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Oral Testing for Conversation Skills

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Students in the English Communication I (ECI) Program at Kansai University study English conversation skills in their first term. They take an oral test at the end of the term, talking with other students while a teacher evaluates them. This paper gives some theoretical background and discusses some current issues in oral testing, such as interviewing students to judge proficiency. Students in the ECI program converse with one another during oral testing rather than being interviewed by an examiner. As there are many different ways of administering a conversation test, the authors asked the teachers in the ECI program to respond to a survey describing their testing methods. This paper discusses the survey results and examines the reliability and validity of the oral testing in the ECI program.

関西大学の英語 I コミュニケーションの授業では学生の会話能力向上を目指している。学期の終わりに口頭試験があり、先生が学生の会話能力を評価する。会話能力の評価法における最近の動向、特にインタビュー形式で学生の評価を行う方法について論じた後、コミュニケーション授業で使われているテスト方法を考察する。英語 I コミュニケーション授業では先生によるインタビューによって学生の会話能力が評価されるのではなく、学生同士が会話をし、それを先生が評価する方法が取られている。これがどのような形で行われているかを調べるため、授業を担当している特任外国語講師にアンケートに答えてもらった。本稿ではこのアンケート結果をまとめ、その信憑性を論じる。

Introduction

The English Communication I Program (ECI) of the Institute of Foreign Language Education and Research at Kansai University consists of 11 full-time teachers, all native English speakers, who teach a coordinated curriculum to first year Japanese university students. Each class has 30 students; therefore, together we teach over 3000 students the course entitled English Communication I. This yearlong program is divided into two courses, each lasting one semester. Classes meet 90 minutes a week for 14 weeks per semester. In this paper we will focus on the first semester's course.

Our students have all had 6 years of English instruction in secondary school and, thus, possess a basic understanding of the language. On the whole, their written English is better than their spoken English; they have had little experience with English as a living language. Therefore, the primary goals of our program are to teach English as a linguistic-cultural-social unit, to

facilitate learners' use of the language as a tool for communication, and to "actively develop students' ability to communicate in a socially appropriate manner" (Kurzweil, et al., 2002, p. 32).

To realize these objectives in the classroom, we have developed a syllabus designed around conversation skills, such as: opening and closing a conversation; asking follow-up questions; giving long answers (i.e., details and more information); opening and changing topics; using active listening, which includes rejoinders (e.g. "I see," "Really?") and backchannelling (e.g. "Uh-huh," "Yeah"); turn-taking; eye contact; body language; and key prosodic features. These skills are taught together with other necessary components of language so that students can practice speaking about topics relevant to them: personal information, family, hobbies and interests, school life, friends, work, future plans, past events, and so on.

At the beginning of the course, students are told that they will have a conversation test at the end of the semester and that everything done in the course directly pertains to acquiring the skills necessary to perform successfully on this test.

The test, then, not only is a natural complement to the semester's coursework, but plays an important role throughout the course itself. We would, therefore, like to closely examine aspects of our testing procedure to better understand the effect on and implications for our learners and our teaching program as a whole. To do this, we find it useful to begin with a review of the theory behind and current issues in the field of oral testing.

Theories and Issues in Oral Testing

Oral tests are used to test speaking ability and traditionally have focused largely, and often solely, on linguistic proficiency. Recently, however, there has been an increase in the inclusion of conversational skills and strategies, as well as para- and extra-linguistic features of the target language.

Oral tests serve many purposes: to measure language proficiency; to assess achievement of the objectives of a course of study; to diagnose learners' strengths and weaknesses; to identify what they do and don't know; and to assist in the placement of learners within a teaching program (Hughes, 2003).

The most common format of oral testing is the interview, in which the test taker converses with an interviewer and his or her performance is evaluated. There is often an assessor present who does not take part in the spoken interaction but listens, watches, and evaluates the abilities of the test taker. If there is not a second person available to act as an assessor, then the interviewer must also assess the candidate's abilities.

