Conversation-Based Learning
Because life is not a grammar test

Speaking Improves 50%
Which improves TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS scores 20%

For too long, English education has focused on grammar because grammar is easy to test. Now conversation is easy to test. This fundamentally changes how foreign languages can be taught.

Gunther Breaux
Your students are not clones who need a generic English education.

Most airline pilots are not good English speakers. However, they have their dream job. Only English majors need an English education. Everybody else needs conversation ability in their major. This is now possible.
Now you have a choice.

Grammar-Based English
Tries to prevent 10,000 mistakes, and then measures ability by how many mistakes you make.

Conversation-Based Learning
Is all conversations, conversation tests, and you find and fix your own mistakes.

The rest is details.
Conversation-Based LEARNING

1. **It’s easy.** Students do all the talking. MS Word gives their ability. *Simple.*

2. **You can prove they improved**
   The first test measures their ability, the second test measures their improvement.

3. **You get both: Speaking Ability and TOEIC scores**
   Speaking improves 50%, which improves TOEIC, TOEFL and IELTS scores 20%.

How?

1. **There’s something new under the sun. MS Word can measure speaking ability.**
   *This changes everything.* Language learning can now be conversation based because now conversation is easy to test. It’s that simple.

2. **We use human nature**
   **The Class:** Everybody loves to talk about themselves. **The Test:** What gets tested gets done.

Questions?

1. **What about mistakes?** It’s a conversation class, not a mistakes class.
   The best tennis players in the world make mistakes all the time. They self-correct. Conversation-Based Learning uses self-correction and allows human nature to take it’s course. This is a new century with new technology. Students find and fix their own mistakes.

2. **What about grammar?** It’s a conversation class, not a grammar class.
   Tennis is not judged by golf rules and conversation should not be judged by grammar rules. *All children master speaking without grammar.* They talk a lot about themselves and copy people who are better than them. That’s human nature. That’s this method.

Stop the Insanity

Korean and Japanese middle and high school students score at the top of the world in math and science, and much lower in English speaking ability.

*Why?*
- In math class they have a math book and a math test.
- In science class they have a science book and a science test.
- In speaking class they have a grammar book and a grammar test.

This is a conversation class, with a conversation book, and a conversation test.
We use partners, not grammar

This is the Class
The class is pair conversations. Speed Dating.
You get a new topic every 2 weeks, and a new partner every 7 minutes.
Everybody is speaking half the time, and half the time your partner is a better speaker.

This is the Test
Three students of similar ability have a 17-minute conversation.
They record it with their phones, and transcribe just what they said.
The first test measures their ability, the second test measures their improvement.

Students find and fix their own mistakes. This is a new century, with new technology.
Their mother no longer ties their shoes, and teachers no longer find their mistakes.
Conversation-Based Learning
From first-day placement test to last-day improvement data

1 Placement Test
Gives your ability, and your first test partners.

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<thead>
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<th>Placement Test Score</th>
<th>First Test Partners</th>
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<td>54</td>
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</table>

2 Homework Check
Forces you to do the book, prepares you to speak, and it’s easy to count.

3 Speed Dating
One topic, many partners. Focus + Repetition = Improvement

Switch every 7 minutes

6 Ability
The first test gives your ability, and your second test partners.

5 Transcript
Personal feedback for students and accurate grading data for teachers.

4 Conversation Test
3 students, 17 minutes Students record and transcribe.

C16. Kim, Choi-lee
I spoke 180 words ÷ 25 times = 7.2 words per utterance

After midterm, do it again.

A comparison of midterm and final test data will show 50% improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Words Spoken</th>
<th>Second Test Partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>621</td>
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<td>562</td>
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<td>380</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>172</td>
<td>140</td>
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<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>7</td>
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Homework Check
Midterm test
How many times I spoke 40
Average words per utterance 10
Total words I spoke 400

Final test
How many times I spoke 28
Average words per utterance 17.5
Total words I spoke 500

Improvement 75% 25%

50% Improvement
1 Placement Test

12 minutes to give, 5 minutes to grade. And more accurate than the 3-hour American SAT test.

The university entrance exam measures intelligence and attention span for cramming.

This test measures their ABILITY.

This is also a levels test for the first conversation test. Partners are grouped by similar ability. This makes the test fair, and accurate.

On the first day of class I know their:
1. Speaking ability
2. Pronunciation problems
3. Prepositions problems
4. First conversation test partners

That’s a pretty good use of 20 minutes.

The Placement Test Changes Everything

1. Because you know their ability on the first day, everything after is to improve ability, not determine it.
2. You don’t have to waste class time and midterm and final weeks on grammar-grades tests to determine their ability and provide a basis for grades.
3. The placement test changes the course from an English knowledge course to an English ability course.
4. Ultimately, how can you improve their ability if you don’t know their ability?

Students mark their answer on paper (for a permanent record). Then, they enter answers on their phones. Google can grade 1000 students in 2 minutes.

Pronunciation | Prepositions | Score
---|---|---
74 | 25 | 99
70 | 22 | 92
69 | 21 | 90
69 | 20 | 89
65 | 23 | 88
66 | 21 | 87
65 | 20 | 85
67 | 16 | 83
64 | 16 | 80
60 | 19 | 79
58 | 20 | 78
63 | 13 | 76
59 | 14 | 73
58 | 14 | 72
53 | 15 | 68
54 | 13 | 67
52 | 12 | 64
48 | 10 | 58
49 | 8 | 57
47 | 10 | 57
45 | 9 | 54

1st conversation test partners

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.
The goal is smoother speaking

The method writing preparation, and a lot of speaking with a lot of partners

Write what you will say, talk about what you wrote

Writing before Speaking improves Accuracy. Speaking to many partners improves Fluency.

Do the book at home, speak in class. Simple.

This book is conversation preparation. There's no read and guess.

Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking, Vocabulary and Pronunciation are Speaking preparation and also improve. All examples are perfect grammar, so that improves. Speaking improves 50%, which improves TOEIC, TOEFL and IELTS scores 20%. Simple.

The core of each unit is 16 conversation questions.

Every student knows the answers because every question is about them. After writing about themselves for 30 minutes, students are able and eager to speak. They want to use what they wrote. Writing generates speaking, speaking generates improvement. Simple.

This book gets students speaking. No more pulling teeth.

