

# **“The New Face of English” - A Reflective Analysis of the Oral 1 (a/b) Course**

**Douglas PARKIN**

## **1. Abstract**

The need for change to the current Japanese English education system is widely accepted by the government, educators, and by the general public throughout Japan. The purpose of this paper is to see if the new Oral 1 course methods are successful in preparing our education students, to meet the growing need for better English education, in our school and in this country. The methods used in the new Oral 1 course utilize three core principles of “Active Learning”, “ICT” (Information and Communications Technology), and “Reflection”. The methods we have used in this course have demonstrated varying degrees of growth in grammar skills, but have resulted in extreme growth in English communication/expression skills by each of our students. The Oral 1 course has clearly shown itself to be a success, by providing students with cognitively demanding challenges which demand output oriented communicative results.

## **2. Introduction**

“The New Face of English” in Yamaguchi Gakugei University is one where courses like Oral 1 will be used to successfully prepare our education students, to meet the growing demands for better English education in elementary, junior, and senior high schools. To accomplish such a task, we have designed a course where “Active Learning”, “ICT”, and student “Reflection” is used by teachers to guide students to take control of their own growth, as individuals and as future educators.

### **1) Active Learning**

“Active learning is a process whereby students engage in activities, such as reading, writing, discussion, or problem solving that promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class content.” (“Active Learning”, 2016) English education in Japan has relied on reading, writing, and relatively recently listening skills as the only means to educate students. It is now time that we utilize methods that promote students taking an active part in the English learning process, and to start using the language as a means to express their thoughts and emotions. Output oriented activities where students analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information for the purpose of presenting their findings to others, is one of the key methods in question with this paper. The real question is: Does “Active Learning” improve English education learning for

students in an oral communication class?

## **2) ICT**

As time progresses so too does technology, and we as educators need to identify and accept the need for ICT to become part of the future landscape of education. As part of the Oral 1 course we believe that ICT needs to be incorporated to improve the learning of English, and to connect it pragmatically to the world. Much research has been devoted towards analyzing the use of ICT as a contributing factor in language acquisition. One paper devoted to such research stated “To equip students to be literate life long learners and global citizens of the 21st century we must successfully integrate ICT into both the English curriculum and English pedagogical practice.” (English Teachers Association of NSW, 2011) Throughout the Oral 1 course we have utilized ICT in varying degrees, and in this paper we will discuss how well it has contributed to the growth of our students’ skill sets.

## **3) Reflection**

Reflection as it pertains to pedagogy, is an essential tool that educators need to utilize in order to intrinsically promote growth within our students. In a paper published within the Harvard Business School they stated:

Results from our studies consistently show a significant increase in the ability to successfully complete a task when individuals are given the chance to couple some initial experience with a deliberate effort to articulate and codify the key lessons learned from such experience.

(Di Stefano, Gino, Pisano, Staats, 2016, pp. 27)

The study showed that experience coupled with reflection is a key component to self growth and to improved successes in any given task. The study also quoted Confucius as saying “By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third, by experience, which is the bitterest.” (Di Stefano, Gino, Pisano, Staats, 2016, pp. 1) Over 2500 years ago Confucius knew that reflection was a valuable tool to learning. Within this paper we will review the effectiveness of reflection as a tool for our Oral 1 students, to understand past performances and to improve on their abilities to accomplish future tasks.

It is through the use of the three principles of “Active Learning”, “ICT”, and “Reflection” that we have created the Oral 1 course and have used materials and methods to best facilitate the application of such theories. We chose these pedagogical principals based on personal experiences and research that we have acquired through the years, that strongly indicate when applied correctly, that our students should receive the best possible education as learners of English a second language and as future educators of the language.

### 3. Materials and Methods

The Oral 1 course is given in the spring term as Oral 1a and in the fall term as Oral 1b. During the writing of this paper the Oral 1a portion is finished but the Oral 1b portion still needs the final exam and a few other tasks to be completed over the next three weeks. In this section we will list the materials and methods used as per the “Evaluation Methodology” listed in Table 1 and Table 2, required materials needed by the students, plus other items used within the course.

