

Altering Student Perception on Communicative Classes through Timed-Pair-Practice

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ABSTRACT

As part of an on-going project, this research has continued to focus on re-orientating students to improve their proficiency in communicating in English but in a more natural setting conducive to acquiring a second language. It has been acknowledged thus far that students can display improvement in fluency and, to a certain degree, in their pronunciation through the introduction of the framework, Timed-Pair-Practice (TPP), combined with pronunciation training (Pipe & Tsushima, 2021 a/b; Pipe & Tsushima, 2022). However, research up until now has concentrated on a quantitative methodology in investigating speech production. To gain a deeper insight from a student's perspective into the success of, this paper will concentrate on a qualitative approach. Through closed surveys, individual responses and focus group interviews, it has come to light the thoughts and opinions about how each participant benefited from this first-year course in communication. First, it was noted that students did not seem perturbed by culture factors when encouraged to participate in TPP tasks. While it could be conceived that maintaining harmonious relationships can affect how students participated, it became apparent that students overcame concerns about feeling ashamed of their English proficiency. Second, despite a general dissatisfaction in high school education, students could overcome their concerns when conversing in English but would still seem to evaluate their perception of English proficiency through this experience in secondary education. Third, by concentrating on developing a positive outlook in regards to performance accomplishment, vicarious experience and verbal persuasion through the practice and testing stages of TPP and experimentation in their pronunciation training, it is believed that students could develop greater self-efficacy in completing the tasks given and could begin to establish more poignant meta-cognitive goals in their learning.

As a result of such efficacious experience, students also became more motivated intrinsically in their pursuit to improve their individual learning goals in the practice stages of TPP.

Keywords: timed-pair-practice, fluency, prosody, self-efficacy, confidence, motivation

1. Introduction

From conducting several investigative pilot projects by Pipe & Tsushima, (2021a/b, Pipe & Tsushima, 2022), it became apparent that these studies followed an empirical and constructive approach to discover whether speech production could be modified and improved in terms of fluency and pronunciation. It was hoped that this would be realised through the incorporation of the framework, Timed-Pair-Practice (TPP), and pronunciation training (for further information about the operation of TPP, refer to section 6.2). TPP is designed to encourage students to focus further on their lexical, grammatical and phonological resources as they struggle to maintain their communicative English. This would lead to overall improvement in each student's proficiency in English in terms of fluency and in pronunciation, and also build their confidence in their English skills as they stretch their abilities to converse with their classmates in paired conversation. To determine the degree in which TPP had been successfully included in EFL classes and thereby add to the sparse body of longitudinal research in the two aspects of fluency and pronunciation, a post-quantitative research was conducted. Up to now, a more established and clearer methodological approach to TPP and pronunciation training had been observed with clear improvement in student fluency in terms of speed, pausing and repair, and natural alteration in the pause location to between-clause boundaries to reflect a more native-like speech production. However, only limited progress had been noted in the alterations in prosody in function words but not in content words. In fact, despite receiving more focused pronunciation training, the research group was only able to make statistically significant alterations in prosody in function words but not in content words. This would still indicate the challenges students faced with efficacy issues in phonological encoding as they produce spontaneous speech. Despite making progress with fluency, students would still seem to be faced with language processing efficiency issues notably in phonological encoding which affected the overall rhythm.

However, although precise and thorough testing on numerical data validated the theory of TPP as a framework to improve each student's proficiency in English in terms of fluency and, to some degree, pronunciation, such quantitative data could possibly have limitations. To be specific, the theory of TPP may not reflect the true understandings of the actual participants, or that the knowledge produced might be too abstract or even too general for direct application (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). To enable a deeper and more genuine understanding that reflects a more true and fair description of views held by the students (Howe, 2004), a qualitative driven praxis would also be deemed necessary. After all, recent research findings gathered from both "positivistic" and "interpretative" perspectives in discovering the nature of their subjects (e.g. Alhadeff-Jones, 2013; Ma, 2015) could lead to greater clarity in the research itself and build insightful awareness of the more subjective aspects of TPP (Hesse-Biber et al., 2015) and shed light in determining a more realistic interpretation of the cause and effect in the hypothesis of future research (Alhadeff-Jones, 2013; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Wright & Losekoot, 2012). In this on-going research, it is of great importance to learn beyond the numerical data provided and discover how the implementation of TPP can result in class activities that actually focus on improving fluency and pronunciation being conducted at the optimal level. This qualitative orientated paper is particularly interested in investigating the processes involved when students interact with each other, especially as their individual cultures and learning experiences may have affected their level of participation. Compounded further by inefficient effort to apply grammatical, lexical and phonological encoding (Mora & Levkina, 2017) and overwhelmed by the complex nature of pronunciation, it becomes unsurprising for there not to be a definite pedagogical approach in ways to effectively improve fluency in speech production while teaching pronunciation appropriately (Isaacs, 2018; Pardede, 2006). This paper, therefore, begins to bridge this gap by focusing on the perspectives of EFL students. It is of great significance to understand how the dispositions of students towards conversing with peers play in shaping and developing those processes in speech production in the classroom (Rex et al., 2006). This paper has looked at student opinions on factors that affected confidence (culture and high school education), motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and self-efficacy when applying TPP and their pronunciation training to classes in order to determine whether an appropriate pedagogical approach has been successfully applied.

2. Cultural and Educational Factors Affecting Performance in the EFL Classroom

Despite the establishment of more communicative classes taught by Western teachers, there is still reluctance for students to speak in English. Students can succeed in performing a task successfully without the need to participate in much meaning negotiation or the need to attend to linguistic form (Swain and Lapkin, 1995). However, closer examination would also suggest that other cultural factors affect the level of engagement by Japanese students in their English classes. A collective communication system created by Japanese students can lead to group orientation and generally fulfilling the needs of others, and thereby leading people not to feel obligated to talk unless they need to transfer specific information (Hofstede et al., 2010). In fact, conveying personal matters and individual opinions are discouraged under the significance of others in collective cultures (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005; Triandis, 1989). Students may feel less compelled to participate verbally in communicative tasks due to misunderstandings on the differing level of expectations of explicitness (Matsumoto, 2000), and that maintaining harmonious relationships within the class is of greater importance (Nisbett & Masuda, 2007). It is noted that students often elect for communication that focuses on “group-mindedness, consensual decision-making and formalized speechmaking and listener responsibility” (Anderson, 1993: 104). Finally, students have higher expectations of what they should say (Banks, 2016) and, therefore, may remain silent because they feel afraid of: losing face and making mistakes in front of others (Anderson, 1993; Brown, 2004; Kawamura et al., 2006); or standing out from others through speaking out and showing off their abilities (Brown, 2004); or falling short of other’s expectations (Kanagawa et al., 2001). As a result, students may feel inhibited to participate in paired/group discussions for a variety of cultural factors.

Students are further burdened by a high school English educational system that still prioritizes second language learning which concentrates primarily on university entrance exam requirements (Butler & Iino, 2005; Tukahara, 2002) and thus bears little relevance methodologically or pedagogically to SLA (Nishino, 2008; Nishino & Watanabe, 2008; O’Donnell, 2005; Tahira, 2012). Incredulous prioritization of traditional *yakudoko* translation methods of grammar and vocabulary (Falout, et al., 2009; Kikuchi, 2009; Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; Tsuda & Nakata, 2013) in preparation for the university

entrance examinations (Butler, 2015; Butler & Iino, 2005; Løfsgaard, 2015; Steele & Zhang, 2016, Tahira, 2012, Tukahara, 2002) has resulted in the level of conversational fluency by Japanese students when conversing in English to remain poor. In fact, despite a minimum of 6 years of study of regular schooling, for the past decade, Japanese students of English have been categorized as being in the “low proficiency” band (Education First, 2020) and has resulted in this country being placed 55th out of one hundred countries and one of the lowest among Asian countries (Educational Testing Service, 2019). Such traditional approaches to teaching impede the level of involvement students invest in their conversational classes. With high school teachers unsurprisingly concentrating on the teaching and stressing the memorization of aspects of the English language to pass these exams, it is unsurprising that little consideration to the methodology of natural SLA nor the application of these aspects in real conversation in task-based learning. With insufficient attention being placed on communicational fluency in the high school classroom, students are often unable to converse in paired conversation at a reasonable level and, therefore, cannot feasibly benefit from appropriate pronunciation training. Students will most likely be overwhelmed by the actual demands of speech production to consider incorporating aspects of the pronunciation to their conversational utterances.

