

Figure 1 What kind of learner are you?
### 2.1.2 Reasons For Study

Table 2 Why they learn English

Read the reasons, choose a response (4 through 1), and circle the number in the space after the reason, according to the following scale:

- I think so very much = 4,
- I think so = 3,
- I don’t really think so = 2,
- I don’t think so at all = 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>英語コミュニケーション能力を養いたい。 to brush up abilities to communicate with foreign people in English</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>英語圏の文化や考え方を知りたい。 to learn about the cultures of countries where English is spoken</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>異文化を理解し、異文化間でのコミュニケーション能力を身につけたい。 to know different cultures, and interact with people from other cultures</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>外国語の学習の効果的な学習方法を身につけたい。 to learn how to learn foreign languages</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>頭脳を鍛える知的トレーニングのひとつとして英語を学びたい。 to train yourself intellectually</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>日本語も含めた対人コミュニケーション能力を養いたい。 to brush up all round abilities to communicate with people, including Japanese</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>母語である日本語をより深く理解するようになりたい。 to understand Japanese language better</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>教養を高め、「生きる力」を養いたい。 to be a well-educated person with social competence.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>英検やTOEICなどの語学能力試験で高得点を取りたい。 to succeed in exams and to get English qualifications</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>進路希望を実現するために、英語試験などでよい成績を取りたい。 to get good marks to get a job</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>親の期待に応え、よい成績を取りたい。 to get good marks to make my parents happy</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>教師の指導に応え、よい成績を取りたい。 to get good marks to meet teachers' expectations.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>日本の経済的国際競争力を高めるための英語力を養いたい。 to acquire English abilities to achieve economic or political goals</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>環境問題など国際的問題の解決のための語学力を身につけたい。 to cooperate to solve world issues</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>学術研究の分野で国際的な活躍をしたい。 to take an active part in international academic fields.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>芸術、スポーツその他の分野で国際的な活躍をしたい。 to take an active part in the fields of art or sport</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.3 Learning Strategies

Table 3 What their favorite learning strategies are

Read the statements, choose a response (4 through 1), and circle the number in the space after the statement, according to the following scale:

I think so very much = 4, I think so = 3, I don’t really think so = 2, I don’t think so at all = 1

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>単語を覚えるのが好き</td>
<td>I like to memorize words.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ゲームやパズル、力試し問題が好き</td>
<td>I like games and puzzles.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>教師に解説をもらったのが好き</td>
<td>I like to listen to teachers’ explanations.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>自分で考える問題解決型の学習が好き</td>
<td>I like to solve problems by myself.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>グラフや図表を描くのが好き</td>
<td>I like to draw graphs and figures.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>映像を利用した学習が好き</td>
<td>I like classes with visual aids.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>スキットやロールプレイが好き</td>
<td>I like to do skits and role plays.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>体を使ったアクティビティが好き</td>
<td>I like to do physical activities.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 Why they learn English
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>英語で歌を歌うのが好き</td>
<td>I like to sing English songs.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>音楽的</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>CDに合わせて行うアクティビティーが好き</td>
<td>I like doing activities to music.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>グループワーク、ペアワークが好き</td>
<td>I like pair-work and group-work.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>対人関係</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1対1の対話練習が好き</td>
<td>I like to one-to-one dialogues.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>計画を立てたり、反省を書き留めるのが好き</td>
<td>I like to make plans and monitor myself.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td>自己理解</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>自分のできばえを振り返るのが好き</td>
<td>I like to evaluate myself.</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Favorite Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music &amp; Rhythm</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise &amp; Performance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Language</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logics &amp; Math</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasp of Vision &amp; Space</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3** What their favorite learning strategies are

2.1.4 Reasons For Not Speaking Well

Table 4 Why don’t you speak English well?

Read the statements, choose a response (4 through 1), and circle the number in the space after the statement, according to the following scale:

I think so very much = 4, I think so = 3, I don’t really think so = 2, I don’t think so at all = 1 (NS = Native Speaker)

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>相手の言うことが聞き取れないから（リスニング力不足）</td>
<td>I didn’t catch what the NS said</td>
<td>4 - 3 - 2 - 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why don’t you speak English well?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>% 0</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can’t catch what NP said</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can’t think of what I should say</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>couldn’t put ideas into English</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takes too much time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of vocabulary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of grammar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor pronunciation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too nervous</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I think so very much = 4
- I think so = 3
- I don’t think so very much = 1
- I don’t think so at all =

Figure 4 Why don’t you speak English well?

The results of the questionnaires reveal various issues which are important in the context of the students’ learning environment.