#### 1) Oral 1a

Table 1

*Oral 1a Evaluation Methodology*

<b>Prepared</b> Notebooks Dictionaries Attitude etc 10pts	Tell Me More 10pts	QC Card 10 pts	Self Introductions 10pts	Self Intro Reflections 5pts	Spring Term Final Test 45pts	Final Test Reflections 10pts
---	-----------------------	-------------------	--------------------------------	-----------------------------------	------------------------------------	------------------------------------

Table 1 lists the specific methods of evaluation used for the spring term of Oral 1a. The total of the evaluations is 100 points or 100% of the course term mark. The materials required by each student closely mirror the contents of the “Prepared” section in Table 1 above. The students are required to bring with them to each class inclusive and in addition to the items listed above (a) a *Pathways* (Fettig, Najafi, Folse, 2014) textbook; (b) a notebook with a “Words are Power” section inside; (c) a “QC (Question Crazy) Card”; (d) a “QC Mini” notebook; and (e) a dictionary.


#### (1) Pathways Textbook

The students are required to purchase a National Geographic *Pathways* textbook to use within the Oral 1 classes. The textbook uses interesting topics to encourage active learning to be utilized by students in an enjoyable manner. The title of the book includes the terms listening, speaking, and critical thinking. Critical thinking and cognitively demanding tasks are what we believe can motivate students to use English as a means to express their thoughts. Traditionally, English has been used merely for the purpose of passing written university entrance tests, devoid of students’ interests and personal ideas. For Oral 1a, we have taken the *Pathways* textbook and used the first 4 units to create a cognitively demanding output oriented test for our students, which as listed in Table 1 is 45 points towards their final grade.


## (2) Spring Term Final Test

Figure 1

Oral 1a Spring Term Final Test (Modified Shortened Version)




# Oral 1a Final Presentations!



**Topics**



- A) Unit 1 - Same and Different - Compare and contrast how things are the same and how they are different from your generation to older generations like your parents, grandparents and maybe beyond. Examples could be diet, education, sports, medicine, entertainment, technology, etc.
- B) Unit 2 - Taking Risks – Create your own risk adventure based on reality but may be mixed with fiction. Use research and present facts qualitatively and quantitatively. Examples may be volcano surfing, swimming with killer whales, going to Mars etc. Think about how to get to your adventure, how long it will be, and any other details an adventure may have.
- C) Unit 3 - Enjoy the Ride! – Research and create a presentation on how transportation has changed through the ages. Also, predict how it will be in the future! Use a minimum of two countries, Japan plus one or more foreign countries.
- D) Unit 4 – Unusual Destinations – Create a slideshow trivia quiz and presentation on the most amazing travel spots on the planet. Ask viewers to predict what is happening or will happen in your slides. Examples are actions by people, season, temperature, climate, etc. Think about amazing locations, festivals, and events around the world. Examples can be Easter Island, Iceland, Alaska, Egypt, etc.

*Remember:* I think/feel!! Your opinion is very important!



1. You must use Microsoft Office PowerPoint for your presentation. You must have at least 15 slides! You may use almost anything in your presentation like YouTube (no videos longer than 30 seconds), Google Maps, costumes, etc.
2. Presentations are a minimum of 10 minutes with about 5 minutes at the end for questions. All groups are responsible for at least 3 questions during the 3 weeks of testing. 10% of grade.
3. No reading is allowed but you may use your slide show and paper to look at when needed. You must always look at your audience when speaking. If you read you will be stopped!
4. Natural English Only - No Katakana English is allowed.
5. If you are not ready for your presentation and do not have a good reason such as being sick or an emergency event, then your group will receive a minus 20% and will come back again.
6. You have to write your own sentences. Don't copy sentences from the Internet or books! That is called plagiarism.
7. You have to hand in your rough draft on **June 21<sup>st</sup>**. Your rough draft must be written in Microsoft Office Word on computer and handed in using a USB flash memory stick.
8. Judging will be Natural English 20%, Use of Multimedia 10%, Professional 15%, Content Organization 15%, Creative and Interesting 20%, 3 Questions to other groups 10%, Level of English used 10%.

*Final Notes:* Make sure you choose information that is interesting for you!! If not, we will find it boring just like you! Good luck everyone and please have fun teaching all of us something NEW that you have learned!



# The Journey




Figure 1 is a one page condensed version of the actual two page test given to students, to be completed by the end of July. The actual test has twice as many topics used, which were taken from the first 4 units of the textbook. The purpose of the test is to get the students to utilize all of their English skills, as well as several other skills, in an active learning environment. The end goal is a presentation which they give in pairs, in front of the rest of their class. ICT is an integral part of the learning process, where the students use it to conduct research and to create PowerPoint slide shows, which are essential to their presentations. In addition, students also use microphones, a projector, as well as a fully integrated multimedia centre, as part of their presentations. The test is also unique in that each group watching must ask questions to the presenting groups, as well as judge them based on a standardized evaluation form.