Although the oral interview is widely practiced, there has been mounting criticism against

its use in recent years. Many researchers agree (e.g. Bachman, 1990; van Lier, 1989; Lazaraton, 1992; Young, 1995) that the oral exchange that occurs between an interviewer or tester and test taker does not mirror or even closely replicate natural, or real-life, conversation. As Johnson and Tyler (1998) observe, in natural conversations topics as well as turn distribution, order, and length are mutually negotiated by both interlocutors; however, in an interview test, they are primarily “set in advance and controlled by the testers” (p.48). They further argue that “naturally occurring conversation is by its very nature interactive, and that a crucial part of this interactiveness is a sense of involvement or reactivity among interlocutors...[They] have noted that...testers’ contributions consistently lack this quality of conversational involvement” (1998, p.48). Indeed, a real-life conversation is a spontaneous creation between two (or more) involved participants which has not been planned ahead, and the content, sequence, and outcome are largely unpredictable.

Educators and testers are rightly concerned that speaking tests should mirror real life speaking situations. As Bachman states, we need to “capture or recreate in language tests the essence of language use, to make our language tests ‘authentic’” (1990, p.300). He proposes a ‘real-life’ approach which aims to develop authentic tests and which is primarily concerned with: face validity, how the test appears to and affects those taking it; and predictive validity, how accurate the test is in predicting future non-test language ability.

Another concern with the interview test, as Kormos (1999) points out, is that they are often unequal social encounters and, therefore, “inherently resemble interviews rather than natural conversation” (p.164). She further raises the issue that “the schemata for participating in interviews might be culturally different” (p.171). Young supports this proposition by finding that Asian test takers will expect the interviewer to lead and dominate the conversation, thus obscuring the test-taker’s discourse abilities (1995).

One can conclude that in an oral test in which the test taker’s partner is a trained interviewer, the social inequality between the two interlocutors, the lack of spontaneity and involvement on the part of the tester, and the fact that the conversation held is not ‘authentic’, will hinder the performance and assessment of conversational competence.

An Alternative to the Oral Interview Test

In recent years there has been considerable criticism of the oral proficiency interview. Although a review of the literature has found many shortcomings to the interview format, there do not seem to be many solutions or alternatives to this format proposed. We would like to offer our communication program’s oral test as one alternative to the interview format.

The distinguishing feature of our test is that it is not an interview. Students are examined in pairs or small groups, so that each student has another student for a partner during the test; the teacher is only an assessor. There are many advantages to using this arrangement. First, the test takers are socially equal, which not only ensures a degree of comfort, but allows them to express themselves more freely. This is especially relevant for Japanese students, as conversational style varies greatly depending upon the relative social status of the speakers. If a student speaks with someone older, for example, the student will not participate equally in the exchange but will instead assume a lesser role, allowing the elder to lead and dominate the interaction. Furthermore, a student-student interaction is much closer to a real-life conversation than an interview in that: 1) they typically converse with other students every day and, 2) when they will have a real life conversation in English, it will most likely be with someone who they must speak to as a social equal. A further advantage to student pairs is that it is easy for them to find common topics to talk about. For these reasons, we believe our oral test to have a high degree of authenticity, in that it closely resembles a real-life conversation.

It is always a challenge to design a test so that a natural conversation can occur. Learners must be relaxed and confident enough so that a conversation can spark, topics flow and, thus, “allow the activity (the conversation) to become dominant, and its ulterior purpose (a language test) to be temporarily subordinated. The oral test then reaches its highest degree of authenticity by no longer being a test” (Underhill, 1987, p.45). We propose that in our oral test, we provide the necessary conditions to create such a situation conducive for having natural conversations.