When they speak they improve. When they improve, so do TOEIC scores. Simple.

What about grammar? The best grammar lesson in the world is a 50-minute conversation.

My students are low level. They can't speak for 50 minutes. They could if they had this book.

This is the world’s first conversation book.

Really? Yes, all the other books are grammar books with a conversation activity stapled on.

What about 4-Skills Integration books? Think about it. Conversation IS the agent of Integration.
# 3 Homework

Homework is important. It’s worth 40%. They do it or they fail.

This is a new century with new technology. Every page is on audio. They do the book at home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homework Grade</th>
<th>Required Pages</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Do the first 8 pages</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Do the first 8 pages and the Descriptive Paragraph</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Do the first 8 pages, Descriptive Paragraph and TOEFL essay</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each unit has 12 pages, 9 of them require student input. Each page is worth 1 homework point.

- **1 Warm up**
- **2 Writing for Speaking**
- **3 Vocabulary & Pronunciation**
- **4 Short Paragraphs with details**
- **5 Descriptive Paragraph & TOEFL Essay**
- **6 Advanced Questions & Conversations**

30 minutes of homework generates 2 hours of conversations. *Simple.*

Students can basically choose their own grade:

- C = Do the first 8 pages, takes **30 minutes**
- B = Do the first 8 pages, and the Descriptive Paragraph **1 hour**
- A = Do the first 8 pages, Descriptive Paragraph and TOEFL essay **2 hours**

1. Homework forces students to show up prepared, and homework pages are easy to count. The homework grade is transparent and objective.

2. *Homework is worth the same, 40%, as the speaking tests?* Yes. Without homework, there is no speaking.

3. Homework for a class of 30 can be checked in class in 15 minutes, while students are using their paragraphs or essays to start conversations.

4. Homework is conversation preparation. The more they prepare, the more they improve. So their homework grade is also a reliable improvement grade.

5. Because homework is 40% of the grade, this prevents great speakers who are lazy students from making an easy A.

6. If students are too lazy to do 30 minutes of homework a week, that’s not a Conversation-Based Learning problem. That’s a lazy student problem.
4 The Class: Speed Dating

One topic, many partners
A new topic every week, a new partner every 7 minutes

The bigger the class the better.
More partners = more variety = more interesting = more repetition = more improvement

1. Walk in, put your phone on the roll sheet, look at the board, find your seat and partner, and sit.
2. Meet, greet, introduce yourself, and chat. After 7 minutes, the teacher yells, SWITCH!
3. Students seated on the inside say, Bye, Gotta go, Nice meeting you, See you later, and move on.
4. Next class you’ll do it again, better, smoother, with new partners.

We don’t give you new grammar to study every week. We give you new partners! THEY provide you with new information, pronunciations, vocabulary, and questions. We don’t give you advanced (and irrelevant topics), we give you advanced ways to talk about yourself. That’s a very relevant topic on a job interview.

How do you get good at something? You do it more than once.
5 Conversation Test

MS Word can measure speaking ability.
It’s as easy as 1, 2, 3.

1. Three students of similar ability have a 17-minute conversation.
2. Students record with their phones.
3. Students transcribe just what they said on MS Word (about 2 hours).
4. MS Word gives the total words spoken, and how many times they spoke.
5. Simple division gives their average words-per-utterance.

Students go home or to the computer lab and type just what they said. It takes 2 hours or less. Easy. They email or upload it, and go meet their friends.

Total Words is their speaking ability
After 10 years of English education, and two hours after the test, the speaking ability of everyone in class is known.

Total words on the first test determines partners for the second test. This ensures fair and accurate testing.

For example, these three students will be partners on the second test.

They are beginning speakers, speaking as fast as they can.
It’s a communicative test, and MS Word measures precisely how much they communicated.
The Second Test Gives Their Improvement

Their second test partners are determined by their total words spoken on the first test. This makes the test fair and accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How many times I spoke</th>
<th>Average words per utterance</th>
<th>Total words I spoke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm test</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>210</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final test</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Thus, my speaking improved 60% this semester.

Each semester every student has about 100 conversations with about 25 different partners. Of course they improve. But, exactly how much?

There. That’s how much.

Their utterances are 84% longer. Longer speaking is smoother speaking.

They spoke 36% more. That means shorter pauses and fewer pauses.

This is a direct measure of speaking ability, and improvement.

What about mistakes?

They find and fix their own mistakes. This is a new world, and finding mistakes is no longer part of the teacher’s job.

Get a hobby.

Measure how much students do, not how much they do wrong.

____________________________________________________________________

1. Usually I’m weekend warrior, but last weekend I stayed at home because this week is midterm exam, so I was staying at home and studying for midterm exam. What did you do last weekend?
2. No, I didn’t hear about that.
3. Last weekend I was couch potato. What about you?
4. I don’t like gory films. I like superhero movies, like the Avengers and Ironman.

VOCABULARY

MOVIES

- Love at first sight
- Crush on someone
- Soul mate
- Outdoor person
- Outdoor person

FOOD & FITNESS

- Pig out
- Appetizer
- Snack
- Snack

SUMMER BREAK

- Weekend warrior
- Couch potato
- Couch potato
- Couch potato

1. No, I didn’t hear about that.
2. I have never been there. I’ve never been there.
3. What is your best favorite movie? What is your favorite movie?
4. Will you go to any festivals or theme park this winter vacation?
5. Will you go to any festivals or theme park this winter vacation?
### 6 Semester Results

#### You know their ability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average of 3 tests</th>
<th>Total words spoken</th>
<th>Words per minute</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>682</td>
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</table>

#### You have wide-spread grades

<table>
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<th>Conversation Tests</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Final grade</th>
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#### You can prove they improved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How many times I spoke</th>
<th>Average words per utterance</th>
<th>Total words I spoke</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 week test</td>
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<td>8.6</td>
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<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Therefore, my speaking improved 60% this semester.*

Total words increased 20%. That means shorter pauses and fewer pauses.
Average words per utterance doubled. Longer speaking is smoother speaking.
Their speaking improved, and you can prove it. Speaking ability, and improvement, is now visible.