### (3) Notebook

As part of the course, students are required to again take an active part in the learning process, by bringing a notebook with them to record new vocabulary words and any other important items. New words are to be entered into their “Words are Power” section in their notebooks, along with a translation in Japanese, as well as an example sentence in English for better understanding of the usage of the new vocabulary.

### (4) QC Card

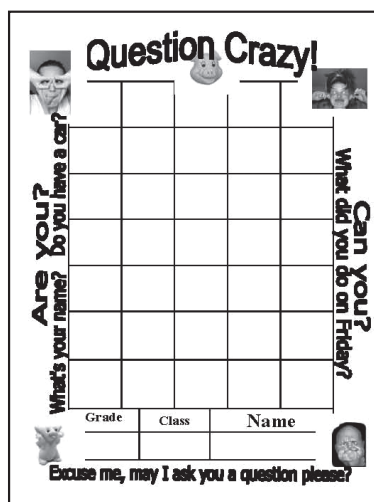
Figure 2 is a copy of the “QC Card” which Parkin (2015) explained that:

this little card has 35 small boxes on it in which a small stamp or a signature can be used to fill it. The QC card system works like this:

- a) A student goes up to any teacher and says: “Excuse me, may I ask you a question please?”
- b) If the teacher says “OK” or “Sure”, then the student proceeds to ask a question in English to the teacher.
- c) The teacher will answer the question and decide how many points the question deserves. 1 point is given for an easy question, 2 points for a medium level question, and 3 points are given for a high level question. (102)

Figure 2

QC Card (Question Crazy Card)



Students are required to complete at least one card with 35 points for Oral 1a and another

card for Oral 1b. This card system is a great active learning tool which lets students control which staff member they would like to go to, the question they want to ask, and when they want to ask it. The system is great at building confidence for the students and relationships with the university staff members, all being built using the language of English.

#### **(5) QC Mini**

The “QC Mini” is actually the “Question Crazy Card Mini Notebook”. The notebook is a pocket sized notebook, which is used by students to create an extensive list of questions, that are to be used in conjunction with their QC cards. The QC Mini notebook is a great tool for building new vocabulary, better grammar skills, and for helping Oral 1 students with their class work of getting 35 QC card points.

#### **(6) Dictionary**

As part of the Oral 1 course, students are required to have a dictionary, and hopefully they use a paper one. The explanation given to students is that they could not play a game of soccer without a ball, and if they hope to learn English then a dictionary is the only way they can play. One opinion regarding the use of a paper dictionary, is that it makes the learning process more meaningful. This opinion is based on the belief that students must work harder to obtain their new information, and therefore it will be stored in longer term memory, perhaps in part based on the appreciation of the efforts made. Regardless of the type of dictionary used, it is universally recognized as an essential tool in the learning process of second language acquisition.

#### **(7) Attitude**

Attitude is listed as part of the 10 points students receive for being prepared for class. Although attitude may seem obvious to most, it is essential to the active learning process, especially in second language acquisition. Learning English requires of students to lose their traditional Japanese forms of humility, and to open up with an attitude of “Yes I can!” Without an open mind and a positive attitude, our students in Oral 1 cannot improve their own English skills, and will never be able to pass on and properly develop the skills of their own students in the future.

#### **(8) Self Introductions**

Students are required for 10 points of their Oral 1a grades, to give roughly a one minute introduction of themselves to the class. Of course they must use only English, but they may use any items they want to, in order to give their introductions. Some students use PowerPoint to show pictures and to organize their thoughts, some bring various personal items, and others

simply talk. All students are required to use a microphone while speaking in a clear loud voice, and they must fully utilize all of their natural English speaking skills. Even though the introductions are only a required one minute long, many students use several more minutes to demonstrate their eagerness to do a great job. It is this type of active attitude that we encourage and reward in our course.

### (9) Reflections

Reflections are an integral part of the Oral 1 course, for they are used twice within the Oral 1a spring term session. The first reflection assignment is 5 points and it is given to students right after they finish their self introductions. Figure 3 is a modified version of the second reflection sheet, which is 10 points of their grade. This sheet is to be given by the end of the spring term in August.