In addition to the peer partners arrangement, there are other factors that contribute to the authenticity of our test. One is that of preparedness and resulting confidence. Throughout the 14 week semester, students are consistently working on aspects of conversational competence, leading up to the final oral exam. As our test mirrors our course content, and assuming that our students are trying their best, they are likely to be well prepared and thus have confidence when taking the test. As Underhill points out, “how learners react to a test, and therefore how well they do, depends on how the test compares with what they expect it to be like” (1987, p.19). Not only are our students well prepared, they are also well informed by their teacher as to what the actual test conditions and procedure will be like. Our students know what to expect; we have taken the surprise factor out. The more information and preparation they have prior to the exam, the better they will perform and the more accurate a picture we will get of their oral abilities.

Our speaking test not only serves as a way to measure our students' conversation abilities (i.e., achievement in the course), it has many other purposes as well. The teachers in our

program agree that while measuring achievement is a purpose of the test, it is not the only one. The main reasons for having a final oral test are that it motivates and focuses the students throughout the course, provides a framework for both teaching and learning, and gives students a clear direction and goal to work towards. It encourages them to pay better attention in class, study harder, and in general, take their learning endeavor more seriously. This effect of the test on teaching and learning is called washback by some (Underhill, 1987; Bachman, 1990; McNamara, 2000) and backwash by others (mainly, Hughes, 2003). Washback can be either positive or negative. We find the washback of our test to be extremely beneficial and useful.

Another advantage of our oral exam is that the test in itself is often a positive learning experience — even enjoyable — to many of our students. It gives them a sense of accomplishment. Students often write in their learning journals¹ that they were surprised with how well they performed during the test, or that they enjoyed the conversation they had with their partner, or that they forgot they were even taking a test. Of course, we also receive feedback where students express regret (or even surprise) that they did not perform as well as they had expected, or that they did not prepare enough, as well as students' realizations of their weaknesses and vows to work harder in the future. Another purpose, then, of our test is diagnostic: it tells the learners as well as the teachers what the students' strengths and weaknesses are and what areas and skills need to be worked on more in the future.

A discussion of the ECI conversation test in relation to current concerns and issues in oral testing has shown that it has a high degree of authenticity, has many positive effects on students' learning experience, and serves multiple purposes. To attain a clearer understanding of how the test is actually carried out, we take a further look into the details of the examination procedure by discussing the survey results.

Survey Response

How have teachers in the ECI program at Kandai approached the oral testing of conversation skills? The authors were interested to find out how teachers coped with the daunting task of orally testing 300 students each with reasonable reliability. We surveyed the teachers in the ECI program (see Appendix A), asking for a detailed description of their testing process, including preparation, both psychological and pedagogical, marking systems, procedures, atmosphere, criteria, and feedback or follow up. Although all the teachers in the ECI program administered an oral test of conversation skills to their students, their individual methods and procedures are different. Without necessarily seeking to further standardize the testing process, we wanted to create a resource for everyone in the program to examine common ground,

compare and contrast testing methods, and learn from one another.

Preparation

As mentioned above, ECI teachers generally announce that there will be an oral test of conversation skills in the first week of class. Everyone reminded students of the test a week or two prior to the actual event. One teacher made constant reminders and others occasionally reminded the students to take note of material for the end of semester conversation test.

Most teachers provided students with a written guideline to study for the test (see Appendix B for sample guidelines). One teacher preferred to write the guideline on the board, and another said his students could refer to the worksheets in their notebook.

All the ECI teachers set aside class time for students to take a mock conversation test (see Appendix C for sample worksheets). Although every class is devoted to learning the conversation skills that the students will be tested on, a mock test gives students insight into the evaluation process. It also provides students with an opportunity to review the semester's material, practice the specific skills being tested, and lower anxiety about the upcoming test. Generally, students had one 90-minute class period to practice for the test. A couple of teachers allowed more time over a two or three week period for test preparation.

Also, most teachers had students evaluate one another as part of the practice for the test. Students listened to one another's conversations, and offered advice. Students doing observations then talked to classmates about good points and things that needed work.

It should be noted that none of the teachers used peer observations as part of their test grade. Therefore, the peer observations are intended to help the students understand the evaluation process as well as give them the opportunity to have critical feedback; this, in turn, should improve performance on the actual conversation skills test.