*When Speaking Ability improves, so do TOEIC scores.*
Conversation-Based Learning

1. The PLACEMENT TEST gives their ability. After this, everything is to improve ability, not determine it.
2. The BOOK prepares and motivates them. They do the book at home and speak in class. Simple.
3. The CLASS is speed dating conversations. A new topic every 2 weeks, a new partner every 7 minutes.
4. The TEST gives their ability, their improvement. Students find and fix their own mistakes.

We use partners, not grammar
The engine of improvement is a lot of conversations with a lot of partners.
The repetition makes them smoother, and half the time their partner is a better speaker.
Test partners of similar ability gives fair and accurate testing. Simple.

Questions?

1. What if students are low-level speakers? Can they handle this?
   Yes. Absolutely. They write what they will say, My father is a teacher and then say it in class.
   Speaking ability is not improved by listening to a teacher talk about the English language.

2. Is transcribing difficult?
   No. Low-level speakers speak at a low level. They’re transcribing what THEY said. I’m born in Seoul.
   They’re not transcribing the BBC News.

3. How long does it take to transcribe?
   It takes everybody about two hours. There is a YIN and YANG. The better speakers speak more and have more transcribing ability. The lesser speakers speak less, and have less to transcribe.

4. What if they don’t do the homework?
   They make an F. This is a required course. They do homework in other classes. What’s the problem?

5. What about instructions?
   Pre-class instructions and post-class feedback are sent by email or uploaded on the website.
   If students can read and hear it at home, teachers shouldn’t say it in class.

6. What about feedback and error correction?
   Students hear and read their own mistakes when they transcribe, and then fix their top 5 mistakes.
   If they can tie their own shoes, they can find their own mistakes: When I was a middle school.

7. Are big classes really better?
   Absolutely. More partners = more variety = more repetition = more improvement. Big classes have more partners of similar ability. Big classes have more energy.

8. Does speaking really improve 50%?
   Actually, it’s usually more, about 70%. When a student goes from My hometown is Busan, (4 words) to My hometown is Busan. I lived there until I was eight. (11 words), that’s a 175% increase.
I have taught English Conversation
to Korean university freshmen for 23 years.

I hold these truths to be self-evident:
Grammar is wrong. It’s always been wrong.
It’s an easy way to test English, but an awful way to teach it.

I quote from Einstein.

If you can’t measure what’s important (speaking), then what you can measure becomes very important (grammar).
If you cannot explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.
The definition of insanity is repeating the same action, but always expecting a different result.

What can English education learn from Einstein?
1. Grammar is not important, it’s just easy to test.
2. Clear, confident speaking ability is important.
3. Stop the insanity. If you want better results you need a better method.

The insanity is that after a decade-long English education, very smart Koreans with high TOEIC scores are still showing up at job interviews with low speaking ability.

Conversation-Based Learning is now possible because conversation is now easy to test. This changes everything. This fundamentally changes how foreign language can be taught.

The right method for the right goal.

Conversation-Based Learning
Because life is not a grammar test

You get conversation ability AND higher TOEIC scores.
## Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conversation-Based Learning</th>
<th>Grammar-based English</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interesting ✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Personally-relevant ✔️</td>
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</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Easy to test ✔️</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Long-lasting effects ✔️</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Builds confidence ✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Improves grammar ✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Improves life ✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Helps at airports ✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Helps at job interviews ✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Results in language acquisition ✔️</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SCORE** 100 20
Primary sources, not theory
I've been to the mountain top. I have primary sources.

In 23 years, I have probably taught about 5000 university freshmen. My course is not shaped by linguistic theory. I know first-hand their speaking ability. I also know first-hand their real-world English needs, because for 20 years before teaching English, I worked in the real world. Life is a contest of passion, ability and showing up on time. My job is to give them the ability to express their passion in English.

Every semester I give an end-of-semester survey, and I asked students to include a sentence or two describing their English education before they got to college. Some comments are below.

1. In the last 12 years, I only learned reading, not speaking. So, I really hate speaking for English.
2. When I was a high school student, we only read English text and memorized them in English.
3. English was hard and boring. Festival of long passages. I have to decode that to solve problems.
4. What I have only learned in schools before university is how to read English text and translate it.
5. From elementary to high school I have learned English reading but I didn’t have chance to speak English.
6. Before this class, I hate language itself. Especially I hate English. English was merely a mere test subjects.
7. I just studied English for reading. I didn’t know that I can not speak in English because I had never had a chance to speak in English.
8. Until I had this class, what I learned was only theory and grammar to pass exams like TOEIC. Because of studying English under pressure, this subject was stressful for me and frankly I hated it.

The gap in their English education is speaking ability. They will not get that at university because universities simply replace entrance exam courses with exit exam TOEIC preparation courses.

Attention to grammar at the university level is bad. Bad.

1. It requires a grammar test (so it’s no longer a conversation class).
2. It steals classroom speaking time.
3. It reduces speaking ability. Attention to grammar in beginning speakers results in long pauses and many pauses. Grammar reduces, stilts, gums up speaking ability. It doesn’t help, it hurts.

Below are quotes from three university freshmen.

Too much emphasis on grammatical knowledge makes me unable to speak.

I know I’m not perfect in English. So I hesitate to talk in English until I make perfect sentence in my brain.

I have a bad habit which I can never overcome. The bad habit is that I never open my mouth until I make a complete sentence with correct grammar in my head.

Over the years I’ve heard students say that their speaking got worse during high school, because the focus was on university entrance exam preparation. Therefore, I put that question on a survey. The result:

45% said their speaking ability declined during high school

I teach required freshmen English. For most of my students, I teach the last English course they will take in their life. They don’t need another thin foundation layer of grammar. They need speaking ability, as much as possible, before the end of the year. And every day they get older, becoming fluent takes more time and effort.
It works like this. One day a student came in with a broken arm. Her first partner asked what happened, and she explained. Then, her second partner asked her, then every partner. By the end of class, she was pretty good at explaining. To make it academic, ask an academic question: Why did you choose your major?

Speed Dating Formations

Variety is Energy. Oxygen.

This is the mass production of speaking ability. That takes a lot of energy. That’s supplied by many new partners. More energy supplied by students = less work for the teacher.

1. Sit like this in straight rows.
2. Every 5 minutes you switch partners.
3. You can switch 12 times and never have the same partner twice.