Figure 3

*Final Test Reflections Sheet (Modified Version)*




<h1>Presentation Reflections - 2</h1>		
Item to Evaluate	Score 1-10	Explain - Comments
Overall performance		
Confidence		
Connection to Audience		
Grammar		
Pronunciation		
Feeling		
Information you Gave to Audience		
Answers you Gave to Questions		
Voice - Volume and Clearness		
Did you prepare enough?		
Was your Practise Time enough?		



Figure 3 (Cont'd)

*Final Test Reflections Sheet (Modified Version)*


Compare your second presentation with your first one. How do you think you have changed? What other changes would you like to make for your future presentations? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

How have you changed your attitude toward speaking English since you started this course in April? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

What would you like to learn in Oral 1b? Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please Note: Attach more paper to this sheet if you want to say more.



**(10) Tell Me More**

As part of the utilization of ICT in language acquisition, we have incorporated the use of an English language learning software called TELL ME MORE Education v7 (Auralog, 2010). Although the software ceased being produced by the Auralog company in 2013, it is still a great learning tool for our students, that has been used by the university for seven years now and by the Oral 1 course for almost one year. Figure 4 is a copy of the software's logo that can still be found on some websites, but not on the original Auralog company site, which no longer exists.

Figure 4

*Auralog Logo for Tell me More*



Figure 5

*Tell Me More Phonics Practise Page*

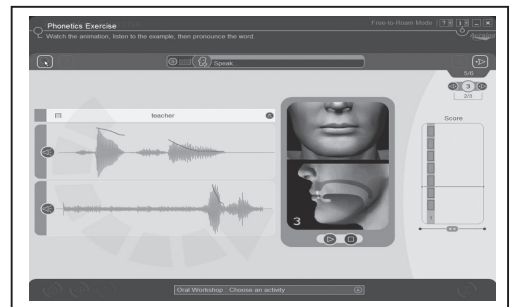


Figure 6

*Tell Me More Dialogue Practise Page*

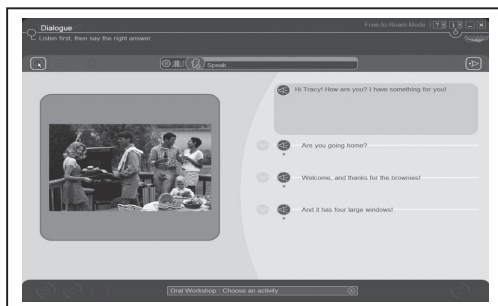


Figure 7

*Tell Me More Training Log for Students*

Tell Me More Communication – Training Log			
Student Name	Class	Student Number	
Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section
Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed
Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken
Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section
Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed
Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken
Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section
Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed
Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken
Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section
Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed
Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken
Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section
Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed
Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken
Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section
Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed
Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken
Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section
Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed
Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken
Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section
Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed
Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken
Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section
Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed
Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken
Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section	Level and Section
Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed	Date Completed
Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken	Time Taken



Figure 5 is a copy of the phonics practise page, where students use headsets with microphones to listen to different forms of pronunciation given by the software, then respond by repeating what they have heard. After the software hears the response by the student then it will score them using grey and green bars. The software also gives example videos of how each pronunciation sound should be produced by use of the mouth.

Figure 6 is a copy of the dialogue practise page, where students are given a dialogue to listen to and are to choose from three possible answers, in which to give their spoken response. The software listens for the correct response, and if the student has chosen the wrong answer then a red highlight will be given, indicating a mistake has been made. If the students use wrong pronunciation or give a complete wrong answer, then no highlight will be made. If the student gives a correct answer then a green highlight will be given, and the software will proceed to the next dialogue page.

Figure 7 is a copy of the training log that is given to each student, in which they must complete at least 24 sections for Oral 1a and 24 more sections for Oral 1b. Each section indicates the level chosen from 6 possible levels, ranging from “Complete Beginner” to “Business Expert”. Each level has several dialogue sections to choose from, making 24 sections on the training log very easy to fill. The time goal for any given section is five minutes or shorter. If students take too long in any given section, then they are encouraged to repeat that section until they have an acceptable time limit.

#### **(11) Items in addition to Required and Evaluation Methods used in Oral 1a**

##### **a) Open Campus**

Although open campus events for the school are not listed as part of the Oral 1 curriculum, they still are an important part to our students’ education. Students are encouraged to participate in such events, and are given the chance to assist us teachers in performing demonstration classes for possible future students to the university. It is in these classes that Oral 1 students use English to assist high school students, in performing the tasks they are given. There were three such events during 2016 in which our students participated in, and each was a great success for our Oral 1 students and for the future of the school.