Partners

While some teachers allowed students to practice with partners of their choice, only two allowed students to select their own partners for the conversation test. To some extent this reflects how partners are assigned or found in regular class meetings, although more teachers allowed students to find their own partners in regular class meetings than for the oral test. Most teachers assigned partners randomly just before observing the students being tested. Thus, students did not have a chance to perform a specific dialogue with a specific partner but had to produce conversational utterances of an unrehearsed nature. One teacher noted that he sometimes assigned a weak student to a stronger partner.

In a natural conversation, learners tend to behave naturally; that is, their normal personalities will come out, and there will, therefore, be differences in openness, shyness, confidence to speak and start topics, and ask questions. Because of these human factors, teachers must be sensitive to the personality and behavior of the learner.

Most teachers tested students in pairs. The others had groups of three to five people. Extra students in pair classes were dealt with in slightly different ways. One teacher tested them in a group of three, rather than a pair, allowing slightly longer time. Other teachers offered students a chance to retake the test and improve their scores by repeating the test with the last partnerless student.

Test Criteria

All of the teachers used criteria listed in the conversation skills agreed on by the ECI Program for the oral test (Kurzweil et al., 2002). These include starting a conversation, giving long or detailed answers, asking follow-up questions, using rejoinders and other active listening skills, and closing the conversation. These core conversation skills were the primary consideration in evaluating students' oral tests. Depending on what was emphasized during their individual lessons, teachers also included things like turn-taking, the use of small talk, using repair skills to clarify or ascertain meaning, making smooth transitions between partners, employing appropriate language, and using culturally acceptable conversation topics.

While not primary to the exam, other factors considered included body language, culture, specific vocabulary, personal interaction skills, prosody, and clarity of expression. Appropriate body language, such as eye contact, facing a conversation partner, nodding, smiling, and gesturing were considered by most teachers in evaluating student performance on the conversation test. Avoiding an interrogation style interaction was mentioned specifically as an important point by two teachers. Some teachers expected students to use particular vocabulary related to topics they had studied in class. Two teachers mentioned having a balanced conversation as a factor to consider. Other factors mentioned were creativity, interest level, and using western style conversation gambits, such as following a topic for a while rather than asking a series of unrelated questions.

Teachers agreed that conversation was the primary purpose of the communication course. With that in mind, pronunciation, intonation, and volume were considered as test criteria insofar as they might impede clear communication, or enhance it. Of course, students were expected to speak exclusively in English. Avoiding *katakana*² pronunciation was noted as a requirement by several teachers. Speaking loudly enough to be clear and using suitable intonation were also

included by some teachers. No one listed grammar as a notable consideration for test grades.

Teachers used the same criteria for marking the oral test that students were given for the mock test (see Appendix D for sample grading sheets).

All teachers gave tests that are criterion-referenced. That is, our oral tests show whether the students are able to perform conversational tasks satisfactorily. This is in contrast to norm-referenced tests in which students' abilities are judged in comparison with one another.

Test Procedures

How do teachers organize their oral tests? Testing 30 students in a 90 minute class period apportions three minutes per student, without allowing time for anything such as moving or taking attendance. Also, while the teacher observes oral tests, the other students need to be occupied with something. Teachers dealt with these constraints of time, space, and bodies in various ways.

Most teachers used only one class period to test all of the students. Three teachers, however, spread the oral test over two class periods in successive weeks. Several teachers had tried both one and two weeks of testing, or planned to do the opposite in the future. Most teachers preferred to test the students apart from the class, with lowering anxiety and increasing concentration being mentioned as reasons for this. This is supported by Underhill who contends that learners can relax in ordinary surroundings, such as a hallway or a cafeteria, which deemphasize the test-taking aspect of the conversation. This helps the students speak more naturally (1987).

Teachers who preferred to test students in a separate space either used the hallway or a nearby empty classroom to give oral tests. Three teachers had their students stand, and the rest had them sit down, all facing a partner or partners.