Many of them really want to study and improve their English skills, but very few can put their ideas into practice. They like a friendly atmosphere with nice teachers and classmates. Some of them would like to try to act positively, but they are not outgoing enough to speak out.
They want to brush up their abilities to communicate with foreign people in English and also to learn the cultures of English-speaking countries. Although the Japanese government recommends learning English to further participation in economic or political circles or to take a more active part in academic fields, they think little of such kinds of goals.

Their favorite learning strategies differ according to the individual students. Generally speaking, most of them like music and songs, but are not good at logical thinking. They prefer activities and performance to theories and teachers’ explanations.

Probably thanks to the curriculum, they think that they can catch what the native speakers say. They understand the meaning of the questions, but they have trouble in putting what they want to say into English. They also think they lack sufficient vocabulary and grammar.

2.2 How Well The Curriculum Works

As a whole, the curriculum has been working reasonably well. The students look forward to taking communicative classes and it come naturally to listen carefully and concentrate in the classes. In other words, they are learning very positively, and they are satisfied enough with the classes. They look very happy especially at the beginning of the first grade. Their listening abilities are growing better and better.

Nevertheless, there remain two weak points with regard to the curriculum. Firstly, the students’ attitudes are like typical Japanese ones. The group consciousness sometimes prevents them from vocalizing their thoughts voluntarily. They are sometimes strongly influenced by the atmosphere of the classes. It may be because their ways of teaching and learning are different from the teachers. Generally speaking, Japanese students are accustomed to being led by kind teachers. They tend to wait for the teacher’s guidance and obey them, while the teachers, who are from the US, the UK, Canada and Australia, may think any learning can be carried out only when learners try to learn positively. They may not be prepared to guide the students every single step of the way because, as college students, they are, in the teachers’ eyes, adults.

Secondly, their English learning styles, which have been formed before they entered the college, sometimes keep them from using English positively. They were required to memorize a lot of vocabulary and to understand English grammar, which often bored them because the classes were monotonous. There is a big gap between what they wanted to do and what they had to do.

As a result, they have not known how to improve their communicative skills and how to enjoy themselves in learning English. Besides, they don’t know how they are evaluated by native teachers. If they can also learn to self-evaluate themselves properly, they will become more conscious of the learning process and grow more autonomous.
For these reasons, another innovative plan should be executed to help the students use English autonomously. We have wondered if there is still some room for modification in the present teaching and evaluating systems. We believe they are reasonably good, but we might not succeed in describing those points clearly or simply. As a result, most of the students don’t know how to prepare for the class and the speaking and interview tests, or how to encourage themselves to use English in the classes.

So we are planning to:

1. make the students more aware of their particular cultural characteristics which sometimes prevent them from using English, and encourage them to perform free from their shyness and uneasiness.
2. let the students understand what is required in class and in tests
3. show the students the basis for evaluation, particularly in interview tests
4. introduce some good strategies to prepare for the classes and the tests

The next sections contain some general background information on testing techniques.

3. Discussion about tests

We have made a lot of tests over more than thirty years for high school and college students, but we believe that there is a strong probability that, as Cooper (1972: 331) states, the tests we made were “often administered routinely, and both the definitions of tests and the purposes of testing were apt to be forgotten.”

Backman & Palmer (1990) defined that a test is a measurement instrument designed to elicit a specific sample of an individual’s behavior.

Hughes (1989: 6) states the general conditions for testing. That is to say, they:

1. consistently provide accurate measures of precisely the abilities in which we are interested;
2. have a beneficial effect on teaching (in those cases where the tests are likely to influence teaching);
3. are economical in terms of time and money

Before one can construct a good test, it is necessary to survey many aspects of testing. First of all, a brief review of the purposes of tests will be provided.

3.1 The purposes of Tests

Owen (1997: 2) cites 14 possible reasons for using language tests:
1. to rank students in a class or school
2. to find out if students can handle a certain level of language
3. to see if learning has or has not taken place
4. to motivate students to work harder
5. to predict future performance
6. to keep students busy
7. to obtain material, e.g. errors, to help decide what or how to teach
8. to comply with administrative requirements
9. to pilot a test so that a better version of it can be produced
10. to compare the effectiveness of two teaching methods
11. to compare the effectiveness of teachers or schools
12. to find strengths and weaknesses
13. to exercise control over students
14. to amuse, interest or stimulate students

These reasons may or may not be applicable to the interview tests conducted by the native speaker teachers, on a case by case basis.

3.2 Kinds of Test and Testing

Generally speaking, many Japanese English teachers still explain the meanings of new words or let the students look them up in dictionaries, and explain grammatical points, and then translate each sentence into Japanese.

In those conditions, the students focus mainly on listening to the Japanese translation by teachers and writing it down in their own notebooks. Most students make great effort to memorize the meanings of words and the answers to grammatical questions.