##### **b) VELC (Visualizing English Language Competency) Test**


The VELC test is a level evaluation test that was given to each Oral 1 student at the end of the spring term. The test will also be given upon the completion of the fall term. VELC “was developed for the purpose of estimating test-takers’ proficiency levels on vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening skills, and placing Japanese university students into their

appropriate level.” (Kumazawa, Shizuka, Mochizuki, Mizumoto, 2016, pp.1) The test is used in the Oral 1 course to first give a base line level evaluation of each student in the first term, then to see how much improvement in their English skills have occurred after taking the course for an additional term.


### c) Motivation Handout

Figure 8

*Motivation Handout Given to Students*



# Motivation!



**Do you want to be:**

A) An OK Teacher    B) A Good Teacher    Or    C) A Great Teacher!


To be successful you need many things, but above all you need Motivation matched with a Desire to succeed.

1. Extrinsic Motivation – From Outside – People giving you compliments, money, smiles, high fives!
2. Intrinsic Motivation – From Inside – You motivate yourself with a desire to become better, stronger, matched with a will to succeed. Each small success motivates you from the inside to take the next step and face your next challenge.

**Carpe Diem – Seize the Day! Make this day and every day from now Special and Meaningful for your life!**

**Start Today!**

1. Simply do what your teachers ask you to do.
2. Motivate yourself.      Then ...
3. Go to the next level - Create and do more than you were asked to do!!



**Power Words for You Today Tomorrow and Always!**

Motivation - Carpe Diem - Opportunity - Positive Attitude - Respect - Confidence - Creativity  
 Trust - Team Work - Desire - Passion - Potential - Never Give Up - Think - Learn - Honesty  
 Believe - Focus - Purpose - Understand - Proud - Appreciate - Care - Empathy - Question - Silence  
 Relax - Take a Break - Breathe - Your Time

This is a list of some words that will help you to focus on what is important, as well as what you need to do to become a Great Teacher who will eventually change the lives of many students!  
 Good Luck – Have Fun – and Work Hard!

Sincerely,

Mr. Parkin and Mr. Iwanaka.

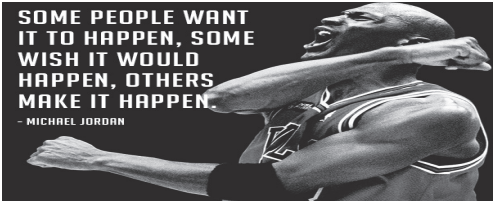


Figure 8 is the motivational handout that we gave to our students in May. The purpose of the handout was of course to motivate the students, but it was also used to show them that learning in a foreign language can be much more valuable than just studying new words and grammar in order to take tests. The purpose of this course is to touch the minds and hearts of our students using English, and to allow them to express those emotions and thoughts in the same language!

#### **d) English Lunch**

English lunch is not listed as part of the curriculum for the Oral 1 course, but it is another essential method we have implemented for our students to have more opportunities to use English in an open output oriented format. English lunch is held twice a week during lunch time on Tuesdays and Fridays, where students from all grades, plus various staff members and teachers, join together to discuss a variety of issues and topics in a positive fun-filled environment. English lunch is mandatory once a week for Oral 1 students, but twice a week is encouraged.

## **2) Oral 1b**

**Table 2**

### *Oral 1b Evaluation Methodology*

In Class Performance 10 pts	Tell Me More 10pts	QC Card 10 pts	1 Minute Speech 10 pts	1 Minute Speech Reflections 5pts	OPP 15 pts	2nd Term Final Test 30pts	Final Test and Term Reflections 10pts
--------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------	------------------------------	--

Table 2 lists the methods of evaluation used for the fall term of Oral 1b. Items such as Tell Me More, QC Cards, and In Class Performance, are almost the same as the Oral 1a course, so they will not be mentioned in this section. We will however list methods and materials that were different in the Oral 1b course.

#### **(1) 1 Minute Speech**

Each student is required to prepare using any means they wish, a one minute speech of their choosing, which they will present in front of their class. Students are again required to use a microphone and of course well written and spoken English to give their speeches. Judging of their performances are done by their peers, themselves, and by the course instructors.

#### **(2) Reflections**

Reflections as indicated in the Oral 1a section, are essential for student growth as


individuals and as future teachers. Reflections for Oral 1b are a 1 minute speech reflection for 5 points and a final test and term reflection for 10 points. The two reflections are an integral way for students to actively critique their own growth or lack thereof, during the Oral 1b course but also over the entire school year.

