

## Developing Speaking Abilities Using Student Recordings

Yasuyo Matsumoto  
Asahikawa University

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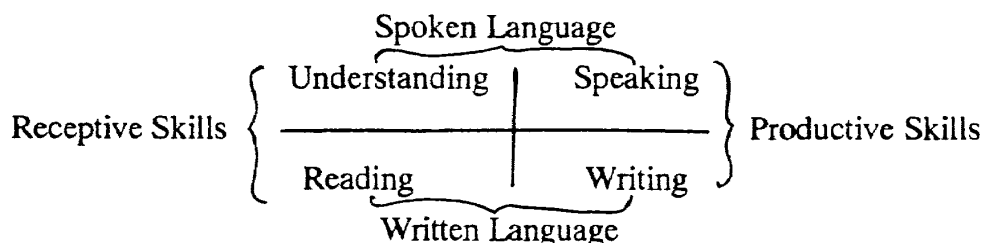
We often judge other people's language ability by their speaking. Bygate says that "it is the skill by which they are most frequently judged, and through which they may make or lose friends." (Bygate., 1987).

The subjects, who are sophomores majoring in economics, wish to speak English. This research used the strategy of "Students Recordings" to develop speaking ability. The strategy of "Student Recordings" is used to establish how these affect Japanese students who have some cultural hindrance to speaking English. Analyzing the data, two experiments were examined: 1. How is "Student Recordings" useful in improving speaking fluency? 2. Which group of the subjects improved their speaking ability most? Fourteen of the subjects took the test, "TOEFL Institutional Testing Program" (ITP), in July 1996.

There are some elements in the way Japanese is used for communication that hinder Japanese people from speaking English. They are: 1. Intuitive and indirect: Silence is more important in Japanese society than in the West. 2. Feelings of "strange" and "embarrassing" Japanese people are sensitive to what other people think of what they say or how they behave.

However, communication is definable as dynamic, and as dependent on the negotiation of meaning between two or more people who share some knowledge of the language being used (two-way process between speaker and listener). It involves the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding. Donn Byrne shows how all four skills are related shown in figure 1 (Byrne., 1976, p. 8).

Figure 1



Development of communicative competence requires realistic interaction among learners by using meaningful, contextualized language. Learners must use some strategies to communicate with other people. I have chosen two strategies to help

9月5日(金) 研究発表第5室(16号館306)

learners talking in English. They are: 1. Compensation. This strategy overcomes knowledge gaps and continues to communicate authentically. That is, learners use guessing when the meaning is not known, or use synonyms or gestures to express the meaning of an unknown word or expression. Compensation strategies are the heart of strategic competence. 2. Self-direction. This strategy is essential to the active development of ability in a new language. Owing to conditioning in Japanese culture and in the educational system, many students are passive and accustomed to being spoon-fed. These attitudes and behaviors cause learners to acquire a new language with some difficulty and without motivation. Learner self-direction is a gradually increasing phenomenon, as students gradually gain greater confidence, involvement, and proficiency.

According to Skevington, there are six good reasons for using student recordings (SR) as part of an EFL course: 1) They can be used as an interesting way to reinforce work completed in class. 2) They can help to increase and maintain student motivation. 3) They can encourage students to cooperate with each other and to share their knowledge. 4) They can help to make lessons less stressful. 5) They can give students individual help with pronunciation. 6) They can be used by the teacher for diagnostic and assessment purposes (Skevington., 1993, p. 9).

#### Procedures:

From April to July, I taught listening comprehension using a textbook. During the first semester, fourteen students took the ITP in July 1996 voluntarily.

From September in 1996 to January 1997, they recorded their spoken sessions in the Language Laboratory. The class was held once a week for 90 minutes. The subjects listened to five questions about a dialog and had to answer verbally. Each dialog and the corresponded questions were read twice before students answered in English.