Three teachers had students take their oral test with other students observing. One teacher preferred to test the students at his desk while the rest of the class was engaged in another activity, and one teacher circulated in the classroom and made observations while all students in the class conversed. Two teachers observed two pairs of students conversing at the same time, allowing a longer observation. By having two conversations going simultaneously, the students can feel that they are not the sole focus of the observing teacher, thus lessening performance tension. Having students converse in small groups rather than pairs may serve the same function — lowering individual pressure.

Time pressure was lessened by taking two weeks of class for the oral test, allowing for lengthier observations of each student. Most of the teachers who used one week to administer

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oral tests mentioned allowing time the following week for overflow, makeups, or retesting.

Most teachers allowed about 5 minutes per observation. One teacher allowed two minutes and 30 seconds. The teachers who observed the students in groups rather than pairs allowed 10 to 20 minutes, with more time allowed if the test was spread over a two week period. It should be noted that additional time is needed to give feedback, call student names, and move around physically so that the oral testing is done within the scheduled time.

While the teacher was evaluating oral tests, what was the rest of the class doing, if not observing? Several teachers had their students working on speaking activities, and one had them write an essay evaluating the first semester's class. Three teachers had students come for their oral tests by appointment, while the rest of the class was preparing in another location.

Only two teachers allowed students to refer to a dictionary during the oral test, and one allowed them to write down words they did not know in English in Japanese to show to a partner. About half the teachers said they never offered help to students struggling during the oral test. The other half said they offered help rarely. Only one teacher readily helped students during the oral test.

In terms of specific instructions given to the students just before the test, some teachers simply tell the students to have a conversation which includes elements they have studied in class. Tarone notes that in language testing, all speaking tasks must be carefully designed so that they elicit the authentic language use conditions that apply in real world situations (1998). Two teachers give the students being tested instructions that they either knew their partner or are strangers, and ask them to converse accordingly. One teacher assigned topics and another had students write down a topic and hand the paper to a partner. One teacher has students perform skits, which they write and rehearse the preceding week, incorporating conversational points and topics that they studied.

Reducing anxiety or test-taking stress was mentioned by most teachers. Ample preparation, including the peer-observed mock test, clear outlines of skills to be tested, and maintaining a friendly atmosphere were mentioned as techniques to reduce stress. About half the teachers mentioned testing students away from the rest of their classmates. This was seen as less stressful than performing with an audience of classmates.

Feedback

Most teachers gave the students some immediate feedback after the test, ranging from encouraging comments like "good job" to handing the student an evaluation page with a final grade. One teacher gave the students their evaluation pages, with his comments, at the beginning

of the following term. Several teachers mentioned telling students immediately that they had passed. Also, most teachers commented on good points and items that needed improvement just after the test.

About half of the teachers gave general feedback to the class as a whole, going over common mistakes and items for further practice in addition to general encouraging remarks.

Conclusion

The responses to the survey of oral testing showed that while the basic nature of the exam was the same, there were a variety of ways to organize and administer the test. Everyone tested students orally on the conversation skills taught during the first semester. Everyone observed students conversing with one another, rather than the teacher. All of the oral tests were criterion-referenced. All teachers informed the students well in advance that there would be a test, prepared the students for it during the semester, and allowed class time for mock tests and peer observations.

At the same time there were a variety of strategies employed in the testing procedures. Groups or pairs of students were tested in different settings, such as in front of the class or alone in a hallway. One teacher had students produce a skit of a natural conversation rather than have a spontaneous one. Some variety is only natural given different personalities and teaching styles of the individuals involved in testing. Many teachers mentioned changes they planned for future testing, or changes they had made from the past, indicating that creating this conversation test is an ongoing process for them. Would any standardization be beneficial to the testing process? Is there one best way to orally test the students, particularly in reference to test validity and reliability? Or, do a variety of slightly different testing methods achieve the same end?

