

A Case Study of Form-Focused Intervention on Speaking Development

Chie Ogawa

ABSTRACT

This semester project is an examination of students' development of their monologue speeches and their perceptions of two types of pedagogical intervention: teacher-model input and peer-check activities. This case study focuses on two students to understand students' speaking development over 11 weeks. Students' monologue speeches during the 3/2/1 tasks were analyzed qualitatively. Questionnaires were also analyzed to explore how the students perceived form-focused intervention and their speaking development. Implications of form-focused instruction in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) will be discussed.

INTRODUCTION

English Discussion Class (EDC) in Rikkyo University employs Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), in which student-centeredness and meaning are primary focuses. The small class size (7-9 students) maximizes student-to-student interaction. The rationale of this program is that students will be able to become more fluent speakers and effectively convey their ideas during the extended group discussions. Although the students primarily focus on meaning, they also learn functional language every lesson to help them have an effective group discussion. For example, to give opinions (e.g. *In my opinion,...*), to give reasons (e.g. *It's mainly because...*), to give examples (e.g. *One example is...*).

In addition to helping students conduct an effective discussion, another learning objective of this program is that students become more fluent speakers (Hurling, 2012). To achieve this objective, 3/2/1 speaking tasks are implemented in every class. During the 3/2/1 speaking tasks, the speakers make pairs with listener partners. In this task, speakers talk about a particular topic for three minutes, retell the information a second time in two minutes to a different listener, and then retell it a third time in one minute to yet another listener (Nation, 1989). One advantage of this task is that students can develop speaking fluency through verbatim repetition (Boers, 2014; De Jong & Perfertti, 2011; Nation, 1989; Thai and Boers, 2015).

Although students learn function phrases when they conduct a group discussion, they are not strongly encouraged to use the function phrases during the 3/2/1 tasks. This is because the 3/2/1 aims for speaking a lot rather than speaking correctly. However, I have been examining how focusing on linguistic form during the 3/2/1 tasks might help students improve their speaking skills (e.g. Ogawa, 2016). I hypothesize that adding form-focused intervention during the 3/2/1 tasks could be beneficial for students for the following reasons. First, through verbatim repetition over time, the target linguistic forms can become more automatized. Students probably struggle with focusing on meaning and form at the same time at the beginning of the semester, but gradually their use of the target function phrases during the 3/2/1 tasks becomes automatized. Second, the automatization of target function phrases can help students organize their monologues very smoothly. If students give their monologue speech by giving opinions (*In my opinion,...*), giving reasons (*One reason is...*) and giving examples (*One example is...*), they will be able to organize their monologue speeches more coherently.

Ellis (2016) suggests four ways to implement form-focused instruction: pre-task planning, repetition, corrective feedback, and text-enhancement. In this study, a combination of the four form-focused instruction methods that Ellis suggests was used. For example, students had pre-task planning time, in which they planned what they would say after they listened to a teacher-led

model (text-enhancement). In addition to the planning stage, another pedagogical intervention was added during the 3/2/1 speaking tasks: a listener partner checked whether a speaker was using the functional phrases during their speech in 3/2/1 tasks. The students might understand the target formulaic language through teacher-led planning, but it does not guarantee that learners use the target forms during their task performances. Indeed, solo use of text enhancement itself might not have a strong impact on learners' development (Lee & Huang, 2008). As Ellis (2016) suggested, a combination of other types of focus-on-form activity will be more beneficial. Therefore, an intervention such as peer-checking is of possible value in terms of pressuring the learners to use the target formulaic language during the 3/2/1 task.

In this case study, as Ellis (2016) suggested, form-focused intervention was employed. Students were encouraged to focus on form by using the target function phrases prior to and during the 3/2/1 tasks. Encouraging students to use the function phrases (e.g. *In my opinion*; *It is because...*; *For example...*) during the 3/2/1 tasks would help students to improve speech organization. In this project, I will mainly examine the effects of pedagogical intervention (teacher-modeled input / pair-check activity) qualitatively. Specifically, this case study examines students' development in the quality of their monologues by using the target function phrase and students' perceptions toward form-focused intervention.