1st & 2nd Class

Switch every 5 minutes

3rd Class

Switch every 7 minutes

4th Class

Switch every 10 -15 minutes

1. OK. Evens have never spoken to evens, and odds to each other.
2. So today, evens sit together and odds sit together. All new partners. Again.

1. Sit in groups of 3, all new partners.
2. To switch, inside students go clockwise, and outside go the opposite way. Center students stay.

You can just put numbers on the board. I use photos. Makes it easier and more interesting.

Everybody gets a photo roll sheet. Every time they talk to a new partner, they highlight the partner’s photo in yellow.
3 Partners are Best, 3 Tests are Best

**The First Test** is to get them speaking.
It’s a low-stress, low-stakes, practice test.
Everybody gets an A+, and teachers get students’ ability before they start improving too much.
The only instructions they need is to watch a 3-minute example test video. Simple.

**The Second Test** is to get them speaking longer and academically.
At least once during the test they use first, second, third with their specific examples.
This forces students to prepare and results in longer, smoother speaking.

**The Third Test**, they do it again. Better.
Everybody knows exactly what to do.
On the second and third test, I often have the best speakers from three different classes grouped together, and likewise the least proficient speakers.
This ensures more fair and accurate tests.

---

### 3 Partners are Perfect
1. With pairs, each student has more speaking time, but a deadbeat adversely affect their partner’s performance.
2. A four person test is just too many and unnecessary. I have NEVER tested four.
3. Three is perfect. Everyone has sufficient speaking time, and there’s more real-world interaction.

### 3 Tests are Perfect
1. You know their ability before they start improving too much.
2. Early on, it shows students that homework is preparation for class, and each class is preparation for this specific test.
3. The average of 3 tests is more accurate, and the result of 3 tests is more improvement.
More tests = more accuracy & more improvement.
Below are third test partners from a recent semester. With each subsequent test, the partners are of more similar ability. Everyone has a fair chance to speak up to their ability. Importantly, preparation will manifest itself in several ways: longer utterances, and more total words (because of shorter and fewer pauses), and more new vocabulary. Given partners of similar ability and a little preparation, improvement is guaranteed.

The 18 students above had an average increase in total words of 20% and average words of 60%. Partners of similar ability gives you fair tests, and accurate tests. Everybody has equal opportunity to shine. Further, 40% of students prefer to have partners of better ability. They realize it ups their game.
Total words is their speaking ability

They are beginning speakers, speaking as fast as they can.
It’s as accurate as a typing test.

Like beginning typists, students are hunting and pecking in their brain for the correct word and the correct word order.

It’s a communicative test, and MS Word measures precisely how much they communicated.

For the great masses of teenage Asian students who are beginning speakers, how fast they assemble and utter words is an accurate indicator of the speaking ability. And, that speed – which MS Word easily counts – is an objective indicator of their speaking ability.

At right is their test performance in both Total Words and Words per Minute. The data is from one test. However, it could just as easily be the average of three tests.

- The top three students averaged 40 words per minute
- The bottom three students averaged 10 words per minute

Like most tests, the word count easily identifies the top and bottom third, with the middle being a bit imprecise. The bottom third are speaking as fast as they can, and it’s very accurate for them. The middle third is less precise due to variables such as preparation, confidence and personality. The top third is also precise. However, the top speakers may dumb-down a bit to accommodate less-ability partners. This is why I much prefer three tests. The best speakers have sufficient opportunity to show their true ability.

ABILITY RANGE  Frankly, their ability range should not be so wide. All students scored in the top 15% on their university entrance exam. However, that exam measured their intelligence and attention span for cramming. This test, for the first time, measured their ability.

Again, total words on the first test determines partners for the second test.

Average words per utterance is not their ability.

First. Low-level speakers sometimes memorize a paragraph and then go quiet. This gives high average words (not accurate) and low total words, (accurate).

Second. High-level speakers might make many comments, No kidding, and ask many short questions, Why? What about you? This gives them low average words, which is not accurate.

This is the crucial, world-changing point.

While total words is an accurate measure of the speaking ability, it counts for only 20% of their test score, and only 8% of their final grade. However, this direct, objective measure enables English Education to be conversation based rather than grammar based.
TRUE STORY. In the late 1960’s, a new university was built in America. All the campus construction was done, everything. Except for the sidewalks. After one semester, there were well-worn dirt paths where students naturally walked. THAT is where they put the sidewalks. They wanted to see where students walked, and then gave them a smoother way to get there.

The conversation test transcripts are the same thing. We do not try to prevent a million generic mistakes. We force students to speak and then find and fix their own specific speaking mistakes.

While transcribing, students hear – repeatedly – their own mistakes. (They also hear their partners’ mistakes.) They then read and fix their top 5 mistakes. Transcribing is solid gold. It’s about the best language-learning activity, and it gives extensive, self-correctable feedback.

**Transcripts**

The transcripts are very user friendly. Students download the template transcript, delete the example information, and insert their own. Simple.
Feedback

This is a new century with new technology. Students find and fix their own mistakes. That’s no longer the teacher’s job.

Here is a typical second test transcript.

It shows:
1. Their Average Words per Utterance.
2. Their Total Words Spoken.
3. The Vocabulary they used, by topic.
4. Their Top 5 Mistakes, which are highlighted in the transcript and listed on top.
5. Their Improvement.

Is that real improvement?
Yes, four weeks ago they’ve never had an English conversation in their life. Many had never said a complete English sentence or asked a self-composed question in their life.

Their second test is much better. That’s normal, logical. It’s not smoke and mirrors.

Students do all the talking and transcribing. MS Word gives their ability and improvement. All in 2 hours. Simple.

Life-changing Feedback

The week after midterm, groups come back to class at the same time and watch their test.

1. This gives personal feedback and great motivation (or shame).
2. They see and hear how the world sees and hears them.
3. It’s of great benefit to every freshman to be confronted with their speaking ability in their first or second language.

If students are too lazy to transcribe and fix their own mistakes, they’re also too lazy to take action on mistakes their teacher finds. That’s a lazy-student problem, not a Conversation-Based Learning problem.
Self-correction

The best tennis players in the world make mistakes all the time. They self-correct. Conversation-Based Learning uses self-correction and allows human nature to take it’s course.

Self-correction is an essential step toward ability in any skill. If students are not speaking enough to become self-aware and self-correct, they will never progress. It’s a stage all must go through. A figure skater knows when they fall down, their coach does not have to yell “Don’t fall down!” Likewise for most speaking mistakes.