#### Conclusions:

Firstly, through the eleven "SR", I concluded that "SR" motivated students to speak, because the subjects tried to answer with longer sentences once they got used to speaking English while they recorded. The subjects could formulate their thoughts faster and speak fluently, not causing communication breakdown. "SR" overcomes some cultural hindrance for Japanese students because they have to speak English while they record. "SR" helps to improve the fluency of speakers at the beginners' level.

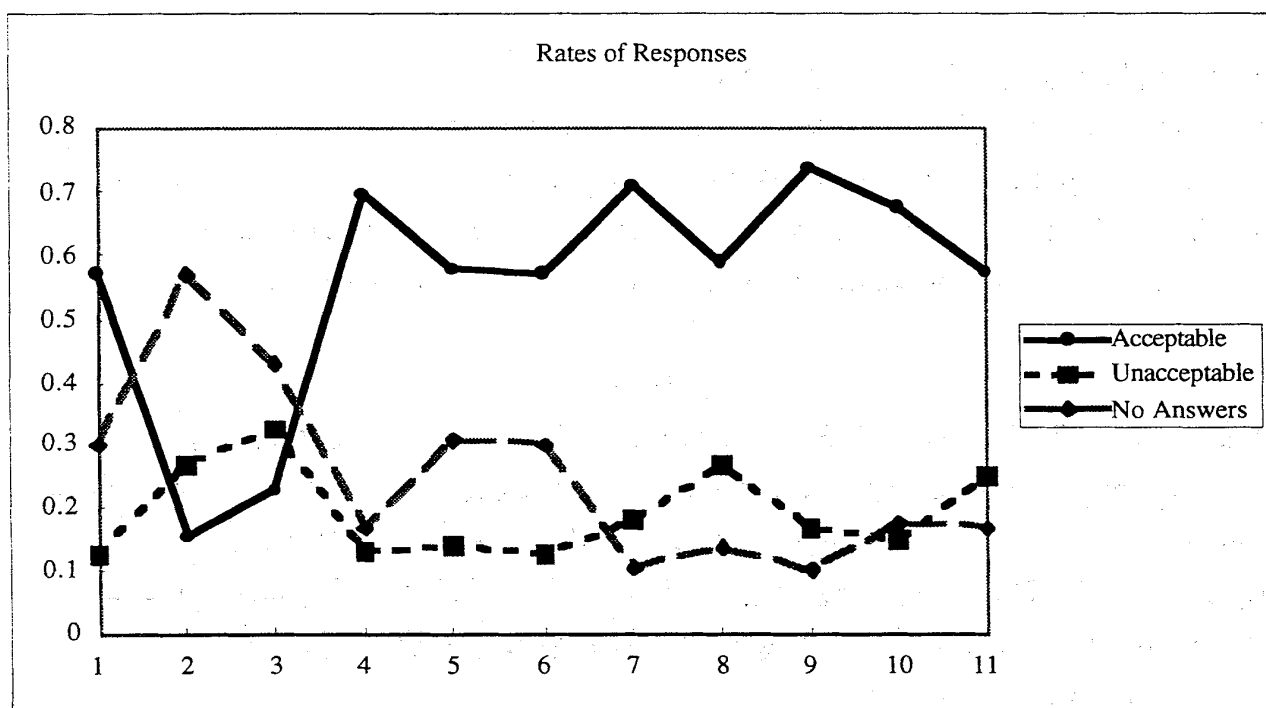
Secondly, the subjects, who took the ITP in 1996, have improved their speaking ability more than the subjects who did not take it. "SR" helps students responding faster, and motivating them more.

It also makes the subjects listen to their own voices, which they seldom hear when they speak English. As Skevington mentioned, "SR" has six good reasons for using "Students Recordings" in EFL classroom: 1) They can be used as an interesting way to reinforce work completed in class. 2) They can help to increase and maintain student motivation. 3) They can encourage students to cooperate with each other and to share their knowledge. 4) They can help to make lessons less stressful. 5) They can give students individual help with pronunciation. 6) They can be used by the teacher for diagnostic and assessment purposes.