METHOD

Participants

For the purpose of this case study, I focused on two students: Aki and Momo (pseudonyms). The participants are from the same class (Level II). They belong to the College of Community and Human Services. Their TOEIC scores ranged from 500-505. They came to class on time and participated in the discussion class actively. However, these students showed some difficulty when they were doing the 3/2/1 tasks at the beginning of the semester. I chose these participants specifically in order to understand how their performances and perception toward the 3/2/1 tasks changed throughout the semester.

Form-focused Intervention

All students in the class received form-focused intervention prior to and during the 3/2/1 tasks. In this project, the form-focused intervention was implemented to help students practice formulaic language more frequently. The function phrases would be helpful to organize their monologues when they tell their ideas during the 3/2/1 tasks. These function phrases were the same function phrases that were being taught to all the students in order to do the group discussion. However, students do not necessarily use the function phrases during the 3/2/1 because the purpose is on meaning, not on form. The target functions for the form-focused intervention are listed in Table 1. The following section explains two types of form-focused pedagogical intervention.

Table 1. Function Phrases During the 3/2/1

Opinion (Taught in Lesson 2)	●	<i>In my opinion</i>
	●	<i>Personally speaking I think</i>
	●	<i>I am not sure but I think</i>
Reasons (Taught in Lesson 3)	●	<i>It's mainly because</i>
	●	<i>One reason is</i>
	●	<i>Another reason is</i>
Examples (Taught in Lesson 6)	●	<i>For example</i>
	●	<i>For instance</i>
	●	<i>One example is</i>
Possibility (Taught in Lesson 11)	●	<i>Another example is</i>
	●	<i>If</i>

Text enhancement + pre-task planning (Before the 3/2/1 tasks). Prior to the 3/2/1 speaking task each lesson, students received a teacher-led model passage using the function phrases with the handout (Appendix A). The teacher-modeled passage was displayed on the handout with the target function phrases, which were underlined. Teacher read the passage aloud while the students followed the handout. After students listened to the teacher-modeled passage, they were given two minutes to brainstorm their ideas on the white paper. The model passage and students' planning papers were collected after they finished planning.

Peer-check feedback (during the 3/2/1 tasks). Students received additional form-focused pedagogic intervention during their 3/2/1 tasks from their listener partners. While speakers engaged in 3/2/1 speaking tasks, a listener partner checked if the speaker was using the target formulaic language on the check-sheets (Appendix B). After each speaking turn, the speaker received quick feedback from a different listener partner. By doing so, it is hypothesized that students would get used to practicing the function phrases through the peer check little by little as the cognitive load might decrease.

Data Collection

Recording 3/2/1 speaking. Two different types of data were collected: recordings of 3/2/1 tasks and student questionnaires. In order to analyze the students' speaking development of their monologue tasks qualitatively, students' speaking audio data were collected in Lesson 3 and Lesson 14. During the regular 3/2/1 tasks, students make pairs and take turns after the first speaker finished their speaking turns for three minutes, two minutes and one minute. However, only on the recording days, students recorded their speaking individually by holding an IC recorder. On the recording days, students were given one minute to think about what to talk about prior to the recording. However, the students did not receive any pedagogical intervention such as teacher's model input or peer-check. Table 2 shows the topics of the 3/2/1 recording.

Table 2. 3/2/1 Tasks Recording Questions

Lesson	Questions
3	<u>Club activity</u> : Do you think doing club activities is a good idea for students? Have you ever joined a club before? What did you learn from your experiences?
14	<u>Studying English</u> : Do you think learning English is important for you? Do you think study abroad is a good idea for university students? What are other ways to improve your English skills?

Questionnaires. To follow-up the audio analysis, students' questionnaire answers were analyzed. The questionnaire was administered in Lesson 13. It explored how the students perceived the 3/2/1 fluency training and the pedagogic intervention (teacher-modeled passages, peer-check activities). The questionnaires included four question items with 6-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree) and open-ended questions about why they chose their particular ratings. For example, "Listening to teacher's model is necessary." "I use the teacher's model speech as a reference." "I think peer-check activity is effective."