3. Motivational Theory

Knowing the psychological processes involved in L2 speech can inform the teacher as to the best practices to engage students in their learning endeavours. At the heart of this research would be motivation through TPP. Motivation in learning encompasses the willingness and desire to exert effort to engage in the learning process (e.g. Ariani, 2013). Motivation can be driven or encouraged through intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation refers to the individual performing the tasks for themselves (Deci et al., 2001) and the willingness to succeed through the mastery need of the challenge (Goodman et al., 2011). Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is derived from the individual performing the task to attain some kind of tangible or verbal reward (Cheng et al., 2011; Hayenga & Corpus, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000) such as a good grade (Ariani, 2013). In general, many students may engage in class activities generally because the tasks interests and engages them, and because they want to earn a good grade or seek positive interaction and support from their teacher or peers (Goodman et al., 2011). As a result, students will vary their attention on both *learning goals* which are mostly related to

improving competence, and *performance goals* which focus on performing better than others (Brophy, 1998; Pintrich et al., 2003; Stipek, 2002).

However, due to Japanese students' experience of learning English at high school in preparation for the university examinations, grading would appear to be the main form of motivation to stretch students in their learning (Butler & Iino, 2005; Tukahara, 2002). Students will, therefore, concentrate on their *performance goal* by aiming to receive favorable judgement in their competence by their perception of what is considered as communicative acceptability from the teacher (Meisel, 1987), rather than their *learning goal* which would be communicating effectively and more competently (Dweck & Elliott, 1983). In the classroom, students will understandably concentrate on the evaluation stage in TPP as this will determine their grading. Students will try to extend the length of their conversations in this testing stage in order to receive this favourable judgement from the teacher. However, in terms of second language acquisition (SLA), the practice stage that precedes the evaluation stage in TPP will become an integral part of the learning process as students realise they need to practice harder to improve their English production skills with their peers. During the course, as students focus on their speaking performance evaluation, it will become apparent that avoiding challenges in maintaining their conversations with their peers in the practice stage would, in fact, be counterproductive. Despite being restrained due to strong cultural and educational factors, students will instead aim to challenge their abilities in the SLA activities even when facing the possibility of failure. As a consequence, there is a change in cognitive-affect-behaviour from a maladaptive 'helpless' response to one which is more 'mastery-orientated' (Diener & Dweck, 1980). Students will begin to recognize the importance of the practice stage in cultivating their language resources as they initiate further experimental conversation from the passively prepared in their 20 questions. Rather than complacently relying on limited and safer range of language forms to seek favorable judgement from the teacher in the evaluation stage, students will drive for more meaningful negotiation in the practice stage and naturally acquire interlanguage systems to improve their English proficiency.

Re-orientating their attitudes will lead to students developing stronger sociolinguistic awareness and competence as they acquire possession of skills and knowledge to regulate appropriate language use in a social context. By practicing a topic from prepared questions during the less stressful and opportunistic practice rounds where students are free to experiment with their partners, students can develop a greater appreciation of stretching their linguistic abilities. As a result, there will be a change in perceived

motivation due to an alteration in the goal-orientated behavior (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). TPP effectively changes the students' attitude in how they participate in their English communication classes by drawing attention away from the performance goals in the testing and towards the pursuit of learning goals in the practice stages. Consequently, there is an erosion of maladaptive behavior as the students gradually recognize the class activities as beneficial and meaningful because they begin to appreciate the fact that it is more productive to understand and improve their English skills rather than to perform well (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). TPP will also create a more suitable environment to encourage students to embrace their pronunciation training programme.

4. Self-Efficacy Awareness

To address these gaps in teaching methodologies to prevent this severe impediment in the level of involvement students invest in their conversational classes and bolster their confidence through the application of TPP, students need to become more responsible and self-efficacious in their learning. Self-efficacy is defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997: 3). In other words, self-efficacy is the personal determination of one's own ability to deal with a certain task. This is of great significance in the EFL classroom because the students' self-beliefs of language ability can influence their language achievement negatively or positively depending on the strength of their efficacy beliefs (Rahimi & Abedini, 2009). Research has revealed that EFL teachers have frequently observed in their classroom that students with poor proficiency in English are mostly those who do not believe that they can learn a foreign language (Başaran & Cabaroğlu, 2014). By creating opportunities in the classroom to gain a process of positive experiences, students can begin to re-orientate, restructure and improve their perception of self-efficacy (Başaran & Cabaroğlu, 2014; Burrows, 2013; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). However, unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act (DeTure, 2004). If, for example, students are provided early intervention, individualized instruction, and frequent feedback by EFL teachers, such support would help boost self-efficacy (Tsuda & Nakata, 2013). In fact, higher levels of proficiency can be acquired where teachers can facilitate increased proficiency through meta-cognitive strategy building (LoCastro, 2001; Nunan, 1988; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 2011). Students, therefore, need to know how to reflect on their language learning and set

feasible target goals to increase their language proficiency in small but manageable increments (Dam & Legenhausen, 2010; García & Kleifgen, 2018; Lamb, 2010; Liyanage et al., 2012; Rahimi & Katal, 2013; Tsuda & Nakata, 2013). In contrast to their education received at high school, students will be encouraged in developing self-efficacy as they will begin to develop greater meta-cognitive awareness when completing their TPP tasks.

There are several ways to create this sense of self-efficacy pertaining to a specific task can be achieved by developing a level of confidence in relation to a particular behavior (Burrows, 2013). First, the most obvious and influential approach to positively influence self-efficacy would be through performance accomplishment as this activates a personal mastery experience (Burrows, 2013). Successes tend to increase one's sense of self-efficacy (Burrows, 2013; Horwitz, 1987; Wang & Pape, 2007; Zabih, 2018; Zuo & Wang, 2016) while failures lower it (Bai et al., 2018; Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, student self-efficacy can be particularly affected if failure occurs early in the course. Failure experienced later on in the academic year can have less impact on self-efficacy. For the teacher, it is important to consider the level of failure experienced by student - occasional failure that has later been overcome by sustained and acknowledged effort by the student can strengthen their self-efficacy, especially if the difficulty of the task, such as maintaining fluency or incorporating a targeted prosodic feature, can be mastered through their efforts. Second, vicarious experience is also an important source of self-efficacy information to motivate others (Bandura, 1997; Burrows, 2013; Vye, 2018). In other words, students observing others performing particular activities can enhance the value of learning and develop the notion of learner ownership of emulating a similar experience as their peers. The closer the student feels he has become to the modelled performance by their peer (as well as the teacher), the more influence the vicarious experience will have on the observer's self-efficacy (Burrows, 2013). For this to be effective, it is necessary to explicitly identify modelled behavior that exhibits clear outcomes as this will convey more efficacy information for other students to emulate. Also, by providing more diversified modeling by identifying other students will result in greater encouragement for students to persevere in their learning. Finally, verbal persuasion by the teacher and other students can also impact the level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006; Daly & Thompson, 2017; Newlin, 1997). Although this will have less influence on self-efficacy compared to performance accomplishment and vicarious experience as there is no authentic experience, it can still affect the degree in which students believe they are capable or not in performing a particular task. By concentrating on developing a positive outlook in

regards to performance accomplishment, vicarious experience and verbal persuasion through the practice and testing stages of TPP, it is believed that students can develop greater self-efficacy in completing the tasks given and begin to establish more poignant meta-cognitive goals in their learning.

5. Research Questions

The introduction of TPP and prosody training aimed at encouraging students to engage in meaningful conversation so as to provide opportunity to strengthen both listening and speaking skills. This simple but expedient approach to re-orientate students better in their speech production led to improvement in fluency and to some degree in pronunciation through the repetitive engagement of particular tasks. To determine the level of success of their EFL programme, this current investigation addressed the following questions so as to learn more from a student's perspective in regards to their beliefs about their culture, education, self-efficacy, TPP and prosody training:

1. What culture factors have affected the level of participation?
2. What high school experience has affected the level of participation?
3. What changes have been exhibited in the participants' EFL self-efficacy due to the addition in TPP?
4. What changes have been exhibited in the participants' EFL self-efficacy due to prosody training?