Recently some teachers have realized that this method is not suitable, and are improving their teaching styles in order to help the students learn how to communicate with each other by using English.

Nevertheless, the teachers have not grasped the accurate methods of how to help the students improve and evaluate English communicative abilities.

The ways and the aims of any class should be stated plainly and clearly, and how to evaluate the students’ performances in the tests should also be pointed out specifically.

A kind of speaking test should be planned. It is not an achievement test, which is “directly related to language courses (Hughes, 1989: 10)”, but a proficiency test, which is “designed to measure people’s ability in a language regardless of any training they may have had in that language (Hughes, 1989: 9).”

In the next section, some other aspects of testing will be discussed.
3.3. Direct versus Indirect Testing

According to Hughes (1989: 15), “testing is said to be direct when it requires the candidate to perform precisely the skill which we wish to measure” and “indirect testing attempts to measure the abilities which underlie the skills in which we are interested.” With speaking, “it is necessary to get students to use various skills, and indirect testing should be carried out.

The intentional use of speech is sub-served by information-processing skills that are highly complex and little understood.

According to Levelt (1989), the blueprint for the speaker consists of the following components:

1. A Conceptualizer, which generates preverbal messages. These messages consist of conceptual information whose expression is the means for realizing the speaker’s intention.

2. A Formulator consisting of two subcomponents. The grammatical encoder retrieves lemmas from the lexicon and then generates grammatical relations reflecting the conceptual relations in the message. Its output is called “surface structure.”

The phonological encoder creates a phonetic plan (or “internal speech”) on the basis of the surface structure. It has access to the form information in the lexicon, and it also incorporates procedures for generating the prosody of the utterance.

3. An Articulator, which unfolds and executes the phonetic plan as a series of neuromuscular instructions. The resulting movements of the articulators yield overt speech.

4. The Speech-Comprehension System, which makes self-produced internal and overt speech available to the conceptual systems; this allow the speaker to monitor his own productions.

Each of these components, we assume, is autonomous, specially in transforming its characteristic input into characteristic output.

3.4 Discrete Point versus Integrative Testing

To borrow Hughes’ phrase (1989: 16), “discrete point testing refers to the testing of one element at a time, item by item”, while “integrative testing, by contrast, requires the candidate to combine many language elements in the completion of a task.” Interview tests fall into the latter category, because speaking needs “three main qualities: fluency, accuracy and complexity (Skehan, 1998). Speaking is a completely integrative activity, which needs many aspects of English study as mentioned in the previous section above.

Generally speaking, Japanese students are accustomed to discrete point tests, and they might be embarrassed when first encountering an interview test given by a native
4. What makes a test any good?

A good test should have validity, reliability and practicality. In addition, we should consider its backwash effects.

4.1 Validity

There are several validities discussed in Hughes (1989: 22-25):

“A test is said to have content validity if its content constitutes a representative sample of the language skills, structures, etc. with which it is meant to be concerned.”

Another approach to test validity is called criterion-related validity. “There are essentially two kinds of criterion-related validity: concurrent validity and predictive validity. Concurrent validity is established when the test and the criterion are administered at about the same time, and predictive validity concerns the degree to which a test can predict candidates’ future performance.”

4.2 Reliability

“A fundamental criterion against which any language test has to be judged is its reliability (Anastasi, 1982; Guilford, 1959 in Weir, 1990: 31)” The concern here is how far we can depend on the results that a test produces. There are three aspects of reliability: consistency of scoring among different markers, the concern of the tester as to assessment, and “the parallel-forms reliability, the requirement of which have to be borne in mind when future alternative forms of a test have to be devised. (Weir, 1990: 32)”

We have a duty to make tests with both validity and reliability, but we can imagine we should sometimes accept subjective judgments.

Hughes (1989: 36-42) suggested the way to make tests more reliable:

- take enough samples of behaviour
- do not allow candidates too much freedom
- write unambiguous items
- provide clear and elicit instructions
- ensure that tests are well laid out and perfectly legible
- candidates should be familiar with format and testing techniques
- provide uniform and non-distracting conditions of administration
- use items that permit scoring which is as objective as possible
- make comparisons between candidates as direct as possible
4.3 Practicality

“Practicality pertains primarily to the ways in which the test will be implemented (Bachman & Palmer, 1990: 35)” And they define practicality as “a relationship between the resources that will be required in the design, development, and use of the test and the resources that will be available for these activities,” and represents the relationship as follows:

\[
\text{Practicality} = \frac{\text{Available resources}}{\text{Required resources}}
\]

They also specify the resources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Resources</th>
<th>test writer, scorers or raters, test administrators, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material Resources</td>
<td>Space (rooms for test development, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment (computers, video recorders, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Materials (paper, pictures, library resources, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Development Time (time from the beginning of the test development process to the reporting of scores from the first operational administration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time for specific tasks (designing, writing, administering, scoring, analyzing, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Backwash

Backwash is “the benefit that tests offer to learning (Brown, 2001: 410).” Backwash can be harmful or beneficial, but it is hoped that it will be beneficial and classes will be better conducted as a result. When students take a test, they should be able to utilize the information about their competence that test feedback offers. It should help them find strengths and weaknesses, and to give some hints on how to improve certain aspects of performance. Students should not become disappointed or discouraged, but feel a sense of accomplishment and challenge.