Analysis. Transcriptions of students' performance in a two-minute recording from 3/2/1 tasks were analyzed. Two minutes of speech is often used to understand students' development in speaking. For example, de Jong and Perfetti (2011) used two-minute long monologues for their 4/3/2 fluency study. The usage of the function phrases and the organization of their monologues were qualitatively compared between Week 3 and 14. Students' answers in the questionnaires were also analyzed to understand students' perceptions of the treatment as a follow-up.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, transcriptions of students' speaking performance are shown. All the repetition and self-corrections are included. In the first recording in Lesson 3, students talked about club activities.

Recording 1 (Momo)

1. *I think doing club activities is a good idea for students.*
2. *So it's important for students to make important mates.*
3. *So I think they are... they are always be eh.. good good terms*
4. *So there's sometimes makes conflict with them*
5. *But they are eh they they're they can understand each other more than other club mates*
6. *So they are they will be good partner in the future eh*
7. *I decided my club my circle in Rikkyo activity because I'm interested in volunteer works before I go to ... I become became I become a university student*
8. *So I I liked to make someone smile so*
9. *I want to talk many people and*
10. *I enjoy to play with many people*

When the recording was made, the students had already learned the function phrases to give opinions: "In my opinion,..." "Personally speaking, I think..." Momo started her opinion by saying "I think" instead of the target function phrases. After she gave her opinion, she gave the

New Directions in Teaching and Learning English Discussion

reasons why club activities are important as being “students can make important mates (Line 5).” She said “there is sometimes make conflict” (Line 4) but “conflicts” are not elaborated on. She also explained that she chose her volunteer club because she “was interested in volunteer work” (Line 7) By giving more examples of types of volunteer work, she could have explained her ideas more coherently.

Recording 1 (Aki)

11. *I agree with doing club activities is a good idea for students*
12. *I have join a club activity before*
13. *I learned from my experiences*
14. *first I I think that eh I can make friends*
15. *eh and I know about my friends' university and classes*
16. *eh and we help each other*
17. *second I I'm not sure but I think club activity is good for me*
18. *good for my health*
19. *I decided to join a volleyball club*
20. *I constantly move my body*

Aki explained her opinion of club activities. She tried to structure her talk by saying “First...” (Line 14) and “Second...” (Line 17) She said her first reason was “I can make friends” (Line 14) and her second reason was “good for health”. However, these ideas are not clear because she did not use the function phrases to give reasons (e.g. “One reason is...”). What she means by the first reason (“I can make friends”) does not really support the previous phrase (“I learned from my experiences.”) Also, she said, “Second, I am not sure but I think club activity is good for me” (Line 17) but it sounds like a repetition of her opinion rather than giving another reason.

Another recording was made to understand the development of the quality in monologues. The next section shows the students’ performance in Lesson 14.

Recording in Lesson 14 (Momo)

21. *In my opinion learning English is important for me*
22. *I'm not sure but I think ...eh... actually English is used all over the world*
23. *so if I go abroad ..I go abroad I could .. I can speak only English but I can communicate with these people in there*
24. *And I'm not sure but I think ..making friends.. making foreign friends is good way to improve my English skill*
25. *Personally speaking I think listen in..in fluently English is good way to improve my English skill*
26. *so I have a half friend and she can speak English very well*
27. *so when I meet her she she speaks very in fluently English and I listen her English*
28. *eh ..my ear improve.. my ear can ..can..listen English and*

In Lesson 14, Momo often used function phrases more frequently compared to her performance in Lesson 3 (e.g. “In my opinion,...” “I’m not sure but I think...” “Personally speaking I think...”) Momo was able to use a variety of phrases to give opinions. There were three questions when they recorded their performances. Momo answered each question by using opinion function phrases. On Line 21, she gave her opinion in answer to the question “Do you think learning English is

important for you?” On Line 22 and 23, she gave her opinion in answer to the question “Do you think study abroad is a good idea for university students?” On Line 24 to 28, she answered the question “What are other ways to improve your English skills?”