The conversation below is from three university freshmen. In red bold are obvious mistakes.

A My favorite Korean movie is Hwa Ja. Do you know? It is a crime and thriller movie. And I like thriller.
C Who casted in that in movie?
A In that movie, Lee, Sun kyun is a leading man.
C Girl?
A Girl is a... I don’t know exactly, maybe Soo jung I don’t know exactly. I just like Lee, Sun kyun.
C Just like Lee, Sun kyun ... Then, did you saw, did you see that, Ne Hanee Modun Gawt?
A Oh...oh ...! How did you know that?
C Because Lee, Sun kyun is casted...
A Ahhh I saw that either... I saw that too.
C Is it good?
A Frankly, I slept in a theater. It is too boring.
C Did you have experience sleep when watching a movie?
B Yes when I was young, I saw night movie.
C Night mare?
A Mid-night movie.
B Mid-night movie in theater I was so tired so I slept, but when I was young.
C Then what is your favorite actor or actress?
A What about you? Your favorite actress or actor.
C Alpachino. He is the Godfather, the main character.
A You are very weird. I do not know.
C He is very famous. Alpachino is a best actor. [Al Pacino]
B My favorite foreign movie actor is Robert Downy Jr.
C Robert Downy Junior movie is very similar with Alpachino. So many people confused to man.
A My favorite actress is Lee Na young.
B Why...?
A Because many people said. You look assembled with Lee, Na young. [resemble]
B I can’t agree.
C Me too.
A Don’t you think like that? Ah, yes?
C Did you think you are assemble with Lee, Na young?
A A little. I agree that.

Student A used ‘assembled’ when she meant ‘resembled’. Too funny. Two points: First, there is no way that mistake could have been prevented. Second, it was close enough. Her partners understood. She communicated, and it’s a communicative test. Success.
What about Mistakes?

Mistakes are the mother of improvement. The more the better. Actually, these are not mistakes, they are imperfect communication.

Below are samples from last semester. Bloopers anyone?

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Also same you</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>I have to church in Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Blind admirer</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>I have to memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Can you song?</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>I have to transmit from subway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cling to my subject</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>I heard to someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Concentrate in a row</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>I like foreigner language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Debation and discussion class</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>I live 40 minutes apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Did you hard to study?</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>I often deliver my food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Do you cramming?</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>I reservate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Do you fun about your major?</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>I scared for water [of deep water]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do you join in a club?</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>I still memorize about that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Do you live in alone?</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>I trip there be backpacking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Every my friend moved</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>I want to be drop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Every my vacation</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>I was very impressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Food that you made sick</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>I went to Japanese last year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Grandmother was care about me</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>I will trip Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>His hate is tall? [height]</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>I will wear pretty [dress up]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>His study is really good [grades]</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>I worked in academy as an assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>How do you often go to a movie?</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>I’m a commute person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>How high is he? [tall]</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>I’m a translation [translator]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>How many grade? [courses]</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>I’m confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>How many times? [hours]</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>I’m interesting every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>How much your classes?</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>I’m sleepy just 6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I am a off campus</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>If I go shopping on my foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I am go traveling</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>It can be happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I am wish to go</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>It really gave me fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I become know</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>It’s very easy than you think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I broke my girlfriend [broke up with]</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Many interests in accidental art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I can conversation with</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>More much free time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I catch up my school</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>My classes are started at 11:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>I choice that</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>My mother cook is not good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I concentrate it</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>My mother is packing me to study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I didn't decided yet</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>My preferring major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>I founded my phone</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>My score doesn't enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>I have four family in my family</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>My wannabe is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>I have to church in Friday</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>No scared to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>I have to memory</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Older ager future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>I have to transmit from subway</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Privacy life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>I heard to someone</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Quiet and peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>I like foreigner language</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Remind my high school [remember]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>I live 40 minutes apart</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Respect from afar [admire]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>I often deliver my food.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Saw realistic [saw in person]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>I reservate</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>School off dormitory [off campus]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>I scared for water [of deep water]</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>She threw up that talent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>I still memorize about that</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>She’s birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>I trip there be backpacking</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>She’s club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>I want to be drop</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Soccer is very activity thing</td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>I was very impressive</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Spaghetti of tomato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>I went to Japanese last year</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Strong at alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>I will trip Mexico</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Suggest me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>I will wear pretty [dress up]</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Talks very a lot</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>I worked in academy as an assistance</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>The lecture is spoken by English</td>
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<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>I’m a commute person</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>There’s a lot of expect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>I’m a translation [translator]</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Upgrade my grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>I’m confusing</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>Very expected on that</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>I’m interesting every day</td>
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<td>Was your team win?</td>
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<td>I’m sleepy just 6 hours</td>
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<td>We cook each other [for each other]</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>If I go shopping on my foot</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>We dated but not we are broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>It can be happen</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>We don't close [siblings]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>It really gave me fun</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>We exerted them [Cheerleaders]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>It’s very easy than you think</td>
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<td>We will performing something</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>Many interests in accidental art</td>
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<td>What is your asking question?</td>
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<td>More much free time</td>
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<td>What kind of take your major?</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>My classes are started at 11:00</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>My mother cook is not good</td>
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<td>What’s the best do you think?</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>My mother is packing me to study</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>When I have empty class [free period]</td>
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<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>My preferring major</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>When I was childhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>My score doesn't enough</td>
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<td>Why did you choice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>My wannabe is</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>You look assemble [resemble]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mistakes cannot be prevented.

Look at number 72. A student said “Quiet and peace” instead of “Piece and quiet.” There is no way they ever read or heard ‘quiet and piece.’ Their brain just assembled those words in reverse. Let them speak, and self-correct. Human nature. One beauty of mistakes is that they are personally-relevant.

The test forces students to speak, ready or not. They are forced to assemble words in real time. This is one of my favorite ‘imperfect communications.’ A female student said she went to a soccer game. I asked “Are you the coach?” She laughed and said “No, we exerted them.” They were cheerleaders. She could not immediately recall the correct English word, so she used other words to communicate the context. The test is not a perfect English grammar test, it’s a communicative test, and she communicated. Rather colorfully, I think.
Below is data from one class in the Spring 2015 semester. It shows an average improvement of 51%. This is also the average improvement of 10 years of testing with over 2000 students.