6. Methodology and Methods

6.1 Participants

The participants were 11 first year students from a private university in Tokyo. Despite having a minimum of six years of learning, their TOEIC scores varied from 400 to 755 while Versant scores ranged from 29 to 48. This would indicate CEFR levels of the experimental group being between lower B1 and upper A1 which would mean their English ability can be categorized as high beginner to intermediate. Each student seemed

motivated and understood the purpose of their weekly English classes as it was aimed at improving their communicational skills prior to their six-month education at a university in Sydney.

6.2 Timed-Pair-Practice Procedure

The students were required to prepare 20 questions on a topic chosen by themselves and a 250-word response to this topic. The aim was to provide topics that students genuinely had an interest in (Porter, 1999) so that they would be more motivated to invest their time and converse their ideas with their peers in the classroom. These students were then expected to ask these questions in pairs in the practice stage. After subsequent rounds, the students became able to ask more appropriate questions and maintain longer conversations. After sufficient practice, students were then evaluated in the testing stage in which two students, picked at random, would be asked to provide another conversation on the same topic chosen. Through these practice and testing rounds, it was hoped that students would develop greater fluency by spending less processing time on the conceptualisation, formulation, articulation, and self-monitoring stages of these aspects of the spoken language, and improved pronunciation by incorporating aspects of prosody introduced to them in their pronunciation training.

6.3 Pronunciation Training

Training included micro- and macro-level activities. Micro-level activities refer to attention on word or sentence pronunciation and was initially adapted from the textbook, *Clear Speech* (Gilbert, 2012). Noticing techniques from work produced by students included making distinctions in types of stress of words, drills on words, connected speech phrases and sentences; analysis practice to words and sentences to determine similarities or contrasts in stress; and eliciting techniques to further raise student awareness of the application of previously learned suprasegmental features. Macro-level activities refer to pronunciation of longer dialogues, including teacher audio recordings of student assignments with corrections to understand how to follow native rhythms, especially distressing lexical items (Wang et al., 2005). This provided an opportunity for each student to shadow the audio version of their written assignment and thereby enabling the student to subconsciously mimic various aspects of prosody without having to further determine and decode meaning at a grammatical and lexical level. This technique encouraged the student to subconsciously sub-vocalize their speech input and hopefully

led to improvement in comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation (Omar & Umehara, 2010).

6.4 Data Elicitation

For this to be achieved, individual research surveys were conducted initially to explore how each student (n=11) perceived the effectiveness of TPP in encouraging them in their speech production and such findings will provide a glimpse of their perspective. Based on these findings, unobtrusive qualitative data was next extracted from individual reports and from focus group interviews in which greater in-depth analysis could occur due to more open-ended questions being asked (Hesse-Biber et al., 2015). With written permission from each student, the interviews were recorded by video to enable the researcher to carefully monitor and observe how each person responded to the questioning individually and as a group (Knottnerus & Tugwell, 2016; Kotz et al., 2016). By considering a more holistic study of the effectiveness of TPP, one hoped to gain a deeper understanding in how to improve the practices of TPP, and appreciate the concerns and challenges students have due to the expectations of this framework. However, it is acknowledged that the results over the success of TPP might have been influenced by the author's personal biases and thus it is recognized that such evidence provided in this qualitative analysis cannot make quantitative predictions of theory but support evidence from quantitative analysis (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

7. Results and Discussion from Research Surveys, Individual Reports and Focus Group Interview

7.1 What cultural factors have affected the level of participation?

Little was indicated from the research survey about whether cultural factors affected individual performance until the final open question in the survey. This question related to their confidence in speaking to others. Several students commented on their "sense of shame" in their abilities and one explained that they could now speak, "without feeling ashamed." Another student also expressed that, "failing in their activities," was actually, "a positive experience," because they could learn from it. However, there is little to determine whether students were and still are affected about their culture.

Turning to the individual reports, it also became apparent that most students did not seem to be adversely affected by their culture when committing to their speaking tasks.

It would appear that they could be oblivious in how their culture has affected their performance. Any concerns related to peer conversation would seem to be typical in any EFL classroom. There were a few strongly worded expressions to convey their sentiment towards making mistakes which may echo cultural linguistic strain (Anderson,1993; Brown, 2004; Kawamura et al., 2006). Expressions included speaking without “feeling ashamed” (T7), feeling “very embarrassed” (T9, T10), not having any “pride” nor “confident”, and being hesitant to speak (T11).

However, when conducting the focus group interviews, it became more noticeable that certain cultural elements still affected their level of engagement. This was noted in peer pressure:

“When I started to speak English in front of them, they ...some atmosphere ... peer pressure so [I] didn’t want to speak in front because [I] feel embarrassed (T1).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“Others could not understand my English pronunciation so I used Katakana pronunciation to express myself to fit in (T4).” (Agreed by T2/T6)

Furthermore, there was still the tendency to feel concern about accuracy:

“I am shy about English is correct or not... worried about English is correct (T5).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“I felt that making a mistake is not good (T6).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

However, it was also acknowledged through TPP that they were able to confront this aspect:

“We are forced to speak English . We have to speak English. I’m sure we have respect in English. We all have mistakes in speaking. And it is good to make mistakes. I think this is why our attitude changed (T3).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“Yes. That is because... because in the other people are interested in your experience and you can speak English and don’t think more. We can say our experience naturally (T10).”

(Agreed by rest of the group)

“I still don’t have confidence but I can speak English better – I don’t hesitate to speak English in this class (T8).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

Furthermore, the fact that TPP enabled students to choose topics that interest them meant also a change in their level of participation:

“Yes. That is because, because in the other people are interested in your experience and you can speak English and don’t think more. We can say our experience naturally (T10).”
(Agreed by rest of the group)

“I like listening to other student’s episode so I like speak my own experience. It is interesting (T8).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

Although this might be due to the smaller class size, the friendly atmosphere and the genuine desire to improve, one can obviously see that TPP pushed the students to interact with their peers in English and enable them to dispel some of the myths regarding cultural challenges. As a result, all students were able to express their ideas comfortably in front of others during the focus group interviews, although some participants may have struggled at times to find the exact expressions to convey themselves. Interestingly, it was observed in the group dynamics of the focus group interviews that students could express their own individual ideas but the discussions often evolved quite collectively in which those listening would convey empathy, support for each other, and reply with complete agreement. As a result, one can see that students felt comfortable in expressing their individual opinions in front of others but as their experiences in learning English seemed similar, responses seemed to reflect a collective culture (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005; Triandis, 1989). Culture would, therefore, seem to affect speech production but not in a way that prevented them from participating in discussions but possibly in maintaining harmonious relationships with each other (Nisbett & Masuda, 2007).

7.2. What high school experience has affected the level of participation?

The survey was more revealing in regards to student learning experience in their

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English classes at high school and university. It became apparent from the response that each institution focused on different aspects of English learning. Students perceived their high school education concentrated on grammar, reading and vocabulary but surprisingly less than previously envisaged on their entrance examination (chart 1). However, students believed that courses at university centered around speaking and listening with pronunciation considered as a third aspect (chart 2). It was also noted that students seemed to enjoy their classes more at university when compared to high school. One could postulate that students became more motivated in their participation in English classes due to the change of teaching approach. The focus of attention had drawn away from the *yakudoku* method at high school and moved towards second language acquisition through TPP communicational classes (charts 3 & 4).