In spite of the variety of usages of opinion functions, Momo did not use reason functions or example functions. This might be because there might have been too many questions when the students talked for two minutes. Therefore, Momo might have felt that finishing all the questions first might be more important than elaborating on one topic more in depth.

Recording in Lesson 14 (Aki)

29. *In my opinion learning English is important for me*
30. *One reason is English English is very useful language*
31. *So I can communicate with many foreign people and learn*
32. *Another reason is I can learn other culture*
33. *I know other culture's good points and bad points and i can know Japanese culture's good points and bad points*
34. *Personally speaking I think studying abroad is good idea for university students*
35. *It's mainly because university students have long free time so ..we can so they are use.. they should use ..so use..that time*
36. *eh.. In my opinion ..good.. talking with foreign people is good way to improve in English skills*
37. *I'm not sure but I think*

Aki stated her opinions clearly by using a variety of function phrases to give opinions: “In my opinion” (Line 29, 36), “Personally speaking I think” (Line 34), “I’m not sure but I think” (Line 37). Aki gave two reasons why English is important for her. One reason is to be able to communicate with many foreigners (Line 30 & 31) and another reason is to be able to understand cultural differences (Line 32 & 33).

Aki was relatively successful at supporting her ideas by giving two reasons, which sounded more coherent. However, to answer the question “Do you think study abroad is a good idea for university students?”, she was a bit too brief in giving only one reason. To answer the question “What are other ways to improve your English skills?”, Aki gave just her opinion because of the time limit. Table 3 shows the comparison of their use of function phrases.

Table 3. Students' Use of Function Phrases During the 3/2/1 tasks

	Lesson 3		Lesson 14	
	Momo	Aki	Momo	Aki
Opinion				
● <i>In my opinion</i>	0	0	1	2
● <i>Personally speaking I think</i>	0	0	1	1
● <i>I am not sure but I think</i>	0	0	2	1
Reasons				
● <i>It's mainly because</i>	0	0	0	1
● <i>One reason is</i>	0	0	0	1
● <i>Another reason is</i>	0	0	0	1
Examples				
● <i>For example</i>	0	0	0	0
● <i>One example is</i>	0	0	0	0
● <i>Another example is</i>	0	0	0	0
Possibility				
● <i>If</i>	0	0	1	0

In summary, compared to the first recording, there are two changes in students monologue speeches. First, students used function phrases more frequently to state their opinions. In the first recording (Lesson 3), there was not much variety to state opinion such as “I think.” However, in the last recoding (Lesson 14), students were able to use a greater variety of opinion phrases (*In my opinion, Personally speaking*). It might be plausible to say that the peer-check activity helped the students raise awareness to use a variety of phrases. Second, Aki organized and structured her speech coherently using reasons to support her ideas. Giving two different reasons, Aki was able to show the supportive reasons clearly. However, Momo did not use any reason functions. Both of them did not use any example functions, either. It might be because the students focused too much on completing answering all the questions. Therefore, the recorded monologues were essentially “opinion-based” rather than coherently elaborated monologues.

Students' Perceptions of the 3/2/1 Tasks

On the questionnaire, both of the participants answered that they were not good at speaking in the 3/2/1 speaking tasks. This shows that even after the 13 weeks of 3/2/1 training, these students still felt difficulty completing the 3/2/1 tasks. They said that generating ideas was challenging. Another reason mentioned was that shortening their talk as the time is reduced is difficult. Momo wrote, “I cannot speak briefly when it turns shorter minute.”

The students felt that 3/2/1 speaking tasks were difficult because they found three minutes was a long time to keep talking. They tried to accomplish the task goals by using their own strategies. For example, both of the students figured out how to gain time by giving more detailed information. Aki wrote, “I try to speak a lot by giving many reasons and examples. I try to use function phrases. By using them, I can convey my messages more clearly.” During the recording, Aki said “one reason is” and “another reason is” to explain why she thinks studying English is important. Aki’s strategies were shown in the recording. Momo wrote, “If there are two questions, I tried to give two reasons and two examples each.” However, she did not use any examples or reasons in her recorded performance.

