

Practice-oriented Oral Presentation Proposal

Asking Effective Follow-Up Questions: Evaluating the Impact of a Conversation Sheet on Student Engagement and Interaction in EFL Conversations

Keywords: *follow-up questioning, conversation sheet, student engagement and interaction, EFL conversations*

Summary

Formulating questions in English remains challenging for Japanese EFL learners (Buda, 2010; Shizuoka, 2020), due to factors such as anxiety (Muroya, 2023), limited communicative practice (Yanagi & Baker, 2016), low oral proficiency (Hamada, 2008), difficulty with Wh-questions (Yonezaki & Yonezaki, 2015), and cultural differences (Takanashi, 2004). To address this, this paper presents the rationale, design, and implementation of a self-devised conversation activity that encourages relevant and effective follow-up questioning, with preliminary findings indicating its effectiveness.

(75 words)

Abstract

Formulating questions is a fundamental component of effective communication, as it enables speakers to initiate, sustain, and deepen interaction. In many conversational contexts, interaction begins when a speaker poses a question, signaling engagement and a willingness to participate in meaning-making. This ability is particularly crucial in EFL classrooms, where learners must actively initiate and maintain spoken communication in a second language (Morishita & Harada, 2015).

Despite its importance, research consistently shows that forming questions in English remains a significant challenge for Japanese EFL learners (Buda, 2010; Shizuoka, 2020). Classroom interactions often end prematurely because learners hesitate to ask follow-up questions or struggle to produce contextually appropriate ones. These difficulties stem from factors such as anxiety and reluctance to use English (Muroya, 2023), limited opportunities for communicative practice (Yanagi & Baker, 2016), low oral proficiency (Hamada, 2008), linguistic challenges in forming Wh-questions (Yonezaki & Yonezaki, 2015), and cultural norms discouraging direct questioning (Takanashi, 2004).

To address these challenges, a self-devised conversation activity, supported by a worksheet, grounded in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is hereby proposed. The activity explicitly

encourages learners to ask relevant follow-up questions to sustain conversational flow and reduce interactional breakdowns.

The presentation outlines the rationale, design, and implementation of the activity and reports preliminary findings indicating its effectiveness. Participants will engage in a brief simulation of the activity. The findings may benefit EFL teachers, curriculum designers, policymakers, and learners by informing classroom practices aimed at improving oral English communication competence in Japan.

(233 words)

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