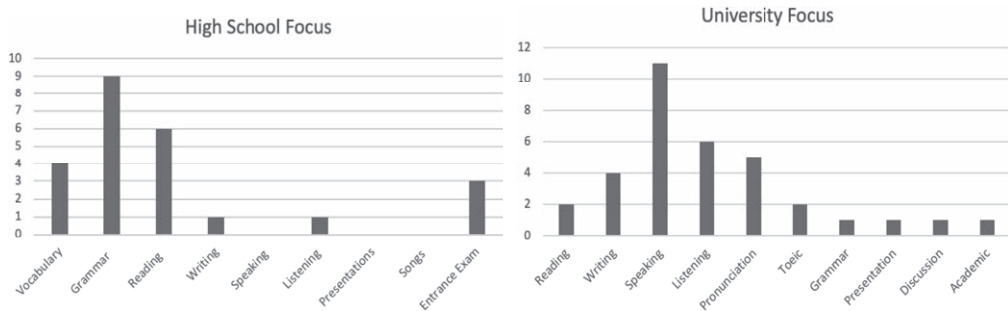


Chart 1 · Chart 2: Comparison between high school and university English classes from student perspective

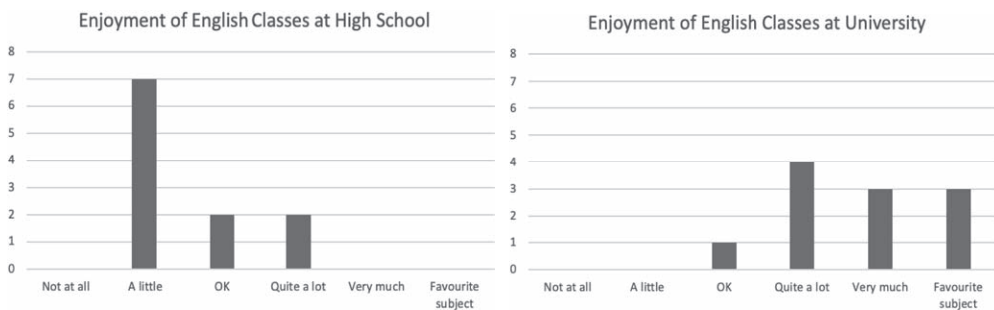


Chart 3 · Chart 4: Comparison of level of enjoyment by students at high school and university

However, despite the positive influence of TPP on communicational skills, the survey also raised further questions regarding student beliefs in their actual English abilities. It would appear that their experience at high school had led to perceived strengths in the more passive skills of academic vocabulary and reading (chart 5). It could possibly be

conceived that students studied a more technically advanced level of reading and vocabulary at high school which still affected their level of confidence and attitude in how they perceived their English abilities. Classes received by the students at university focused largely on building fluency and introducing pronunciation training. Additional grammar and vocabulary exercises were not included in the tasks as it was believed that this would possibly overwhelm students in the conversations with their peers, cause greater dysfluency in their speech production, and render pronunciation training as an impossible goal. Furthermore, despite TPP and pronunciation training, students still seemed to feel that their weaknesses in English still evolved around their productive skills of discussion and speaking (chart 6). Listening was also noted as an issue which may indicate a lack attention on speaking and pronunciation at high school to bridge the comprehension gaps. As a result, it remains unclear in regards to student perception in their English abilities as they still have stronger beliefs in their passive reading and academic skills which were not specifically taught in their university classes but at high school.

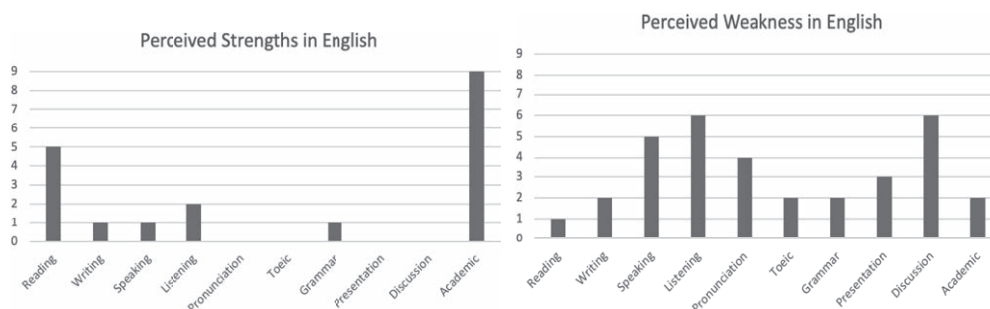


Chart 5 · Chart 6: Comparison of students' perception of their strengths and weaknesses in English

Drawing attention to individual reports, there was little information provided about whether the high school education was effective. One student mentioned that his English classes were appropriate for passing the entrance examination. Generally though, comments were made that the high school approach was not conducive to learning as it “was against what I was looking for” (T5) and that “I couldn't speak well and felt frustrated” (T10). Another student wrote that his classes did not encourage him to improve his English (T11). It also appeared generally that communicational classes were few as little was mentioned. A fourth student stated that she had not received any classes to practice conversing in English and this affected her confidence: “I was so nervous

when I took the first lesson” (T8). Only one student mentioned being confident in his English proficiency in his communicative classes at high school but this was due to the lower level of his peers and so “The English I prided myself on being able to speak was aimed at Japanese people” (T4). Overall, it can be concluded that students did not receive sufficient opportunities to develop their communicational skills and this may have affected their beliefs in their English proficiency.

To establish a clearer understanding of the students’ attitude to speaking English, the focus groups were asked general questions on their high school education to uncover any aspects of teaching approaches that affected their level of speech production. Interestingly, in the class, students seemed much less inhibited in expressing their thoughts about the quality of their high school education. Class management seemed to be quite teacher-centered and focused on entrance examinations. Most agreed that this was not at all inspiring:

“The teacher wrote on the blackboard; taught grammar and vocabulary; and it was boring – Not very interesting. From textbook, we just read it and learn vocabulary and translate (T1).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“We were writing sentences to learn about grammar. Not much fun as did not connect with experience (T5).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“Just to enter into university. Not focused on our speaking listening. Not good for our daily life English (T6).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“Focused on entrance university exam like grammar vocabulary and academic topics. Does not focus on speaking (T8).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“High school English is not useful for real life so we can’t use phrases. We focused on reading and listening. We didn’t focus on speaking (T11).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

Interestingly, two students mentioned some satisfaction with his high school education but were met with surprise from the other students:

“I really enjoyed it (T3).” (Other students looked surprised and giggled)

"I enjoyed leaning English grammar (T11)." (Other students looked surprised)

Furthermore, the lessons at high school seemed to not only lack engagement and enthusiasm from the students overall but also the content appeared to be taught at a level beyond each student's capabilities. Some of the students commented on the inappropriateness of the *yakudoku* method:

"Translation was confusing and not great (T1/T5)". (Agreed by rest of the group)

"Emm, I think between English and Japanese, there is some things different so translation, we can't do it well so don't have some means of it (T8)."

"I think [translation] is good but I think I think more important is other. Translation is good but speaking is more good (T11)."

"More kanji so more complicated - can't find suitable version - don't need it (T6)."
(Agreed by rest of the group)

"But in the exchanging (translation) class, we used the textbook which was made by another teacher and so in the textbook, the sentence was the past university examination in the English text. There was not something of interest in it (T7)."

There was also criticism on the teaching of grammar and vocabulary:

"No, we focused on grammar and what was [grammatically] right. To focus on grammar - it's not all about grammar (T2)."

"We learnt English not as a language but as a subject. We were not interested in speaking English only remember grammar, words and vocabulary (T7)."

"So my teacher, when I had English class, my teacher only read the sentence and changed it into Japanese. Sometimes all of the time we slept (T9)." (Agreed by rest of the group)

It was acknowledged by one student that the purpose of English classes at high

school was to prepare for the examination but there was little reaction by others to this comment:

“One aspect of entrance examination, it was useful as it taught us to solve the question and how to read to solve the question. So the aspect of examination, it was useful but as aspect for language – making a sentence – was not useful for me (T7).”

However, due to the rigid educational approaches set for entrance examinations, students did not seem motivated to learn:

“It didn’t thought I wanted to speak English because it is not I was not interested in the studying it so... (T10)” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“Me too. Because when I was at high school, we don’t need the skill of speaking and all of us can understand others thoughts by Japanese so I didn’t want to speak English (T7).”

“So did I. I didn’t interested in speaking English because we can live without speaking English in Japan. I though English as a subject in order to pass an entrance exam (T8).”

“I don’t think so because the sentence in the, the... We don’t use the sentence in the real life. The vocabulary was difficult. We so don’t use it for daily life ...usually like that (T9).”

“I have no idea but when I went English vocabulary or grammar, but I have no opportunity to use English so I don’t know if it is useful or not (T10).”

One student mentioned the usefulness of learning vocabulary and grammar but this was not agreed by others in the group.

“Basic vocabulary and basic grammar was important but actually we didn’t have chance to communicate in English before (T11).” (Disagreed by T7/T8/T9)

“I think so because we don’t have any time to learn speaking we don’t have to use speaking in English (T8).” (“That’s true” – acknowledged by T11)

Instead of acquiring a second language through communicative activities, students were faced with regular tests which would not seem to be beneficial:

“I cannot enjoy to study English but the small examination for grammar and vocabulary was very strict for me and I cannot enjoy it . And so I am not learning for the test (T8).”