Although the participants felt that the 3/2/1 tasks were challenging and they never felt that they were good enough at completing the tasks, they gave some positive comments in the questionnaire. For example, Momo wrote, “Honestly, I was not good at this 3/2/1 tasks. But as

time went by, I found it interesting.” Aki wrote, “I was getting more and more used to the 3/2/1 tasks. I practice speaking a lot. I feel the 3/2/1 tasks help me speak more easily when we had a group discussion later in the class.”

Students’ Perceptions of Teacher-modeled Input

Both of the participants answered in the questionnaire that listening to a teacher’s model example was necessary. In addition, both of them used the teacher’s model passage as a reference for the 3/2/1 tasks. Aki wrote, “When I can see some practical example, it is easier to follow when I do the 3/2/1. I can learn how to use function phrases and what to talk about.” Momo wrote, “Looking at the model-input helped me understand how to organize and how to use the function phrases.” Momo also answered, “Especially when the topic were unfamiliar, I could learn how to give examples by looking at the model example. Also, in the beginning of the semester, I did not know how to and when to use function phrases. I can learn from the model passage.”

Students’ Perceptions of Peer-check

Both of the participants also answered that the pair-check was effective. Aki wrote, “I can learn how to use function phrases from peers by checking my friends.” Momo wrote, “I can clearly understand which function phrases I did not use.” She also wrote “Sometimes, my partner gave me feedback that I could have used the function at that point. I feel that I would be more careful next time.”

The students see peer-checking in two different ways. First, from a listener’s point of view, it is a good opportunity to learn from their peers. As Aki said, students could learn how to use function phrases by monitoring the speaker more closely. Without the peer-check, listeners might not pay attention to their speaker very much. Second, from a speaker’s point of view, peer-checking can be a good way to receive feedback from their listener. As Momo said, she learned some appropriate ways to use the function phrases from her listener. By receiving feedback each time, a speaker could understand the strong and weak points of their function usages.

CONCLUSION

This case study explored how students develop the organization of their monologues by receiving pedagogical intervention. Analysis of speech transcription suggested that 1) students used a greater variety of phrases when stating opinions, and 2) One student (Aki) gave more detailed information in her speeches in Lesson 14 compared to in Lesson 3. By using reason phrases, it became easier to follow the students’ ideas. Function phrases were not really used when the students recorded their monologues in Lesson 3. In Ogawa (2016), students who received pedagogical intervention used a variety of function phrases more than students who did not receive the treatment. This case study also showed that students used a variety of function phrases. The current study also supports the previous study.

It is worth noting that students perceived that form-focused pedagogical intervention positively helped them improve their speaking skills. Both students answered that these pedagogical interventions were necessary to achieve the task goal more effectively. For example, they said that the teacher-modeled passage was helpful to learn not only what to talk about but also how to organize their speeches by using the function phrases. Students also perceived the peer-check activity positively as they were pushed to use a variety of function phrases. They thought that peer-check activities were helpful in times both when they were listener and when they were speaker.

On the questionnaire, the students answered that they tried to use more reasons and example phrases to organize their speeches better during the regular 3/2/1 training. However, their

strategies did not show in their recording performances in Lesson 14. Momo in particular used neither reason nor example phrases. One possible reason might be the time given for the task. There might be too many questions for the given number of minutes, which might have made students feel that they need to finish their opinions on all the questions. Therefore, students' speeches were more opinion-based without much elaboration. For a future study, it might be more revealing if students were given only one question and encouraged to elaborate on their answers.

There are some limitations of this study. First, this is a case study with only two participants. The findings of the study cannot be generalized. Second, there were no comparison groups. There is a high probability that being monitored by a peer during the 3/2/1 training phrases could help the students use a larger variety of phrases. To understand more clearly to what extent form-focused intervention can be useful to help students develop their monologues, it would be necessary to contrast them with another group of students who do not receive pedagogical intervention.

