

# Speaking in English – Linguistic Problems of Talkative Students and Psychological Blocks of “Intelligent” Students

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## I. Purpose of the Study

This paper is to examine linguistic problems of talkative students and psychological blocks of “intelligent” students and give suggestions about how to lead these students to their goal of speaking in intelligible English.

For this purpose, the following three points are going to be dealt with in the discussion.

1. How have I taught English to my students who have a great desire to speak in English and how have they changed?
2. What remedies have I given two extreme types of students (Talkative Students and Intelligent Students) in the scope of the whole class? (The existence of these two types of students became clear when I began to use English more and more.) And how have they changed after the remedy?
3. What influence do these two types of students have on the other students and how can we make good use of these two kinds of people so that the whole class will be more apt to speak in English?

## II. Trend of Students’ Desire for English Classes

According to the research of a JACET study group,<sup>(1)</sup> and judging from my own questionnaire and interview<sup>(2)</sup> with students in the junior college where I teach, students almost unanimously say that they want to be able to communicate in English or speak in English. However, “communication in English” or “speaking in English” is too big a topic

to be dealt with in one practical report of English teaching. Therefore, the subject will be narrowed to the situation to "Speaking out loud in English, especially in front of other students in the classroom."

### III. A Course Titled "Drill in English" at Chofu Gakuen Women's Junior College

In the junior college, there is a course titled "Drill in English." The contents of this course are Grammar Exercises, Composition Exercises and Aural-Oral Exercises. There are about thirty students in one class and all students have two regular classes and one language-laboratory class a week. The textbook is The New Intensive Course in English Elementary Parts I and II.<sup>(3)</sup>

Here in this paper, my own six-year teaching experience of this course in terms of "Speaking in English" will be discussed.

### IV. Definition of Two Types of Students

#### 1. Talkative Students with Linguistic Problems

— Students who try to speak out not only in Japanese but also sometimes in English although their English grammar is not so good.

#### 2. "Intelligent" Students with Psychological Blocks

— Students who are generally very shy and hesitate to speak out though they usually get high scores in written tests.

The two types, as far as "speaking in English" is concerned, can be called good learners. The first type is talkative and being talkative is an important factor in speaking when "speaking in English" is stressed. The second type knows English grammar and can use intelligible English in speaking when they have the chance to speak out. Each also has a handicap, because the first type is not good at English grammar and those in the second one are shy.

It is assumed that these handicapped "good learners'" attitudes of overcoming their weak points can be stimulant or a good model for the rest of the students. In addition, the rest of the students will be well influenced by good learners' problem-solving attitudes and they

will be more apt to speak out in English.

**V. Teaching Methods Used for “Drill in English” from 1983 to 1988 and Students’ Reaction or Attitude**

**Table 1**

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
1. Rate of Using English in Explanation	10%	20%	50%	70%	95%	95%
2. Rate of Doing Drills with Books Open	90%	90%	70%	50%	30%	30%
3. Main Teaching Methods	<p>Choral Reading _____</p> <p>Group Reading _____</p> <p>Individual Reading _____</p> <p>Greeting in English _____</p> <p>Oral Introduction _____</p> <p>Questions and Answers in English _____</p> <p>Pair-Work _____</p> <p>Group-Work _____</p> <p>Two-Minute Self-Talk _____</p> <p>Students’ Role as a Teacher _____</p> <p>Three-Minute Speech _____</p> <p>Voluntary Speech _____</p> <p>Show and Tell _____</p>					
4. Main Evaluation System	<p>Written Test _____</p> <p>Attendance _____</p> <p>Quizzes in Spoken Form _____</p> <p>Spontaneity _____</p> <p>Speech _____</p> <p>Show and Tell _____</p>					

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
5. Student's Reaction and Attitude						
Reading Aloud After Choral Reading						
Distraction in Classroom						
Concentration on Listening to English Explanation						
Active in Pair-Work or Group-Work						
Speech Contest Applicant (One)						
Speaking Out Loud						
Spontaneity						
Speech Contest Applicants (5)						

In Table 1.1. and Table 1.2., we can see that the rate of my using English is getting higher and that the percentage of students' doing drills with books open is becoming lower. In class students have to concentrate on the English explanation and look at the teacher or their partner in the drills more than before instead of watching textbooks when speaking.

From Table 1.3., it can be seen that many types of methods have been used in class during the past six years. Among these methods, there are two special ones (Two-Minute Self-Talk and Show and Tell). There follows here detailed explanation about them.

In the Two-Minute Self-Talk method, at the beginning of the lesson, students must speak to themselves about what they did on the weekend, or about what they are going to do for the coming weekend. What is special about this method is that students must repeat the final word or phrase of the previous sentence if they cannot make a new sentence or if they cannot think of a following sentence. They have to repeat until they can make a new sentence.

In the Show and Tell method, students are supposed to bring whatever they wish to talk about to the classroom and show it to the other students and explain the relationship between the student and

the object or the reason why she brought it or likes it.

In Table 1.4., the evaluation system has been changed a little so that students' in-class activities can be considered more. Thus, in 1988, students' spontaneity, their points in the speech and in Show and Tell are taken into consideration in their grades.

In Table 1.5., the gradual change of students' reaction and attitude along with the teaching method and evaluation system can be recognized. That will be discussed in the following section.