1. **Notice how the top three students show minus improvement.** This is common and logical. They dumbed-down on the final test to help their lower-ability partners. That is one reason why I like BIG classes. The bigger the class, the more equal-ability partners for both the better and lesser speakers.

2. **The lowest ability students show dramatic improvement.** For the first time in their life, they’re allowed to speak in more than one sentence.

3. Individual improvement varies greatly. This is due in part to partner chemistry and other variables. The overall class improvement – rather than individual – is the crucial factor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words per utterance</th>
<th>Total words spoken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Midterm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Final test</strong></td>
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<td>15.2</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>10.8</td>
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<td>29.4</td>
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<td>8.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>40.1</td>
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<td>19.4</td>
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<td>10.6</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>23.9</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
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<td>9.3</td>
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<td>9.3</td>
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<td>5.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

80% 22%
You can see their Ability, and Improvement

Below are the first pages of two transcripts. The print is too small to be read, but just from glancing at the transcript you can see their ability. The first transcript shows a beginning speaker, typical of an Asian student who has never had an English conversation in their whole life.

The second transcript shows a better speaker. This is evident from the longer utterances. In fact, their utterances could be longer and more numerous but this is a conversation test, and they are exhibiting good conversation test behavior. They are making short comments and asking follow-up questions, thereby allowing their partners to speak.

The first student spoke a total of: 206 words, 30 times, for an average of 6.8 words per utterance.

The second student spoke a total of: 362 words, 25 times, for an average of 14.5 words per utterance.

Here is an extreme example of an increase in words-per-utterance. On both tests, the student was asked: **Where do you live?**

1st test answer: *I’m live in Namyangju.*

3rd test answer: *I commute come school. Because I live in Namyangju. Namyangju is not so far. But I take one hours thirty minute to come school. I take Kywong-ui central line and transfer to the Line Number one. It looks like simple. But very hard to me. Because one hours thirty minute.*

Most students with ability this low do not speak. It is one beauty of this test that it forces such students to speak. And it does not penalize them for mistakes. A beginning ice skater will fall down no matter what you say, and likewise beginning speakers will make mistakes. If you let them speak enough they will start to self-correct, especially the numerous basic mistakes that are shown in the transcript above. (MS Word will catch many of them, if the students care to notice.)

**Here’s the plot twist.** It’s the same student. This is their first and third transcript.
Grading the Test

This is a test, like any other test.
It has different grading criteria, worth certain percentages. That’s all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw scores</th>
<th>Converted scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Ability</td>
<td>Total Words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>706</td>
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<td>572</td>
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<td>79</td>
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<td>525</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The basic ability, holistic speaking score is something that any teacher, native-speaker or non-native speaker can give. It’s a reasonable person’s impression. While this is subjective, it is also very lenient, especially at the low end. The stricter the basic ability criteria, the fewer the teachers who would use the test.

2. Basic ability also serves as a fair counter-balance to the total-words count. Often, better speakers speak less to accommodate lower ability partners. This reduces their total words score, which is offset by a high basic ability score. This allows the better speakers to help such partners without worry of penalty.

3. Total words is objective, accurate and easily counted. And it prompts students to speak more.

4. Vocabulary is also easily counted, and it’s a good indicator of preparation, skill, and improvement.

5. Finding their own Top 5 Mistakes shifts learning from teacher-talking to self-correction.

6. Transcripts. This is a data driven test, and I need data. This 30% weight enables diligent, low-ability students to make an ‘A’, and prevents lazy, high ability students from making one. Further, the transcripts are evidence of their ability, and test performance. A test without evidence is not a valid test.

The percentages shown are for the 2nd test. The percentage weights vary, depending on the class level. Any language features that can be underlined (for example, follow-up questions), can be included.

Total words is worth only 20% of their test grade, and about 8% of their final grade. However, this direct, objective, and easily-acquired data changes the class from grammar based to conversation based.
Here’s your PhD in Communicative Testing

1. Three partners is perfect. With two, a non-talkative student adversely affects their partner, and four partners is way too many.

2. Students always have different partners every test, and best friends are never partners.

3. For the final test, good students are often rewarded with good partners, and deadbeat students are given deadbeat partners. (Life can be fair.)

4. 15 - 20 minute tests are best. The longer the test, the more likely students will stray outside their comfort zone and display their real communicative ability, or lack thereof. It is easier to discern their abilities in a 15-minute test than in a 5-minute test. The longer the test or foot race, the easier it is to spot the winner.

5. Three tests per semester is best. The test is the teaching tool, thus, more tests equals more learning. The test is not an appendage to the class, the class is built around the tests.

6. It’s best if they transcribe the whole conversation. This improves their listening 50%, and triples their feedback because they hear, write and read their partners’ mistakes.

7. Students can work together on their transcripts, but they soon realize that it’s much easier, simpler, and faster to do it by themselves.

8. Students like to partner with better speakers in both class and tests. They realize it ups their game.

9. On the final test I pull the best speakers from several classes and have them test together. Thus, they do not have to dumb down and can speak according to their natural ability. Likewise, I pull the lowest-ability speakers from several classes. In this way, they can speak according to their ability, and no higher-ability classmates will have to dumb down to accommodate them.

10. What about mistakes? The more the better. It’s a communicative test, not a grammar test. Mistakes mean they strayed outside their comfort zone to communicate. A figure skater who never fell down is not very good.

THE YIN & YANG OF TESTING

11. Better speakers speak more and have more to transcribe, but, they have more ability to transcribe. Low-ability speakers speak less and have less to transcribe, but they have less transcribing ability.

12. Students like these tests because during test week they have class for only 20 minutes instead of three hours. Transcribing takes only about 2 hours, so they end up with more free time during test week.

13. The test can be configured to focus on ability or improvement. A test with unprepared strangers most accurately measures ABILITY. A test with a specific task results in more preparation and more IMPROVEMENT (a big part of which is longer utterances).

ABILITY & IMPROVEMENT

14. Total words is an accurate indicator of ABILITY and IMPROVEMENT. When a student goes from speaking 400 to 500 words in the same 17 minutes, that’s shorter and fewer pauses.