### (3) OPP (Oral Presentation and Performance)



OPP is an event which took place in Hiroshima on December 10th, 2016. For evaluation purposes, the event is 15 points of the term grade. The OPP policy is “No competition .. Enjoy using English .. Respect each other and study from others .. No restrictions on presentation styles and contents”. (Iwai, 2015) The OPP event is a truly unique and valuable opportunity for students from several universities, to showcase their English creations in either a presentation or a performance format, without having to worry about being judged.

Figure 9

*OPP Handout Given to Students (Modified Version) (Parkin, in press)*



# Oral Presentation and Performance





**When:** December 11th (leaving at 7:30am coming back at 6:00 pm)

**Where:** Hiroshima International University, Kure Campus

**How to get there:** We will be taking a bus from Gakugei!

**How long:** One day in total but performance/presentation will be 20 min long






**What to do:** We have not decided yet but we can do almost anything. We teachers have spoken and a few ideas have been discussed. We will discuss these ideas in class and if anyone has any other ideas then please give them as soon as you can. Ideas include putting on a performance similar to the TV show Glee. We could start by having a bit of singing and dancing at the beginning then go into performing a play or scenes from movies or other famous productions. We could end the production with another song and dance and maybe leave the audience with a final message. Probably we need to think of a main theme to guide us and our performance/presentation.

**Purpose:** The purpose for participating in this event is of course to strengthen English skills but moreover it is to have this class unite together under a single goal to strengthen and develop new team work skills as students and as future teachers!

We truly hope you will have an unforgettable time which provides you with amazing memories and new skills for your futures.

Sincerely,

Mr. Parkin and Mr. Iwanaka.

#### **(4) 2nd Term Final Test**

The final test for the 2nd term is also taken from the *Pathways* textbook, however it is the final 4 units of the book which are used as the focus for the test questions. The test also differs from the Oral 1a final in that the students are placed in groups of three, stressing even more so the importance of teamwork as an essential element to success. Active learning, ICT, and reflective processing are all key elements to successfully doing the final Oral 1 presentation test. The questions in the Oral 1b test are much more cognitively challenging, which demands of the students more creativity and more focussed motivation.

#### **4. Results**

In the introduction section, it stated that the purpose of this paper was to examine the effectiveness of the new Oral 1 course methods, in preparing our students to meet the growing need for better English education. The question in point, is how to quantitatively and qualitatively measure “effectiveness” as it pertains to second language acquisition. One of the quantitative tools utilized in this course was the VELC test. Results showed that Oral 1 students had varying levels of proficiency, with some students displaying high levels of ability. The real results will be shown when the final VELC test is administered at the end of this term. If students show improvement from the first test, then of course this will indicate a success for the course.

Other means for measuring quantitative effectiveness of the Oral 1 course are grade averages. The class average of 17 students was 86% after the completion of Oral 1a. Based on initial motivation levels shown by the students in April, such a high grade average is a great success. Motivation levels as a means for measurement, in part could be considered to be only qualitative. However basing such measurement on output by students in areas like completing homework, showing up to class and on time, being ready to present on time for tests, coming to teachers for help, and showing up for English lunch, are actual quantitative measures we use to measure motivation. Motivation levels were clearly much stronger in the latter half of the Oral 1a course, and continued to strengthen substantially throughout the Oral 1b course for most students.

Qualitative measures like attitude are carefully considered for each student throughout the course. Attitudes are measured mostly on social interactivity between students, and between students and teachers. Greeting and communicating using eye contact, a clear loud voice, and positive body stature, are effective ways to measure attitude. Attitudes of the students measured by such factors showed a great and constant improvement throughout the Oral 1a course, and again continue to strengthen in the Oral 1b course.

Activities such as 1 minute presentations, final presentation tests, and the OPP event in Hiroshima, qualitatively and in ways quantitatively indicated an increased ability by every student with regards to natural English language acquisition. Increased positive attitudes matched with motivation, resulted in students speaking clearer, using better grammar and pronunciation, while more effectively delivering information to their intended target audiences. The culminating activity which truly displayed “class” improvement, was during the OPP event, when our students presented a 20 minute performance of a pilot episode from the American TV show *Glee*. The performance included 4 songs, 10 scenes, along with dancing by all members. The results were conclusive, in that they worked together as a group, prepared diligently for the event, and completed all elements of their performance on December 10th, 2016 in Kure, Hiroshima.