#### IV. Results and Discussion

##### 1. Correlation between Teaching Methods including the Evaluation System and Students' Reaction or Attitude

In 1983, there was a great distraction, in the use of Japanese in the classroom, because students could both listen to the Japanese explanation and speak to their neighbors at the same time. This would be the same as writing informal letters while listening to the radio.

In 1985, when the use of English was begun, students gradually paid more attention to the English explanation.

In 1986, students became talkative and active in pair-work or group-work drills. At about the same time, the two extreme types (talkative and “intelligent” students) began to be clear.

In 1987, there was one applicant for a speech contest. This probably reflects the fact that students were getting accustomed to speak in English before other students through Two-Minute Self-Talk and in playing the teacher's role. Although that was only one student from the intelligent students' side, it does demonstrate progress in this phenomenon of the students.

In 1988, there were five applicants for the speech contest. Moreover, most of the students tend to speak out loud in Three-Minute Speech, Voluntary Speech and Show and Tell. Probably the evaluation system which includes students' spontaneity, their points of speech and Show and Tell seems to have influenced students' attitude.

From 1983 to 1988, the teaching methods including the evaluation system have given some impact to students' attitude of “speaking in

English.” Students’ reaction has affected teaching style as well. Thus, as a whole, students are getting more and more talkative, and are more apt to speak in English.

## 2. Appearance of Two Extreme Types of Students and Remedies Provided for them in the Scope of the Whole Class

As mentioned, the two extremes (talkative students with linguistic problems and “intelligent” students with psychological blocks) became increasingly clear when the use of English was begun, especially when students had to speak in English in front of the other students in the classroom. Talkative students always try to speak out in broken or sometimes in unintelligible English while the “intelligent” students with blocks try not to be called or be called on to speak in front of their friends. The following remedies were used.

### For Talkative Students

- 1) They were shown their individual strengths and weaknesses in basic grammatical knowledge of English through written tests.
- 2) They did pair-work with intelligent students so that they could take advantage of being a partner of good learners of English grammar.
- 3) Crucial grammatical errors were corrected promptly. Fortunately, they were too strong to be depressed by the teacher’s advice or comments. In other words, they were happy to have their errors corrected.

### For “Intelligent” Students

- 1) In order to lessen their psychological pressure I had them read textbooks or speak in this order (chorus → group → individual) so that the good influence of group activity could be retained in the individual work.
  - 2) They were praised for their grammatical ability in written tests when their answer sheets were returned.
- ## 3. Roles of Two Types of Students and the Results of their Influence to the Other Students

Given the above-mentioned remedies, these two extreme types tried

to solve their problems. Their serious attitude toward overcoming their weak points was a stimulant for the other students and also gave good influence to the other students. Talkative students tried to get basic grammatical knowledge of English and intelligent students tried to speak out through group-work or pair-work. And the other students tried to get something from these partially skillful (or good) learners' problem-solving strategies.

In this way the two extreme types of students affected not only each other but the other students, which gave the following results: there was one applicant for the speech contest in 1987, and in 1988 there were five applicants (one talkative, another one intelligent, and the other three from among the rest of the students). In this case these three students were influenced by the problem-solving attitude of the two extreme types of students. It can be said that this is one of the good results of their influence on the rest of the students.

## V. Conclusion

In order to put the whole class into the atmosphere of an English-speaking class, there are two suggestions.

One is a method for all the students. For this purpose:

1. Teachers should use English as much as possible.
2. Teachers should have students use English as much as possible by adopting practical methods such as pair-work, group-work, self-talk, speeches and “show and tell.”
3. Teachers should keep eye-contact with students and should have students keep eye-contact with each other in speaking.
4. Teachers should reconsider the evaluation system which may motivate students' attitude toward studying.

The second point is a remedy for the two extreme types (talkative and intelligent) of students. For this purpose, teachers should give them effective remedies so that they can overcome their weak points. The suggested remedies are as follows:

For Talkative Students

1. To let them realize their strengths and weaknesses in basic

grammatical knowledge of English through written tests.

2. Pair-work with "intelligent" students
3. Prompt error correction

For "Intelligent" Students

1. To lessen their psychological pressure by this order of reading (chorus → group → individual)
2. To praise their grammatical ability in written tests

The problem-solving strategies of these two types of students through the above-mentioned remedies can facilitate group activity in the classroom and other students can become more apt to speak in English.

Thus we teachers can make good use of linguistic problems and psychological blocks of the two extreme types of students in teaching "Speaking in English."

Finally, since this is an interim report of the author's teaching experience, the data is not sufficient to be proved objectively. Therefore, in order to make the research more scientific, objective and persuasive, a comparative study between a controlled group of students and an uncontrolled group in terms of some linguistic factors, as well as psychological tests related to teaching will be required in future study.

#### NOTES

\* This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the 10th KATE (Kanto-Koshin-Etsu Association of Teachers of English) Conference in Saitama, in August, 1988.

- (1) JACET Bulletin No. 67 (Tokyo, The Japan Association of College English Teachers, 1988) p.1.
- (2) Both of the questionnaire and interview were unofficially conducted in the researcher's classes. Out of 30 respondents to the questionnaire in "Drill in English" class which consists of 30 students, 27 students say that their purpose of studying English is to be able to speak in English. In an interview with 60 other students, 55 of them hope to be a good speaker of English.
- (3) The Intensive Course in English; Elementary Part I and Part II (Tokyo, English Language Services, 1977).



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