“I actually sense...feeling for my score was awful. I didn’t worry about it (T7).”

As a consequence, there would appear to be an imbalance between what the higher-level grammar students studied at high school and materials provided at university. This would indicate possible confusion as their communicative English classes at university may not seem to match expectations:

“But in other [I-Com] class is not useful for me because those are easier than class in high school (T8).”

Furthermore, it was agreed that students felt part of the problem was the overuse of Japanese in their high school classes to explain and analyse the language used:

“Japanese use Japanese to understand – it is a problem I think (T2).”

“Some students could talk without using English (T6).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“That’s becausewe live in Japan so the teacher can’t teach us how to speak English as a native and we can use Japanese to understand our friend’s thoughts and so use Japanese in Japan is natural so I didn’t feel comfortable to speak in English (T7).”

“In fact, Japanese people can live without speaking English so speaking English or having conversational skill is a technical skill and surreal than reading writing so most Japanese students think it is a super skill so focus on reading and writing (T9).”

“There is only one teacher and many students and so some students didn’t use English but Japanese (T5).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

Altering Student Perception on Communicative Classes through Timed-Pair-Practice

This would appear to be an issue with the limited resources at high school as there appeared to be few teachers qualified to teach communicational English:

“My high school English class. There were no native speaker. So we don’t have the opportunity to speak English with classmates (T7).”

“My teacher isn’t native speaker but she lived in America so her English was good but not natural than us and native speakers (T10).”

“Actually, I didn’t have any opportunity to have a conversation with classmate of teacher practice to speak English – no native teacher. We couldn’t learn real English (T8).”

“We don’t have opportunity to speak with another students so I didn’t have confidence (T7).”

“I didn’t have chance to speak in HS and didn’t know our mistakes (T4).”

Where communicational classes at high school were provided, which would seem to be seldom, it was apparent that they did not seem to match the actual needs of the students:

“Communication in English with Japanese students – so easy because we speak so slowly and clearly for others to understand in discussion – without reduction [in pronunciation]. Focus in communication is a big difference (T1).”

“Learn how to make conversation and sing songs... Yes, the English [was] made to feel more easy. We didn’t do something about pronunciation and yes, no practice (T9).”

It would seem that the experience of English classes as high school did not prepare students for communicational classes at university. After spending at least six years of study, it would appear that the government agency MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) had fallen short in their claim in providing an education to improve the communicative proficiency of students and developing a positive attitude to communication (2011). In fact, very little attention would seem to be placed in

the listening and speaking skills. This may also possibly explain why students did not seem to recognize their strengths and weaknesses from the results of the survey. However, through the focus groups interviews, it became more apparent that students recognized concerns in their high school education. Whether such experience affected their level of participation in their communicative classes is less obvious but the views provided in the interview certainly highlighted the necessity to introduce TPP and pronunciation training in an effort to re-orientate students towards how to communicate more effectively. Through activities conducted in university classes, students were, for example, able: to focus on raising awareness on the characteristic of English sounds; to develop abilities to question, respond and maintain conversations with their peers; and to improve overall comprehension with strategies in dealing with communicational breakdown.

7.3. What changes have been exhibited in the participants' self-efficacy due to the addition of TPP

To gauge better the level of confidence in verbal communication, each student was asked in the survey about their views on speaking. Despite cultural concerns and their *yakudoku* experience at high school, students seemed to have mixed feelings as regards their confidence in their speaking but also expressed the opinion that conversing with their partners was a favourite part of the lesson (chart 7).

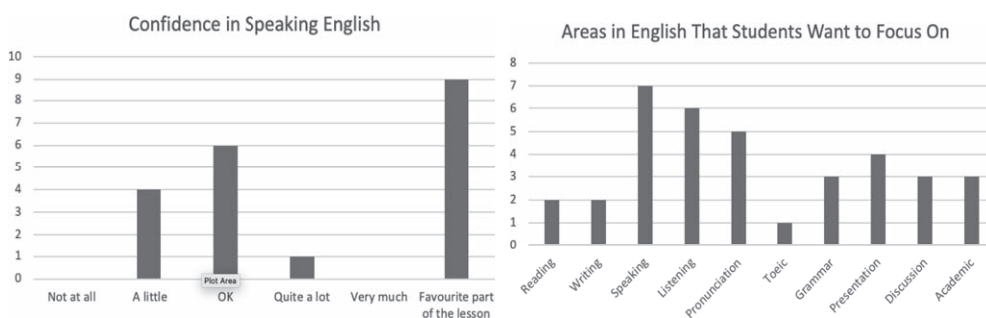


Chart 7: Student beliefs in speaking English Chart 8: Student perspective on aspects of English to focus and improve

When asked about specific aspects of TPP through open questions in the survey, all the students clearly stated the importance of the practice stage. Reasons given included: providing them with “an opportunity to speak” (T1), allowed them to “organize their ideas better” (T5, T9, T11), enabled them to “feel more comfortable and confident” in

speaking (T2, T4, T9), encouraged them to speak more “smoothly”, “fluently” and “clearly” (T3, T4, T5, T9), and better prepared to concentrate on their pronunciation (T5, T6). All except one student agreed completely on the importance of the testing stage. Students elaborated further and explained that the testing stage made them “prepare ideas and vocabulary” (T9), encouraged them to “practice harder in the practice rounds” (T2), “overcame the embarrassment of speaking” (T4, T9), improved their “level of fluency” (T11), raised awareness with “grammar and pronunciation problems” (T3), and “built confidence to speak publicly” (T2). Interestingly though, there were mixed opinions as regards concerns over the grading that resulted from TPP. Some wrote that they could not do as well as others in the testing which motivated them to work harder and prepare more in order to get better scores in future testing. Others, however, appreciated learning from their mistakes, even if it meant a lower grade, because they were more interested in improving their proficiency and general quality of performance. It is, therefore, not entirely clear as to whether students felt extrinsically or intrinsically motivated. However, either way, it certainly demonstrated greater resilience in not giving up in their verbal communication. As a result, looking at aspects in English proficiency, students wanted to improve their speaking, listening and pronunciation, and less on their reading, writing and TOEIC skills (chart 8). However, there was no mention in how they could independently reach these goals except in pronunciation as these materials were made available to them online.

Re-addressing the notion of self-efficacy was challenging due to the emphasis placed on accuracy in grammar classes from high school. From the individual reports, it was noted that expectations set at high school was unattainable in communicative class due to emphasis placed on producing “grammatically correct sentence” and believing in having to use “difficult words which I learned from vocabulary books” (T1). Others mentioned improvement in the English but still in the mindset that their “grammar is not enough” (T7). However, there would seem to be more meta-cognitive learning in the sense that students were more aware of the need to use more appropriate strategies to acquire a second language by: keeping and studying from their own vocabulary book (T5), practicing using their acquired English through chatting with others outside the classroom (T4), such as attending Cotopatio’s conversation lounge (T5, T7, T9), keeping an English diary (T3), and watching the pronunciation videos provided by the teacher (T5, T7). There was an emphasis on acquiring phrases through ordinary conversation to enable smoother communication (T3). It was also acknowledged that TPP helped

encourage students to set more realistic goals by being more aware of their weak points such as improving aspects of their speech such as speed (T2, T6, T10), pitch (T1, T2, T4, T6), and pausing (T6) or strategies in developing their range of vocabulary (T1, T2, T5, T7, T11). TPP, therefore, provided students the opportunity and time to adjust their personal learning approaches accordingly in an effort to handle paired conversations.

The individual reports also conveyed a positive experience gained by all in that they were able to communicate better and initiate conversation in the TPP practice and testing stages. Such accomplishment in performance led to improved motivation and confidence, and it can be inferred that students were certainly motivated intrinsically. One student mentioned that as a result of TPP, he was able to attend Cotopatio conversation lounge three times a week and became happier that he was able to communicate with foreigners and understand their thoughts which, in turn, motivated him further to speak more English (T9). Furthermore, students could also learn through positive vicarious experience. One student explained that she could gain from the ability of others by having their partners rephrase words she could not understand in the practice rounds (T9). From such experience, students provided numerous examples of how they plan to use media such as watching dramas or movies (T1, T4, T8, T10, T11), singing English songs (T1, T9), and listening to English programs on the radio (T3) to improve their listening and speaking skills and also nurture their curiosity of a foreign culture.