15. Average words per utterance is an accurate indicator of IMPROVEMENT. If a beginning speaker goes from 6 to 10 average words per utterance they are speaking longer and smoother.

16. In general, the top third best speakers improve 40%, the middle third 60% and the bottom third 80%. Great tennis players will not improve much by practicing 5 hours in a week, but beginners would.

The problem with English Education is also the solution. What gets tested gets done. Grammar-grading leads to more grammar study. Conversation tests lead to more conversations.
Every teacher gets a Flash Drive which contains all the files.

Every page of the book is on audio. Teachers and students can download the audio and MS Word files directly from the website, all at once, or unit by unit. It’s recommended that teachers upload or send the files unit by unit. Otherwise, eager-beaver students might do all the homework one weekend, and thus would show no progressive improvement.
Support Materials & Class Management Resources

18 Pair Pronunciation Activities

10. Family
11. Hobbies
12. Personality
13. Food
14. Movies
15. School
16. Shopping
17. Special Days
18. Health

4 Frequency Activities

10. Vacations
11. Sports
12. Technology
13. Majors
14. Dating
15. Weekends
16. Jobs
17. Countries
18. States

Mingling Activities

Fitness
Food
School
Weekends

USA Directions

Street Directions

Face Describing

Guess that Movie

Schedule Blanks

Test Grade Sheets

Grade Templates

Semester Survey

Phone Attendance Sheet

Never waste a second taking roll again.
Conversation-Based Learning

Conversation is the book, the class, and the test. There is no smaller unit.

*It’s as easy as 1, 2, 3.*

1. The Book

2. The Class

3. The Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How many times I spoke</th>
<th>Average words per utterance</th>
<th>Total words I spoke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm test</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final test</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improvement</strong></td>
<td><strong>75%</strong></td>
<td><strong>25%</strong></td>
<td></td>
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They improve 50%, and you can prove it.
Conversation-Based Learning
Conversation is the goal, the book, the class, and the test. There is no smaller unit.

It’s as easy as 1, 2, 3.

1 The Book

2 The Class

3 The Test

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They improve 50%, and you can prove it.
Improves Speaking 50%  
which improves TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS scores

**How?**

Writing before Speaking improves accuracy. Speaking with many partners improves fluency. Students have about 100 conversations with about 25 different partners. Of course they improve.

**How do you test all that?**

Easy, a conversation test. The first test gives their ability, the second test gives their improvement.

---

**In each unit, students:**

1. **Read** and **Listen** to 16 questions and answers, 6 descriptive paragraphs, and 6 TOEFL essays.
2. **Write** 16 answers, 4 short paragraphs, 1 descriptive paragraphs, and 1 TOEFL essay.
3. Have at least 10 **Conversations** with 10 different partners.

Each unit has 30 **Vocabulary and Idioms**, and **Pronunciation Practice** for the specific sounds that Koreans have trouble with (**light**, **right**, **night**, **white**;  **bat**, **bet**, **beat**, **bit**;  **bat**, **pat**, **fat**, **vat**).

As a result, **Listening**, **Reading**, **Writing**, **Speaking**, **Vocabulary** and **Pronunciation** improve. All examples are perfect grammar, so that also improves. When all those skills improves, so do **TOEIC**, **TOEFL**, and **IELTS** scores. **Simple.**

Finally, writing is great preparation for speaking, and speaking is great reinforcement for writing. **Would you ever teach them separately?**

---

Korean middle and high school students score at the top of the world in math and science, and much lower in English speaking ability. **Why?**

- In math class they have a math book and a math test.
- In science class they have a science book and a science test.
- In speaking class they have a grammar book and a grammar test.

**This is a conversation class, with a conversation book, and a conversation test.**
Every page is on audio

Paragraph Templates

TOEFL Essay Templates

Test Transcript Templates

ONLINE COMPONENT: WritingforSpeaking.com

SUPPORT MATERIALS & TEACHER RESOURCES

Pronunciation

Describing

Directions

Semester Survey
Feedback

In the late 1960’s, a new university was built in America. All the campus construction was done, everything. Except for the sidewalks. After one semester, there were well-worn dirt paths where students naturally walked. THAT is where they put the sidewalks. They wanted to see where students walked, and then gave them a smoother way to get there.

We do the same thing. We don’t try to prevent a million generic mistakes. Students speak, and fix their own mistakes. Students hear and read what they said. This is extensive, personally-relevant, self-correctable feedback.

Life-changing Feedback

The week after midterm, test groups come back to class at the same time and watch their test.

1. This gives personal feedback and great motivation (or shame).
2. They see and hear how the world sees and hears them.
3. It’s of great benefit to every freshman in every major to be confronted with their speaking ability in their first or second language.

I give very little feedback to my students. However, they do GET extensive feedback. If students are too lazy to transcribe and fix their own mistakes, they’re also too lazy to take action on mistakes the teacher points out. That’s a lazy-student problem, not a Conversation-Based Learning problem.
FEEDBACK

In the late 1960s, a new university was built in America. All the campus construction was done, everything – except for the sidewalks. After one semester, there were well-worn dirt paths where students naturally walked. THAT is where they put the concrete sidewalks. They wanted to see where students naturally walked first, and then gave them a smoother way to get there.

The conversation test transcripts are the same thing. We do not try to prevent a million generic mistakes. We force students to speak and then they find and fix their own specific speaking mistakes.

With transcribing, students hear and read their own mistakes (and their partners’). Transcribing is solid gold. It’s about the best language-learning activity, and it gives extensive, self-correctable feedback.

Here is a second test transcript. It shows:

1. That in only 4 weeks, their total words increased 67% and their average words increased 125%.

   Is that real improvement?

   Yes, four weeks ago they’ve never had an English conversation in their life. Their second test is much better. That’s normal, logical. It’s not smoke and mirrors.

2. That they used only 7 vocabulary, and in which topics. Each vocabulary used is worth 1 point (up to 20) so they must use at least 10 to possibly make an A.

3. Their top 5 mistakes. Maybe overall they made 10 or 15 mistakes. That’s way too many to digest and correct. A figure skater or tennis player focuses on one mistake per practice.

Life-changing Feedback

The week after midterm, test groups come back to class at the same time and watch their 17-minute test.