First of all, it is important to keep in mind that "oral tests are not like lists of questions on paper; they do not exist separately from the people who take part in them," and it is therefore difficult to evaluate test validity and reliability (Underhill, 1987, p.107). There is always going to be some degree of subjectivity in oral testing.

The oral tests administered in the ECI program are to some extent objective. Students are required to perform conversational tasks in order to pass. So, a teacher can reliably record that a given student has asked, for example, follow-up questions. However, the quality of the follow-up questions requires the teacher's judgment, and is, therefore, subjective. Underhill calls this impression-based marking. This very subjectivity may benefit the testing process: "Deliberate and careful impression-based marking is the most direct and authentic reflection of this real-life process that is possible to have in an oral test" (1987, p.101).

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In the simplest possible terms, test validity poses the question, does the test measure what it is supposed to? Probably the oral exam administered in the ECI program can answer “yes” to this question. Students practice conversation skills in English and then produce these skills during a test. The oral test is designed to check that they have mastered a specific group of skills which are observable. Thus, the test has content validity.

In addition to the content being valid, we believe our test also has a high degree of predictive validity. As the conversations that occur during the test closely resemble real-life interactions, the test should rather accurately predict how successful the students will be at using the language in similar future situations. We further conclude that the test has high face validity because surveys from teachers and comments from students have been very positive.

Although we find the ECI oral test to be highly valid, whether it is reliable is more difficult to determine at this point. Because there are different teachers using variations of the test and testing procedure, it is difficult to ascertain the consistency of test results, both within each teacher’s own assessing and among all the teachers. However, there are many areas for future investigation and research which would help to evaluate our test’s reliability. First of all, teachers could compile and compare all their criteria schemes and grading systems, and look at actual marks given on individual criteria and overall grades, in order to see how consistent markers are with themselves and compared to others. Moreover, this process would enable us to see which criteria are the easiest and which are the most difficult to mark consistently.

Other ways to evaluate test reliability would be for teachers to observe one another’s testing process or to use one another’s criteria and marking systems while testing. In addition, teachers could test one another’s students or pair students from different teachers’ classes for a conversation test. As our test reflects the course as a whole, ideally, students should be able to perform satisfactorily no matter which teacher evaluates them or who their partner is. However, this would also involve human variables, as the students would be asked to perform in front of a teacher strange to them, and with a partner that they were not acquainted with; both factors could influence test performance.

Another method for determining reliability would be to videotape students having a conversation. This video could be scored by all of the ECI program teachers, and scores compared to check marking consistency.

Such investigations, however, lie beyond the scope of this paper. Having the survey results from the current ECI team as a starting point may inspire future teachers in the program to experiment with various styles of test administration. Certainly, it can provide ideas and choices for testing students on the oral conversation syllabus.

Notes

- 1) Students keep a record of what they learned in class, for example, vocabulary and conversation strategies in Learning Journals (LJ). Students also write short essays reflecting on what they have learned, including language use, cultural interactions, and personal growth. The LJ provides reinforcement for class work, a study guide for review and a means of communication between teacher and student. LJs increase competence in language production and build a sense of responsibility for the learning process in the student (Calman and Walker, 2003).
- 2) *Katakana* is a Japanese syllabary which is generally used for foreign loan words. Students are often instructed in English using katakana for pronunciation. The result is certain predictable mispronunciations of English, as sounds which do not exist in the Japanese system (e.g. 'v', 'th', 'f') are changed, and vowel sounds are added to all final consonants (except 'n') and inserted into consonant blends. So, Smith becomes sumisu; glasses, gurasezu; and Adventure World, adobenchawarudo. These pronunciation habits are often hard to break and can result in chronic mispronunciation of English if not actively corrected.

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Appendix A

ORAL TESTING SURVEY **English Communication 1 Program July 2003**

PREPARATION

When do you announce that there will be an oral test?

How do you prepare the students for the test?

Do students have a written guideline to study from?

Do students evaluate one another as part of the test preparation?

Do students have specific class time to prepare for the test?