Hughes (1989: 44-47) suggests some ideas to make backwash effective.

- test the abilities whose development you want to encourage
- sample widely and unpredictably
- use direct testing
- make testing criterion-referenced
- base achievement tests on objectives
- ensure test is known and understood by students and teachers
- where necessary, provide assistance to teachers
- count the cost

Generally speaking, teachers don’t seem to have a clear picture of what they have to achieve to succeed in the class and on the test. This may serve to ‘de-motivate’ students.

It is the teacher who decides what and how to assess and what mark to give. Teachers should fully appreciate this and make tests accordingly.

5. Tests of speaking

A test of speaking implies the testing of fluency, accuracy and complexity together. As Levelt (1989) stated, the performances consist of the four components: conceptualizer, formulator, articulator and the speech-comprehension system.

Besides these factors could be influenced by topics, interests, relationships and some other conditions.

The aim of this plan is to make a clear and simple scale for speaking tests and to let the students know the evaluation system, following validity, reliability and practicality. Additionally, the students should think of how to prepare for the test by using the same methods which are introduced in ordinary classes in order to improve their communicative abilities.

5.1 Interview Test

An interview test was chosen as the most appropriate in the context of this research project for the following reasons:
1) It involves ‘Real Communication’ between the participants.
2) It takes account of individual students’ situations and can be tailored accordingly.
3) It reflects the format adopted for many activities in regular oral classes.
4) It allocates a large proportion of the responsibility for success to the students.
5) It is hoped the extra tension generated will have a positive effect.
6) It allows for a comparison of the teacher evaluation and self-evaluation of each of the categories which make up the whole.
5.2 Evaluation System

A valid, reliable and practical evaluation system should be designed and also it should be announced to the students in the syllabus. It is a kind of indirect and integrative test, which is not familiar to the students.

Therefore, even though everything is stated clearly in the syllabus, we have to help them understand what goals the teachers would like them to aim at and how they would be evaluated every so often.

Besides, the evaluation system is influenced by the result of the OPIc test (Oral Proficiency Interview-computer Test), which has been used as a reliable interview test all over the world.

### Table 5 Tokotan Communicative Evaluation Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>評価項目</th>
<th>評価基準</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>①内容 Content</td>
<td>質問を正しく聴き取り、的確に答えている Understanding the questions correctly and answering appropriately</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>②表現力 Expression</td>
<td>適切な語彙と表現を用いて答えている Constructing responses with appropriate vocabulary and expressions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>③発音 Pronunciation</td>
<td>正しい発音で答えている Using correct pronunciation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>④流暢さ Fluency</td>
<td>流暢に答えている Speaking fluently, including use of appropriate verbal and non-verbal communicative techniques.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3=satisfactorily achieved, 2=partly achieved, 1=not satisfactorily achieved

5.3 The Support System

We are planning a support and encouragement system to help the students become more autonomous. The system includes a kind of strategy training to improve their speaking abilities and to control their learning attitude.

They have to pay attention to their own conditions. They already answered the questionnaires as described above in Section 2, and hopefully they have started to think about themselves as English language learners.

They have to become conscious of their life styles. As learning is a part of their lives, they have to design how to lead their daily lives in order to manage when and how much time they will spare to learn English.

Moreover, they have to try some effective learning methods to improve their speaking skills, and check if the methods are good enough or not.

A series of booklets specifically designed to be the backbone of the support system,
called 'Self-Study Journal', look like this.

![Image of Self-Study Journal]

Figure 5 Self-Study Journal

Nevertheless, it will be very difficult for the students to try to continue these challenges wholly autonomously. There is apprehension that they will give up the project soon and every effort should be made to support and guide them so that this does not happen.

It is also very important that teachers keep on communicating with the students and accepting their thoughts and feelings as often as possible.

They will pay attention to their own learning, by checking the weekly schedules, recording their volunteer learning, writing down comments and reading the replies of the teachers.

There is not enough space to comprehensively explain the support system in this paper. Therefore, those details and examples of how the students make good use of it will be reported, together with the results of the OPIc Tests, in a forthcoming paper.

References