1. This gives personal feedback and give great motivation (or shame).

2. They see and hear how the world sees and hears them.

3. Personally, I think it is of great benefit to every freshmen in every major to be confronted with their speaking ability in their first or second language.

I give very little feedback to my students. However, they do get EXTENSIVE feedback. If students are too lazy to transcribe and fix their own mistakes, they’re also too lazy to take action on mistakes the teacher points out. That’s a lazy-student problem, not a Conversation-Based Learning problem.
ENGLISH AFTER WRITING FOR SPEAKING

At the end of every semester, I have students write a reflective, TOEFL essay about:

**What three things did you learn in this class this semester?** Below are selected quotes.

The class has only **ONE** activity, conversation. But the essays show there are **MANY** benefits. The most often stated benefit is also the one that cannot be measured: confidence.

In all my years of teaching, here is one of my favorite student comments. A foreign professor spoke to her in front of her family. This could have been an extremely embarrassing moment. Instead, there was pride.

> I attended the forum with my family. And the instructor was a foreigner. At the break of the forum, the instructor asked me about some questions. My major, my passions, my campus life. I was able to answer confidently because it was what I already dealt with in this class. I first use English in real life. I was so satisfied. And my family looked at me so proudly. That was a wonderful experience.

**What three things did you learn this semester?**

**CONFIDENCE**

1. First, I was a shy korean boy. But thanks to this class now I’m gutsy korean boy.
2. First, I learned confidence in this class. For me, speaking English was hard and shameful thing.
3. First, the confidence I got from this class is priceless. The most important thing is ‘confidence’. After realize this truth, I try hard to just speak English not Korean. This is the first thing I learned from this class.
4. In this class I learned confidence. Professor Gunther always emphasized “Speak loud and proud”. And he recalled us that we are elite university students and can be someone’s role models. When I got this email from him, I decided to be student who has proud and try harder with confidence.
5. First, it fixed my shyness into cheerful. During the speaking lesson, we should introduce ourselves and quickly find a mutual interest. The mutual interest helps easy to get closer, and sharing the mutual interest makes the conversation delightful. At that time, I was wondering why time is in a hurry. Anyway, several conversations got rid of my shyness so now I can have a conversation with anyone friendly.

**SPEAKING**

1. At first, I was afraid speaking English because I have never spoken in English before. This class is my turning point. I’m turning my useless English skill into useful and practical English skill.
2. First, my speaking ability is improved. I can see that objectively because I expressed the ability visually.
3. Speaking English is what expresses me. Through speaking, and in English, I learned how to express myself.
4. The best thing with professor was I can see my speaking ability improving.
5. Speaking English is what expresses me. Through speaking, and in English, I learned how to express myself.

**PASSION**

- I did not have any passion in English before attending this class. Moreover, I hate English before. However, after this class, I learned lots of passion from students and also from professor. From them, I learned lots of passion and I change my mind. I like English now!
- Finally, we watched movie, it was very impressive, because that movie emphasizes passion is important, so I think, if I do everything, I’ll have passion about it.

**LISTENING**

- Third, I could learn good listening skill. When I listen to other people they like me.
- Third, also my listening is upgrade. A movie watched on last week is my first movie without Korean subtitles. I proud of myself to watch movie without subtitles.
**PRONUNCIATION**

- Third, pronouncing was the most hard to learn in korea. Through this class, however, my pronunciation got so much better that before.

- First, I learned that good pronunciation is important. Once I had a conversation with someone who uses very splendid words and vocabulary, but has bad pronunciation. I used “Pardon”? the most ever the rest of my life during that conversation.

**WRITING**

- Writing an essay about real life, I could learn many words which is especially useful in conversation. And the more essay I write, my English composition got better and it also helped my to speak English faster.

- Third, writing an essay about real life, I could learn many words which is especially useful in conversation. And the more essay I write, my English composition got better and it also helped my to speak English faster.

**VOCABULARY**

- For KSAT, I memorized over 10,000 words, including idioms and specific expressions. But can I use them? NO. I just memorized, not absorbed. The words just passed through my brain and didn’t remain. I could not use them. However, preparing conversation, I learned how to absorb words. I learned how to express my ideas using new words and that is the way I can absorb them.

- Second, vocabulary is necessary thing that make sentences enriched. I learned that the more vocabulary I can use, the longer sentences I can make.

**GRAMMAR**

- First, my grammar has improved. I used to make several mistakes such as tense, third person singular and so on. It is difficult to say it has 100% improved and fixed but I am sure the number of mistakes are decreased.

- Consequently, Fear of English has gone away a little bit. Although there is insufficient grammatical knowledge, speaking ability has improved. Too much emphasis on grammatical knowledge makes me unable to speak.

**SPEED DATING**

- First, the power of repetition. I’ve always heard the great effect and power of repetition but I’ve never experienced it before because I’m kind of a lazy person. I talked with every student in this class with same subjects and I became more fluent at that subjects or at one sentence.

- Second, I can reduce fear for English and I can get confidence. Because partners help me when I couldn’t response well, and if I make a mistake, they smile with me and encourage to say more. And I can also help my partners. I become to say my opinion even daily stuff, academically, and confidently.

**IMPROVEMENT**

- Last, I can feel ‘Happiness of Growth.’ In my first conversation test, I had normal grade. In last conversation test, I get 178% increase point. When I write transcript, I surprised. And I feel happy. I knew that what is ‘happiness of growth’ that time. After that, I have more interesting to study.

- After 3 times of conversations tests, I improved more than 100%. In 1st test, I heard other friends speaking and I couldn’t speak well. But my final test, I spoke so much so I felt proud of myself. My English speaking skills improved 175% !

**FEEDBACK**

- Third, after tests we listened to the audio files and wrote a transcript and found our mistakes that we have to fix. It’s very good practice, cause you listen to yourself and hear your mistakes.

- I’ve thought that my voice is deep but never thought that my voice is small. However, after recording my voice for the conversation test, I was surprised that I sound like a timid boy.

**FRIENDS**

- I made new friends while talking! We exchanged our opinions and ideas. Our ability has increased together. And what’s more, we told our private things we made friends naturally.

- Third, I can know about my classmates. I had total 3 tests with all different partners. So every time I met new friends and talked about us. I can know the deep part about them. Although we met almost first time, during the test all people can talk about ourselves freely like a friends. It is a special experience for me.