In spite of these limitations, there are the following pedagogical implications. First, 3/2/1 tasks can be used to incorporate target forms (e.g. function phrases). 3/2/1 tasks are generally used to improve speaking fluency. As previous researchers already found, 3/2/1 tasks are effective at improving speaking fluency; by repeating the same talk in a shrinking time condition, the students will become more fluent speakers (e.g. De Jong & Perfetti, 2011). However, by having an additional push to focus on form, students could possibly improve their acquisition of "form." Indeed, students used more variety of opinion function phrases in Lesson 14. This is related to what Ellis (2016) mentions about "task-repetition." By repeating the target linguistic features in a communicative task several times, students can acquire the target form. 3/2/1 tasks can be a perfect setting to allow students to repeat content.

Second, showing a passage with underlined phrases can be useful when students learn what to talk about and how to use the target linguistic features. As students reported, they understand how to use function phrases from reading the passage. However, as Lee and Huang (2008) suggest, using only text enhancement does not guarantee that students can actually notice and use the target phrases. Therefore, being monitored by a peer is effective at pushing students to practice the target forms more.

From teachers' perspectives, the 3/2/1 tasks are easy to implement, partly because there are no materials and they are completely student-centered. However, I believe that there are many ways for teachers to assist students' development of their oral performance, such as giving text-enhancement of a teacher-modeled passage or providing peer-check intervention. Giving additional pedagogical intervention might maximize students' speaking development not only in fluency but also in quality. For future studies, I hope more projects may be conducted to understand how to maximize students' oral development through the 3/2/1 tasks in the program.

REFERENCES

- Boers, F. (2014). A Reappraisal of the 4/3/2 Activity. *RELC Journal*, 45, 221-235.
- De Jong, N., & Perfetti, C. A. (2011). Fluency training in the ESL classroom: An experimental study of fluency development and proceduralization. *Language Learning*, 61(2), 533-568. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9922.2010.00620.x.
- Ellis, R. (2016). Focus on form: A critical review. *Language Teaching Research*, 20(3), 405-428. doi:10.1177/1362168816628627.
- Hurling, S. (2012). Introduction to EDC. *New Directions in Teaching and Learning English Discussion*, 1, 1.2-1.9.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1989). Improving speaking fluency. *System*, 17, 377-384. doi:10.1016/0346-251X(89)90010-9.

- Thai, C., & Boers, F. (2015). Repeating a monologue under increasing time pressure: effects on fluency, complexity, and accuracy. *TESOL Quarterly*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1002/tesq.232.
- Ogawa, C. (2016). Formulaic language and the 3/2/1 fluency activity: Scaffolding L2 fluency through the development of linguistic complexity. *New Directions in Teaching and Learning English Discussion*, 4, 243-249.
- Lee, S., & Huang, H. (2008). Visual input enhancement and grammar learning: A meta-analytic review. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 30(3), 307-331. doi:10.1017/S0272263108080479.

APPENDIX A – Teacher-led Model Passage and Planning (Week 12)

Teacher-model passage (Lesson 12)

Topic: *1) What makes you happy? What made you happy when you were younger?*

In my opinion, eating sweets makes me happy. **It is mainly because** sweets give me more energy, especially, Japanese sweets. **For instance**, *Daifuku* is my favorite sweet. **If** I have a long holiday, I would visit Kyoto to eat a lot of *daifuku* and nice green tea sweets.

Personally speaking, I think, watching baseball makes me happy. **It is mainly because** many baseball players make an effort to win. **For example**, I like watching high school baseball. **If** I have time in summer, I want to go to *Koshien* to watch high school baseball. Then, I feel happy. When I was younger, reading comics made me happy. **One example is** “*Hanayori dango*.” **It is because** when I read manga, I felt so excited because the stories are very enjoyable.

APPENDIX B – Pair Check Card (Week 12)

	3 minutes	2 minutes	1 minute
Opinion ● In my opinion ● Personally speaking, I think ● I am not sure but I think			
Reason ● It's (mainly/ partly) because ● One reason is ● Another reason is			
Example ● For example/ For instance ● One/ Another example is...			
Possibility ● If			