Considering the effectiveness of the methods used in the Oral 1 course, which used the three core principles of active learning, ICT, and reflection, it is impossible to indicate exactly quantitatively the effect of each principle, but it is clear to us that each have contributed greatly to the success of the course. New English educational needs require new methods, materials, and pedagogical principals, and we feel very strongly that the Oral 1 course fulfills each of those requirements. Great improvements shown in our students’ English skills, are strong indicators that the new Oral 1 course is very effective in meeting new English educational needs, as well as helping to produce strong future educators of the language.

## **5. Discussion**

### **1) Active Learning**

Active learning has been an ongoing narrative used by educators and educational administrators over the past few years, to describe improved methods of educating students. It has become a well accepted fact that change is needed, and that students need to become more active in their own educations. Japan’s *Ministry of Education* has stated:

schools should verify and adopt an evaluation method, etc. which covers various aspects including students’ motivation and attitude for active learning. This can be achieved by focusing on students’ interest, motivation and attitude towards communication, which all lead to active learning. (MEXT, 2014)

This quote was taken from a MEXT article on English education reform. We could not agree more with the statements in the quote, and have consciously made efforts to include active learning in almost every method and material used in the Oral 1 course. Giving our students greater control and responsibility over their education, has resulted in vast

improvements in a variety of skill sets necessary for English language acquisition.

## **2) Skill Sets**

The skill sets required by our students for proper English language acquisition are grammar, vocabulary, listening, and natural English. Natural English refers to the elements of intonation, pronunciation, rhythm, gesture, speed, and volume, and how students use each element to communicate naturally to others. Each student brings a different set of skills with them to the Oral 1 course, but through proper education a uniformity of skill sets should naturally occur between students as they complete each term of the course. We have found that through active learning and team oriented activities, that students quickly educate one another using their unique skills and interests. We have also found that through the use of the ICT tool *Tell Me More*, that students' Natural English skill sets have improved, due to having an active means to practise whenever they have free time. Improving skill sets takes time and opportunity, and we believe that the Oral 1 course has provided the means while the students have actively chosen to provide the time.

## **3) Organizational Dynamics**

Organizational dynamics in context of the Oral 1 course, refers to how students are organized by teachers and by themselves, and the sociological outcomes that result in terms of academic performance. One minute introduction/speech tests are of course done on an individual basis, however as the students are placed in pairs or in groups, the shift in dynamics clearly result in changes in academic success for many students. Students who are normally quiet, reserved, and lacking in self-confidence, showed in our Oral 1 course when grouped with others, that they could produce much higher levels of English communicative proficiencies. For the most part, we found that given the proper active learning activity matched with the appropriate pair or group dynamic, that improved motivation, attitude, creativity, and English fluency, were often the results for nearly every student.

## **4) Motivation - Confidence - Attitude**

Motivation, confidence, and attitude are all essential elements in acquiring a second language, especially in a classroom in Japan. The classroom culture in Japan has typically been one where students have been told exactly what to do by teachers, regarding every aspect of their education. Output oriented active learning lessons have only recently become more popular, causing a shift in the "normal" atmosphere of classes in Japanese schools. As English language education shifts to output oriented curriculums, students must also shift their attitudes towards speaking openly in front of others, especially in a foreign language. As future educators, especially our junior/senior high school English teachers' course students,



they will have to instill in their students how to communicate effectively. All students tend to be shy when they first meet their English Oral communication teachers, but in Oral 1 we have designed a course which demands of our students an attitude of trying, making mistakes, having confidence in their own abilities, and being motivated to fill their learning gaps while acquiring the skills they need to become stronger.

In the final stages of the Oral 1b course, we are happy to say that many of the seemingly poor attitudes displayed in April during the Oral 1a course, have greatly improved. We have also noticed students more motivated in groups as they work much more productively together, while individually they exude confidence where fear and shyness once stood.

## **5) Feedback/Evaluation**

Feedback and evaluation are feared by most people, especially by students. Nothing can be more intimidating than when a teacher announces in front of the rest of the class, who scored the worst on a test. Nobody wants to be critiqued openly in front of their peers, when the results are not flattering.