To establish a clearer understanding of how students became more responsible and self-efficacious in their learning, questions were asked to provide insight into the personal determination of each student's own ability to deal with a certain task. It was first noted that a teacher or native speakers were necessary in their development:

"Have a more active teaching to make more interesting. We had non-native teacher so not interesting (T4)." (Agreed by rest of the group)

"Speaking with native speakers is more authentic. Native speakers make it more authentic (T2)." (Agreed by rest of the group)

"May be my English was strange but... communicating with foreign people, so learning more naturally. So you don't care about your grammar (T1)."

"I need to speak and use English so I need a teacher (T3)." (Agreed by rest of the group)

"I often go to Cotopatio to practice English (T5)."

Admittedly, a concern about TPP is the need to have the teacher present to evaluate performance in the testing stage which may imply that students relied on the teacher:

"We have mistakes with our grammar and Professor Pipe corrects us, our mistakes (T1)."
(Agreed by rest of the group)

"When we made mistakes e.g. grammar. Pipe corrected us and it was helpful (T3)."
(Agreed by rest of the group)

"We need... but somebody not here ... we need in case of mistakes made... I want to know my weaknesses, mistakes (T6)."

"If no testing, I would not practice speaking English (T8)." (Agreed by rest of the group)

However, the role of the teacher in TPP contrasts with the teachers in regular English classes at university which questioned relevancy:

"My English communication class teacher and she taught us English in English but the content wasn't very useful so I don't think it is useful for me (T10)."

"My English communicational class always using movie. I think that it was interesting but using English subtitles but I hear the British expression but I can't use with classmates. I think we have to use more these expressions (T8)."

"I think to improve speaking skill, we should speak in the class. If we have a textbook, we will use the textbook and don't make more conversation. When we have real communication, we don't have the textbook so we can't read any text when having conversation (T7)." (Agreed by rest of the group)

Another interesting area of development which could only occur due to performance accomplishments in TPP was the observation of the role of grammar when conversing in English. When one student asked another about the importance of grammar, the reply

was:

“It is sometimes correct. I think my English is sometimes strange. But communicating with foreign people is important (T1).”

Other students mentioned a change in their attitude as a result of performance accomplishments in TPP:

“My reaction got better and become like a native English speaker. At the beginning, when we were doing time-paired-practice, I just listen to others and ask a question which I have been thinking. However, now, I could take a reaction and ask some questions about what the other person said. It makes the speed of conversation faster and become more natural (T2).”

“We all have mistakes in speaking. And it is good to make mistakes. I think this is why our attitude changed (T3).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“We are forced to speak English – have to speak English. I am sure we have mistakes – good or making mistakes in this class – that is our attitude changed (T5).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“I could study the way of speaking and words and learning English more naturally... This class helped me with this in conversation about me and what mistakes I made (T4).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“I like this class because I like English communication but I don’t like to study. We study in this class but it is enjoyable (T8).” (Agreed by rest of the group)

“My curiosity makes me study English in this university. My curiosity makes me more confident. My curiosity wants me to go to Cotopatio or something where we can speak English. Curiosity is important to study English (T7).”

“Making conversation with classmate is fun and I think in my case, my vocabulary - I don’t have much vocabulary but by practicing I can know what you are talking and to change the

words I can understand (T9)." (Agreed by rest of the group)

"When I speaking English, the teacher stops the conversation. It is a shock but makes me speak more. I want to speak more to tell about my speech. I want to talk more but he stops so I fight. But it makes me try harder in the practice (T8)." (Agreed by rest of the group)

"Every time I speak English, the theme is familiar things and interests, so instead of reading aloud English sentences, I naturally wanted to convey it in conversation, and I became able to speak more actively than before (T11)." (Agreed by rest of the group)

Through their performance accomplishments in TPP, it was also noted that students realized the need to take more action in their endeavours to acquire a second language:

"I can talk with friends and classmates but.... We need to speak English outside. We have to try to speak in English outside class. We have to prepare about making plans (T4)."

"We have to try to speak outside in English (T5)."

"Speaking is making sentences or having conversation? To understand the English – don't use Japanese to understand the English is more good (T8)."

"It was very tough but I could know how to compose the sentence and way of speaking. And as you said, I can find out a new expression or vocabulary (T11)."

"I usefully try to do new things in the practice and so I don't practice grammar wasn't actively but if I do try to say more new things I can use more new words in the conversations. That is my goal to use more words in the conversation (T8)."

As a result of gains in self-efficacy through their positive experience from performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion in TPP, students seemed to gain confidence in creating their own strategies to take the initiative and improve their fluency. This was recognized when comments were made in regards to: "initiate learning" (T2), "set goals and discuss" (T1), and "ask questions" (T5). Although possibly obvious, it is still enlightening to observe the enthusiasm in the

responses given by all students to signify this renewed level of confidence in their learning and personal determination in their own ability to deal with tasks provided in TPP. Furthermore, from comments in how they express their learning experience, it is clear that students had become intrinsically motivated in their learning and more poignant in setting meta-cognitive goals to improve their speaking skills.

7.4. What changes have been exhibited in the participants' EFL self-efficacy due to prosody training?

Regarding pronunciation training, it became apparent that this was actually the aspect of the EFL teaching enjoyed most overall and was often rated as the best part of the lesson (chart 9). This would suggest that providing opportunities to speak and improve fluency is not enough to satisfy the needs to the students. Attention should also be directed towards pronunciation to bridge the gap between student expectations in how they perceive speaking more intelligibly to native speakers. Through the training program, there was not only positive feedback about their perceived level of enjoyment and improvement (chart 10) but clearer awareness of which aspects of pronunciation that needed attention (chart 11). Students had also devised independent methods in how to improve their pronunciation (chart 12)

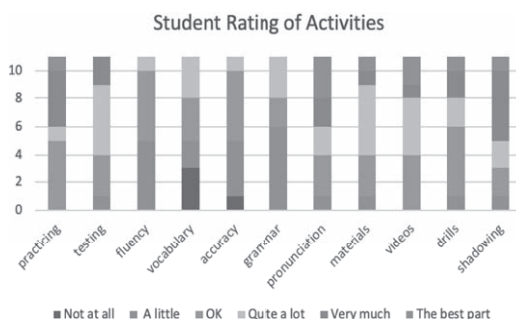


Chart 9: Student Perspective on Activities Held in Class

Looking at the individual reports, it would appear that students had not focused on pronunciation training prior to this course. Student generally conveyed their appreciation overall of the inclusion of prosody training to improve speaking and listening skills as they could not only enjoy this part of the class, but noticed actual improvement in their pronunciation and comprehension. Some students were also better able to express which particular areas of prosody that needed attention (T1, T5, T10, T11). This is of

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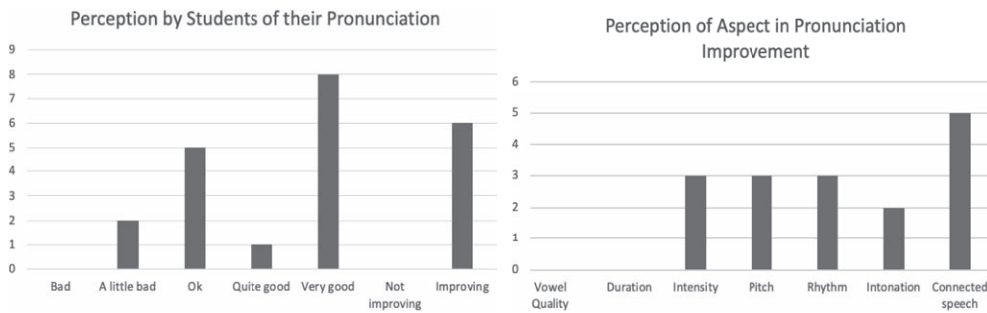


Chart 10 · Chart 11: Comparison of Students Perception in their English Pronunciation and which Aspects to Improve

How Students Practice Pronunciation

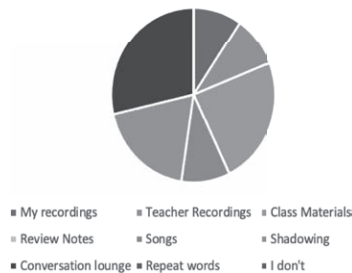


Chart 12: Independent methods devised by students in how to improve their pronunciation

significance as it puts their concerns into manageable and more attainable steps in how to address their pronunciation issues.