"SR" forces Japanese students to speak irrespective of other people's judgment. The more the subjects have recorded, the more fluently they speak English.

Though "SR" requires greater task to teacher effort, it is very useful for language acquisition for Japanese students who are beginners. Students can learn how to speak English by speaking.

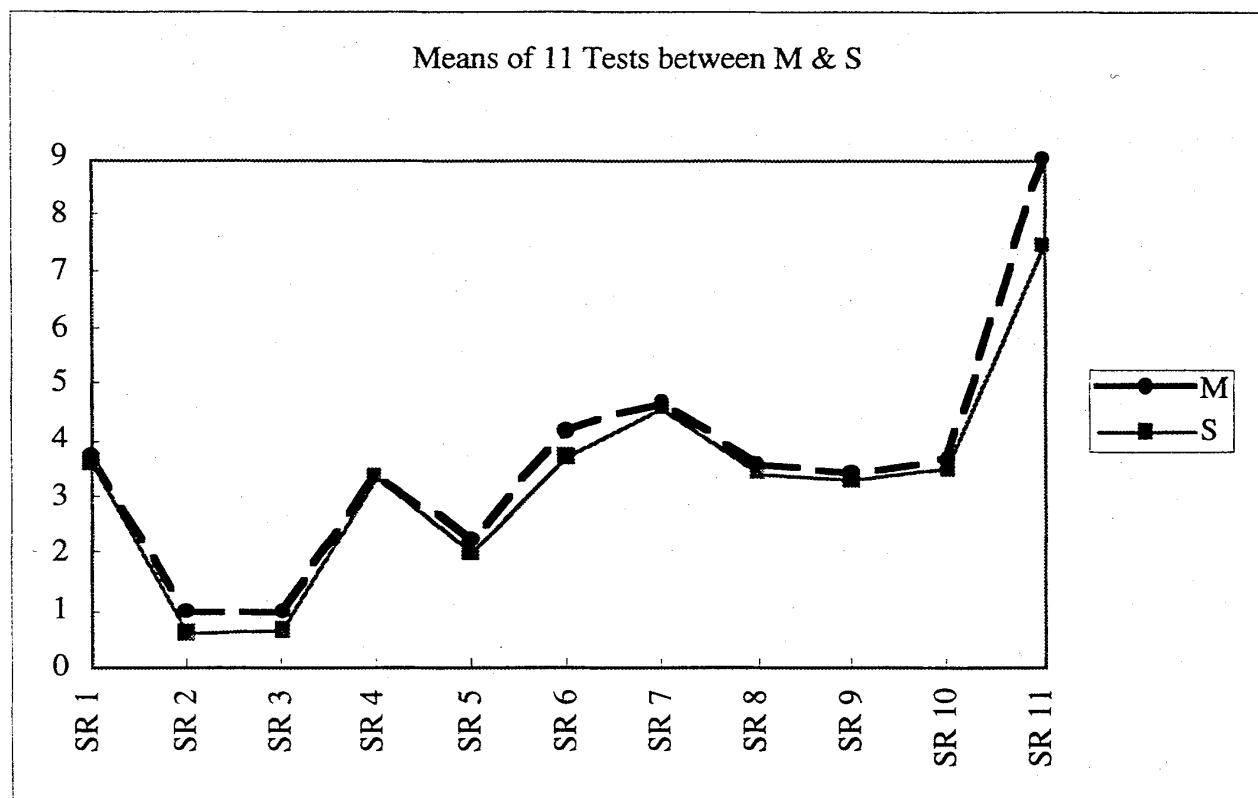
### Time Series for the Responses



### Time Series for Responses for Groups "M" & "S"

"M" means the students who took the TOEFL Institutional Test and "S" means who those did not take it.

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#### Four problems with "SR" for the teachers.

1. Time-consuming for a teacher to listen to, to grade, and to give feedback.
2. Keeping detailed records for assessment purposes.
3. The technical problems when a teacher first uses "SR" can be frustrating.
4. The need to give individual feedback as well as general comments.

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