In the Oral 1 class, we utilize feedback and evaluation on a regular basis, for the purpose of real-time understanding and improvement. Nothing is worse in language acquisition than when you have been using the language improper for years, and no one tells you otherwise. This ignorance has a double compounding effect, in that it allows the mistake to continue with the belief that it is correct, while also never letting the correct form be learned. To avoid such situations, we utilize “Peer, Self, and Teacher” feedback/evaluation within our lessons. An example of this practise is when a student finishes their 1 minute speech in Oral 1b; immediately the student will choose a peer to evaluate their performance, based on natural English and various other elements. We have found that the “Peer Judge” often gives a very honest critique, which helps the presenting student to understand and to become stronger. We then ask the presenting student to give their own personal critique, and although usually they are too critical of themselves, they at least base their evaluations on truths that they wish to improve on. We always want evaluations to include both positive and critical elements, so that the presenter walks away with constructive advice about their performance. We teachers find that many of the comments we wish to give are often already said by the students themselves, and in the end we simply give summary statements and recommendations on ways they can improve their skills.

## **6) Class Atmosphere**

The atmosphere in any given class is usually in direct correlation to the academic levels of

the students. The more positive the atmosphere the higher the grades usually are, which is especially true in English oral communication classes. A good atmosphere contrary to many student beliefs, is not one where the students are always laughing and playing together. Such a class usually indicates a lack of self-discipline by the students, and (a lack of) respect for the teacher. Learning should be enjoyable and be built upon positive energy, given by both the students and the teachers.

The class atmosphere in Oral 1a in April seemed to be that of a group of individuals, with vastly different interests and educational goals. Even when put into groups, the students seemed to value their own needs and wants above that of the people they were working with. Through constant exercises involving group work, the atmosphere changed drastically which allowed for personal characters to show, but also for a new positive “class” character to be created. During the preparations for the OPP event, the class atmosphere seemed to really become more positive and much stronger. It was through focusing on a common “class” goal, that the students came together and produced an atmosphere which was much more positive and productive than before. Since OPP, the students have been working on preparations for their final presentation tests. Their recent efforts seem to be much more team oriented, and more productive than in the first term during Oral 1a.

## **6. Acknowledgments**

I am obligated both professionally and respectfully to acknowledge Associate Professor Takahiro Iwanaka as the senior instructor co-teaching the Oral 1 course with me at Yamaguchi Gakugei University. It is with his positive energy and consultation, that we have produced a course which we believe will help to produce fine educators in the field of English as a second language. It is through a united belief that English acquisition should be taught using output oriented activities, utilizing active learning, ICT, and reflection as core principals, that we have produced a course which we are both proud to offer to our students.

## **7. References**

- Active Learning. (2016). Retrieved January 08, 2017, from <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/tsal>
- Auralog. TELL ME MORE Education . Computer software. Vers. V7. N.p., n.d. Web.
- Di Stefano, Giada, Francesca Gino, Gary P. Pisano, and Bradley Staats. “Making Experience Count: The Role of Reflection in Individual Learning.” Harvard Business School Working Paper, No. 14-093, March 2014. (Revised June 2016.)
- English Teachers Association of NSW. (2011). ICTs in English. Retrieved January 9, 2017, from ETA - English Teachers Association of NSW, <http://www.englishteacher.com.au/>

AboutUs/OfficialStatements/ICTsinEnglish.

Fettig, C., Najafi, K., & Folse, K. S. (2014). Pathways. listening, speaking, and critical thinking. Boston, MA: National Geographic Learning.

Iwai, C. (2015). The 7th Oral Presentation & Performance (OPP) Event At Mahoroba Hall, Yasuda Women's University. OPP2015 Event Report, (7), 1-67.

Kumazawa, T., Shizuka, T., Mochizuki, M., & Mizumoto, A. (2016). Validity argument for the VELC Test<sup>®</sup> score interpretations and uses. *Language Testing in Asia*, 6(1). doi:10.1186/s40468-015-0023-3

MEXT : Report on the Future Improvement and Enhancement of English Education (Outline) : Five Recommendations on the English Education Reform Plan Responding to the Rapid Globalization. (2014, September 26). Retrieved from <http://www.mext.go.jp/en/news/topics/detail/1372625.htm>

Parkin, D. R. (in press). Don't Stop Beleivin'. *JACET 中国四国支部研究会—the 8th Oral Presentation & Performance 2016*.

Parkin, D. R. (2015). A Pedagogical Look at Teaching English Oral Communication To Junior and Senior High School Students - When Theory Meets Practise! *Bulletin of Yamaguchi Gakugei University*, (6), 101-119.