Do students have a checklist of things to study that they must do during the test (e.g. follow up questions, rejoinders)?

PARTNERS

Can students rehearse a specific dialogue with a specific partner before the test?

How are partners chosen?

- randomly at the beginning of the class period
- randomly immediately before each pair or group is given the oral test

- randomly before the day of the test
- students choose their own partners
- teacher assigns partners (based on what?)

GRADES

What grading scale do you use?

What percent of the final grade is the oral test?

ORAL TEST CRITERIA

What conversation skills are you testing the students on? Please list everything.

Do you include any other criteria (e.g. grammar, pronunciation) in the test?

If you have a checklist that you use when testing, please attach a copy

TEST PROCEDURE IN DETAIL

Can students consult any papers or a dictionary during the oral test?

How many class periods do you use to give the oral test?

Are students tested in

- pairs
- groups (how many?)
- mingling
- individual interviews
- other

How much time do you allocate to each group or pair? (per observation or performance)

Do students sit or stand during the test?

Is there any specific arrangement of desks or chairs or bodies required during the test?

What is the rest of the class doing (preparing, writing, coming in by appointment, speaking, etc.)?

Where does the test take place? (in front of the class, in a separate place)

What do you tell the students to do during the test? (e.g. "Have a conversation." or "Talk about your best friend.")

Do you offer any assistance or hints to students if they get stuck?

Do you confine students to specific topics?

If there is anything else you could tell us to better explain your testing procedure, would you please add it.

Feedback

Do you give the student any individual feedback about their test performance? If so, at the time of the test or at a later date? Written or oral? In the form of an overall grade, or a critique of level performance of specific skills?
 Do you give general feedback to the class?
 Do other students evaluate one another during the oral test? If so, do you use those evaluations as part of the grade?
 Do students grade their own test performance? If so, how do you use their self-evaluations?

Appendix B



Conversation - Expressions

Introduction

Introduce yourself the **FIRST** time you meet someone new.
A Hello. My name is **AA**. Please call me **A**.

B Hello, **A**. Nice to meet you. My name is **BB**. Please call me **B**.

A Nice to meet you, too, **B**.

Say Good bye

A It was nice talking to you **B**. See you later.

B It was nice talking to you, too, **A**. See you later.

Greeting

Use a greeting when you have already met someone. Say the person's name if you remember it.

A Hello **B**. Nice to see you again.

B Hello **A**. Nice to see you again, too.

If you forgot someone's name

A Hello. I'm sorry, I don't remember your name.
OR Please tell me your name again.

B My name is **B**.

Good Listening

- Nod
- Make eye contact
- Smile
- Ask Follow up Questions
- Use gestures
- Be sincere
- Use rejoinders
- Give your own opinion
- Support the speaker
- Show reactions

Rejoinders

I'm Listening

- I see
- OK
- Yes
- Uh huh

Good News

- Wow.
- That's great
- Wonderful

Bad News

- That's too bad.
- I'm sorry to hear that.
- Oh, no.

Surprise

- Really?
- You're kidding
- I don't believe it.

Useful Expressions for the Conversation Test

Greetings and First Words	Hi! I'm (your name). Nice to meet you.	[Use these two only if you do not know your conversation partner.]	
	Hi! How are you? Hey! How's it going? Hello! How are things going?	Good morning! Good afternoon! Good evening!	
Starting the Conversation	<i>(With a person you do not know)</i> So, where are you from? So, what's your major?	<i>(With any person)</i> So, how do you like this English class? So, what do you think about the Hanshin Tigers this season?	
	How about you? What about you? And you?	What do you think? What's yours? (In response to "What's your favorite...?")	
Rejoinders <i>(Keeping the Conversation Going, Part Two)</i>	Surprised No way! You're kidding! Really?!	Happy That's great! Wow! Wonderful!	Sad That's too bad. Oh, no. I am sorry to hear that.
Follow Up Questions <i>(Keeping the Conversation Going, Part Three)</i>	How often do you...? When did you start...? What do you like about...? Why do you...?	How do you...? Where do you...? With whom do you...?	
Long Answers	No, I haven't. But, I would like to... No, I don't. But, I do have... No, I am not. I am...	Yes, I did when I was... Yes, I do. I have had... Yes, I am. I have been...	
Finishing the Conversation	Well, I have to go now. It was nice talking to you. Well, it was good to meet you. I'd better go. O.K., Take care! See you later!		