In the focus group interviews, similar sentiments were expressed in that students recognised the importance of prosody training:

“I became to be loved English because I enjoyed learning pronunciation and images (T10).”

“I feel that I have a little ability to listen to English. As I communicated in English, I think I became able to hear it from the beginning (T11).”

“Learning about pronunciation was so useful... I couldn’t understand the way how to do it at first, but I could do it little by little thanks to this class (T1).”

“Although native speaker speaks so fast, I could understand what they are saying. Why I

can understand is that they emphasize the important words (T4)."

"I also learnt a lot about pronunciation and how to speak - like pitch (T3)."

"When I was at high school, I was not concerned but in this class I learned about our pronunciation and am concerned about pronunciation when I speak English (T7)."

"When I speak English, in the practicing, I think about my English pronunciation and I think what is good for improving my pronunciation (T9)."

"When I was high school, I didn't know what was right or good but at university I can know the native speaker's pronunciation and I know now what is my level and how to get close to it (T8)."

"Everyone is interesting and I look forward to [pronunciation]. It is close to our feeling (T11)."

Furthermore, students were able to specify which aspects of English had improved:

"Connected speech definitely an improvement in my English (T4)."

"I was able to realize [that clear pronunciation and careful delivery of each word, of each word] was not what was needed to interact with native speakers] was definitely an improvement in my English (T5)."

"And I think reduced sounds and Linking sounds are very important for listening to English. By knowing these, I was able to grow (T11)."

"Regarding for rhythm while speaking was a little difficult for me but I learned it with enjoyment and tried to acquire that I could (T3)."

"I could be aware of bad points of my speaking and spoke being conscious of trying to improve them such as speed, pitch, pause and so on (T6)."

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Through the prosody training, students were also able to express areas in their pronunciation that required attention:

“I need to practice intonation and pronunciation. I can’t emphasize content words or pronounce vowels well, so I want to practice (T11).”

“I paid attention pitch. I still can’t to use it well, but I always keep in mind... When I am aware of pitch [alteration], I felt that my English pronunciation has improved (T1).”

“I could speak more faster than before. The most reason why I became more faster is that I learned to connect the words. For example, not “do you”, but “dju...”, I become able to change a pitch and emphasize the important words than before (T2).”

“I’m not good speaking in terms of pitch, speed and pause. When I speak English, I often do with no pitch like Japanese. I want to speak English emotionally (T6).”

Effective features mentioned in the training would appear to be in the shadowing:

“The website: “I am sounding English” - it is significant video for me. I would like to practice every day (T1).”

“I take advantage of ... YouTube videos which have been made by my professor (T7).”

“By doing shadowing, I became able to change the pitch and emphasize the words little by little (T2).”

Furthermore, due to the repetitious nature of TPP, students were given the opportunity to practice the same tasks with different partners and so less overwhelmed when considering their lexical or grammatical resources:

“Here, we can take our time to take our time and learn about pronunciation. I didn’t learn about pronunciation in high school (T7).”

“Because we have the same conversation in the practice, I can relax when I had same

conversation. I can naturally answer (T9)."

As a result, there were gains in self-efficacy through their positive experience from not simply recognising aspects of prosody but by having the opportunity to alter acoustic cues in their spoken dialogues during the repetitive practice stage of TPP. During TPP testing, students gained awareness and confidence but also recognized the challenges that lie ahead. When asked whether they felt their pronunciation had progressed, the overall response was that it had but still required improving. Performance accomplishments were noted not only in their alteration of pitch, intensity and duration in the practice and testing stages of TPP but also helped them in the examinations. One student said when asked his views on pronunciation:

"It is useful for both speaking and listening. In the TOEIC test, all of the speaking in the listening test are native speaker so if we don't know chunking, we cannot know the word or words they said. So to know chunking or how to make sentence sound short is good for the test (T7)."

8. Conclusion

TPP has proven to show huge potential in the classroom with little additional work required by the teacher. Following from quantitative research by Pipe & Tsushima (2021a/b, 2022), TPP framework invigorated students in their learning of English and encourages them to genuinely engage in their paired conversation to improve their proficiency in English. These findings established a strong cause-effect relationship between the application of the TPP framework and improvement in fluency and, to some degree, in pronunciation. This paper focused on triangulating that data with results from this qualitative research. In other words, the author wanted to know whether the students also felt that the measures placed in their university classes led to improvement in their English proficiency in terms of fluency and pronunciation.

In this investigation, it became apparent that students could focus more on their speech production through TPP and pronunciation training. Despite concerns over the challenges faced when conversing in their English (Maeda, 2010) due to cultural concerns and their previous high school education, Japanese students were able to perform their communicative tasks. Although there is a large body of research to suggest issues over

participation due to cultural influence, TPP would appear to provide measures to counter these concerns as this framework provided the platform for students not only to interact in English but to also develop self-efficacy and be rewarded intrinsically. Furthermore, despite overall criticism of their high school educational experience, it would seem that TPP could re-orientate students to acquire a second language naturally rather than through *yakudoku* translation and thus motivate them further to participate in class activities. In fact, it was observed that each student's attitude in how they participated in their English communication classes changed. They invested more time and effort to improve their English skills rather than performing well for the teacher (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). As a result, students could notice a change in their attitudes to speech production.

One also could note a change in attitude to meta-cognitive learning due to alterations in motivation and encouragement of self-efficacy. It became apparent that students developed and acknowledged greater perseverance and resilience. For example, research indicates pronunciation as one of the most difficult skills in the learning and teaching of English language (Gilakjani, 2016; Haghighi & Rahimy, 2017; Sadeghi & Heidar, 2016; Tragant & Munoz, 2004). However, through strategies taught in prosodic training and positive experience in the practicing and testing stages of TPP, students became more capable in producing certain aspects of their pronunciation and more aware in recognising improvement in their intelligibility in their conversations. In fact, this became of the favourite parts of the lesson. Although teaching prosodic features explicitly can enhance the second-language learner's development of comprehensible speech (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010; Hinkel, 2006, reported in Gordon et al. 2013), by developing greater self-efficacy through their learning experience in TPP, students could also recognize what aspects of prosody to improve upon. As a result, it is evident from the student's perspective that the pedagogical approaches of TPP and pronunciation training can benefit them in their endeavours to become more proficient in their English production of speech.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Analysis of focus group interviews

Table 1: Analysis of focus group interviews in terms of English high school education, culture interference, TPP and pronunciation, meta-cognitive learning/self-efficacy, and motivation

Views on English educational high school system (Preventing improvement)	Cultural Interference (Affecting nerves / confidence to speak)	TPP & Pronunciation (Recognized as a benefit)
<p>T1 - I noticed my English skill like the pronunciation is low. I didn't know [about pitch alternation] until I took this class.</p> <p>T2 - Before this class, I always try to speak a grammatically correct sentence, and I thought that I have to use difficult words which I learned from vocabulary books.</p> <p>T3 - I sometimes recall and shame when I was in high school and speaking poor English but I'm different now. I was very happy when I felt my own growth and the feeling made my self-confidence gradually increase.</p> <p>T4 - I was proud to say that I speak English better than most. However, through this class, I realized that I don't speak English that well. The English I prided myself on being able to speak was aimed at Japanese people. It's clear pronunciation and careful delivery of each word, was not what was needed to interact with native speakers. In short, it was too unnatural.</p> <p>T5 - I focused on reading and listening. Thanks to that, I could get ability for exams in high school but it was against what I was looking for. I wanted to be able to speak and talk in English. The classes that focus on talking were not held in high school.</p> <p>T7 - I have improved my English dramatically compared to it when I entered my university because I have gotten to like it. It was nothing special to me when I study for entrance examinations, but now I dig it and study it more than economics which I major.</p> <p>T8 - Before I took GCP classes, I had never learned about speaking English. I was so nervous when I took the first lesson. I'm getting used to speaking English. That is a big progress for me. One of these opinions is that I can enjoy studying it. I think when I was junior high school or high school, I could not it. TPP</p> <p>T10 - Since I was junior high school student, I wasn't very good at English. The score was the worst of all the subjects, I was studying a little for the university entrance exam, but my English thinking speed was slow, and actually when I had the opportunities to speak English with a foreigner, I couldn't speak well and felt frustrated.</p> <p>T11 - To be honest, my pronunciation was also bad. For example, when tourists asked for recommended souvenirs at the store in Shibuya, and when they asked for directions during a part-time job when I jobbed rerated to Olympic.</p>	<p>T6 - I could speak English with being relaxed. Although I was little nervous about speaking English before. / I often do not look at person' eyes who I talk to when I think about what I will talk</p> <p>T7 - I can now speak without being ashamed. At first, I was often concerned about grammar and vocabulary, and I couldn't make a statement as I wanted.</p> <p>T9 - I often had my partner rephrase the words I couldn't understand. I was very embarrassed to it.</p> <p>T10 - But I didn't have any pride and I didn't feel embarrassed about the failure. Even if I failed, I could learn from that experience.</p> <p>T11 - I was not confident in my English and hesitated to speak English.</p>	<p>T1 - I couldn't understand the way how to do it at first, but I could do it little by little thanks to this class.</p> <p>T2 - My reaction got better and become like a native English speaker. At the beginning, when we were doing time-paired-practice, I just listen to others and ask a question which I have been thinking. However, now, I could take a reaction and ask some questions about what the other person said. It makes the speed of conversation faster and become more natural. / By doing shadowing, I became able to change the pitch and emphasize the words little by little.</p> <p>T3 - Every class was impressive and suggested new perspectives and allowed smooth English learning. That was of great help to me and use it for another English classes. / Regarding for rhythm while speaking was a little difficult for me but I learned it with enjoyment and tried to acquire that I could</p> <p>T4 - Although native speaker speaks so fast, I could understand what they are saying. Why I can understand is that they emphasize the important words. / I had a lot of chances to speak English and could improve my English skills.</p> <p>T5 - I was able to realize [that clear pronunciation and careful delivery of each word, of each word] was not what was needed to interact with native speakers] was definitely an improvement in my English.</p> <p>T6 - I think and hope that I could speak English more longer and faster than before. I am sure that I could be used to speaking English and enjoy conversation to others than before through pair works in the classes</p> <p>T7 - It took a long time to make a statement, so the conversation was often interrupted. Of course, I haven't been able to speak fluently even now, but it seems that I can now speak English compared to when I entered university.</p> <p>T9 - I put my power and time into listening and speaking in English. Speaking English as much as possible.</p> <p>T10 - For three months, I remembered the words and read long sentences. I became to be loved English because I enjoyed learning pronunciation and images.</p> <p>T11 - There were many words I couldn't understand in the English class and when we were practicing in pairs, I often had my partner rephrase the words I couldn't understand. Since I can only speak in English in this class, I can no longer hesitate to speak English. Besides, every time I speak English, the theme is familiar things and interests, so instead of reading aloud English sentences, I naturally wanted to convey it in conversation, and I became able to speak more actively than before. I feel that I have a little ability to listen to English. As I communicated in English, I think I became able to hear it from the beginning. And I think reduced sounds and linking sounds are very important for listening to English. By knowing these, I was able to grow. However, I can't speak fluently.</p>

Meta-cognitive Learning / Self-efficacy	Motivation (Developing ways to learn better)
<p>T1 - I paid attention to how the words are pronounced. / I paid attention pitch. I still can't use it well, but I always keep in mind. / When I am aware of pitch [alteration] , I felt that my English pronunciation has improved. I watched English drama on Netflix. I could improve my listening skill a little. The website: ""I am sounding English"" - it is significant video for me. I would like to practice every day. I would like to remember vocabulary. I will listen and sing English songs. That is a good time to improve pronunciation. Therefore, I listen and sing it, I want to know more English songs.</p>	<p>T1 - My classmates' pronunciation is wonderful; so I wanted to improve it.</p> <p>T2 - I could feel that my English has improved in many ways and be able to speak more fluently compared to the beginning of this class.</p> <p>T3 - I able to speak English as fast as possible and more fluently through this class compared to before. I was very happy when I felt my own growth and the feeling made my self-confidence gradually increase.</p>
<p>T2 - I could speak more faster than before. The most reason why I became more faster is that I learned to connect the words. For example, not "do you", but "dju". I become able to change a pitch and emphasize the important words than before. If I couldn't come up with the correct words, I use more easy words which has a same meaning.</p>	<p>T4 - Connected speech definitely an improvement in my English.</p>
<p>T3 - I need to focus on a word and phrase which are used on casual conversation. Sometimes I couldn't remember or speak English which I wanted to explain. So, I decided to keep a diary in English and practice to learn the words which I wrote in it, acquire phrases used in ordinary conversation too - makes me better to perform smooth communication. I will try to watch English program on the radio in my free time.</p>	<p>T5 - My speaking has been improved dramatically. When I go to cotopatio, I feel that my own growth of English, because I went there for the first time, I couldn't make me understand. But now, I can tell natives what I want to speak about. And more, I sometime assist Japanese student when they don't come up with English sentences. Then, I feel that my English has improved and pleasure. However, I want to improve my writing skill. We are supposed to make 250 words essays every week in this class. I want to be able to speak and write English fluently sometime.</p>
<p>T4 - I frequently speak English with GCP members outside of class, watching foreign movies, dramas, and TV shows and asking words and phrases I don't understand.</p>	<p>T6 - I could enjoy more it!</p>
<p>T5 - The most under-scarce ability is vocabulary. I can't keep remember vocabularies for long time, so I have to keep studying with a vocabulary book. Remember 20 words per a day but practice talking in English using zoom cotopatio and sounding English videos helps.</p>	<p>T7 - I feel I enjoy studying it when my English is understood by native speakers in classes</p>
<p>T6 - I could be aware of bad points of my speaking and spoke being conscious of trying to improve them such as speed, pitch, pause and so on. I'm not good speaking in terms of pitch, speed and pause. When I speak English, I often do with no pitch like Japanese. I want to speak English emotionally. I speak English thinking about what I will talk and grammar so my speaking speed is slow and it causes unsuitable pauses like stopping or being slow at reductions.</p>	<p>T8 - Not only speaking but also reading and listening are getting better to study in these classes. Actually, TOEIC scores are getting better. My score which is first one was approximately 500 but the latest one is over 650.</p>
<p>T7 - I take advantage of the Cotopatio, and YouTube videos which have been made by my professor. I study reading and writing English for exams such as the TOEIC</p>	<p>T9 - One of these opinions is that I could enjoy studying it. I think when I was junior high school or high school, I could not it. Mr. Tsushima said to us "You must not be hate English and You must enjoy English. It is necessary for us to keep improving." When I heard it, I thought I'm going to enjoy listening to music and watching movies in English. So I will do it during spring break.</p>
<p>T8 - My English is getting better but I think grammar is not enough. That's because I can't make sentences well and I sometimes make mistakes. So I wanna make sentences better and more faster than before.</p>	<p>T10 - My TOEIC score goes up every time I take the test, and the score has doubled compared to when it was the first 280 points.</p>
<p>T9 - Listening to songs with English lyrics, like the songs of One Ok Rock. To say English lyrics as cool as those singers, I practiced pronouncing words or sentences short, just like we do in this class. I think that helped me listen to English pronunciation more carefully and speak more fluently. I go to Cotopatio three times a week. I was happy to be able to communicate with foreigners and understand their thoughts there, which motivated me to speak more English and make me enjoy speaking English. The big part to push my English when I'm learning new English words, I always listen to the example sentences on my smartphone and repeat them. It made me understand how to use it in conversations. I wrote down my questions and last weekend's event on paper and tried to cheat many times while speaking. I will practice with my teacher's video to avoid doing it and practice thinking directly in English!</p>	<p>T11 - My English is still bad, but I feel that it has improved a lot compared to the beginning. I like movies and music, so I watched movies in English and listening to English music. I was surprised that my TOEIC listening score went up so much</p>
<p>T10 - Last year, I started watching foreign movies and dramas with my family. Especially I started watching Friends oneself. Then I became interested in English culture. So, when I started to want to study abroad, I also wanted to go to university, so I decided to study English.</p>	
<p>T11 - I want to improve my vocabulary during spring break and practice speaking at once after thinking about it. I want to speak separated by sentences, but I still speak separated by words. So, I would like to practice answering quickly so that I can talk after thinking a little more calmly need to practice intonation and pronunciation. I can't emphasize content words or pronounce vowels well, so I want to practice</p>	

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