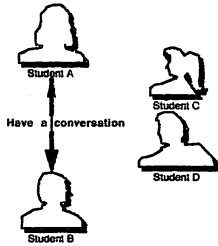
You may NOT look at this paper during the Conversation Test.

Appendix C

Kurzweil Skills

Noticing Conversations

Name _____ Student # _____



Instructions:

1. **Prepare:** Student A and B should choose a question together to start their conversation and then take one minute to mind map their ideas (by themselves).

ex. So... *What have you been doing recently?*

So...*How was your weekend?*

So...*Do you exercise a lot?*

2. **Talk/Take notes:** Student A and B have a conversation. They will have a few minutes to talk and should try to use the different speaking skills and hints we've learned in class.

- Student C and D should listen carefully and take notes.
- Student C should make ticks next to the skills.
- Student D should note down key words.

3. **Reflect:** After the conversation is finished:
 -Student C and D compare their notes.
 -Student A and B write a one minute reflection in their journal about the conversation. *How was the conversation?
 -Student C and D show their notes and give their comments.

Student A's name:

Student B's name:

	Conversation #	
	Uses greetings	
	Starts the conversation	
	Gives longer answers - Names - Experiences - Descriptions	
	Asks follow up questions	
	Passes the conversation	
	Uses rejoinders	
	Uses fillers/nods	
	Finishes the conversation	
	Other things you notice: ex. gestures, asking for meaning, etc.	

Key words

Suggestions/Comments

Observing a Conversation



OBSERVATIONS	SPEAKER A:	SPEAKER B:
How do the speakers greet each other?	Hi [NAME].	Hi [NAME].
How does the speaker open the conversation?	Talks about the weather or asks about the other person's health, or comments on the current situation	
How does the speaker provide the topic?	Starts topic with 'So...'	
What strategies does each speaker use to keep the conversation going?	Shows that he/she is listening by giving short responses or by using rejoinders	Shows that he/she is listening by giving short responses or by using rejoinders.
	Shows interest by asking questions Gives expanded answers	Shows interest by asking questions Gives expanded answers
How does the speaker close the conversation?		Signals the end Gives reason for parting Takes leave
	Do the speakers stick to the topic?	
Do the speakers maintain eye contact?		
Do the speakers speak loudly and clearly?		
Do the speakers speak in a natural manner with intonation?		

Appendix D

Conversation Evaluation Form

	First Pair		Second Pair	
	Student A's Name: _____	Student B's Name: _____	Student A's Name: _____	Student B's Name: _____
Greetings and First Words				
Starting the Conversation				
Passing Back the Question				
Rejoinders				
Follow Up Questions				
Long Answers				
Finishing the Conversation				
Voice Volume				
Intonation				
Pronunciation				
Avoidance of Japanese				

Ratings: 1 = not good 2 = so-so 3 = O.K. 4 = Good 5 = Excellent

Did one person speak more than the other? If yes, who?


Comments and suggestions for improvement:

Student A's name:

Student B's name:

Conversation #	Key words
Uses greetings	
Starts the conversation	
Gives longer answers • Names • Experiences • Descriptions	
Asks follow up questions	
Passes the conversation	
Uses rejoinders	
Uses filters/Nods	
Finishes the conversation	
Other things you notice: ex. gestures, asking for meaning, etc.	

Suggestions/Comments

			
	Greeting/Intro		
	Start		
	Long Answers		
	Ask F u questions		
	Listening Rejoinders		
	Repair skills		
	Good bye		
	Grade %		
	Comments		