TRIALING THE USE OF A PRE-DISCUSSION MONOLOGUE TASK AS A PLATFORM FOR INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN A PAIRED DISCUSSION TASK

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Abstract: *Eliciting specific behaviors in speaking tests can be complex. This is especially so in peer-to-peer tests in which control over the flow of interaction is left up to the students. This paper outlines a testing approach designed to promote intersubjectivity, including the ability to signal the contextual relevance of a conversational turn, as well as engaging with, and expansion of a partner's ideas, in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) paired speaking test. The test, intended as a diagnostic tool to assess speakers' interactional competence (IC), was trialed with first-year students at a Japanese university. In response to video-delivered prompts, each speaker gave a monologue to their partner. Following this, the speakers engaged in a thematically related discussion task. Both the monologues and paired discussion were transcribed and analyzed to investigate the extent to which themes from the monologues were integrated into the discussion and served as a platform for both the contextualization of ideas, and a springboard for further topic expansion. In addition to giving insights into the prior English learning experience of Japanese first year university students obtained from a questionnaire, the paper evaluates the overall efficacy of the monologue stage. While the monologue stage did not actively promote the desired behaviors, there were positive observations related to the discussion stage itself and the video-delivered format. The paper aims to provide insights into the efficacy of pre-discussion monologues and potentially allow other educators to adapt the overall task design and delivery method to their own contexts.*

Keywords: *interactional competence, paired speaking tasks, Japanese EFL education*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to meaningfully interact with people is one of the joys of language learning. On a practical level, it allows us not only to navigate everyday contexts in a second language, but also on a more meaningful level, it enables us to build relationships with others and engage with different ideas to help create richer learning experiences in the classroom and beyond.

Research on Interactional Competence (IC) has given educators and researchers valuable insights into what makes an interaction successful or meaningful. Kramsch (1986) was the first to coin the term interactional competence, pointing out that existing language tests at the time focused on vocabulary and grammar and failed to facilitate and give insight into "dynamic process of communication" (p. 368). Key to this dynamic process is that speakers must be aware of, and contribute to a shared "sphere of inter-subjectivity" Kramsch (1986, P. 367). Speakers with IC ability, are able to use a variety of linguistic resources to respond to, and collaboratively shape the structure and flow of ideas within an interaction in a context-sensitive manner. Indeed, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes which utilize group work or collaborative discussion models, students need to be able to achieve this in order to effectively communicate with their peers in class to navigate meaning together, share ideas and create a deeper, co-constructed understanding of topics covered in classes. In this light, developing students' IC skills is a core factor in enabling students to survive and thrive in university EFL classes.

With this in mind, this paper details the development of a peer-to-peer paired speaking test (PST) to potentially be used as a diagnostic assessment of first year university students' English IC abilities. The purpose of such a test would be to inform teachers of the strengths and weaknesses of incoming students IC skill sets in order to identify appropriate teaching points in EFL or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classes. In prior trials of a previous test which used single conversation

task prompt requiring test takers to choose a travel destination together, it was noted that a large proportion of pairs fell into parallel patterns of interaction (Galaczi, 2008). That is, speakers would put forward and expand on their own ideas, but would not sufficiently engage with ideas introduced by their partner. This issue was compounded by the fact that some students were notably reticent, and did not produce enough spoken content. This presented two problems. On one hand, it resulted in an asymmetrical pattern of interaction (Galaczi, 2008) in which the more confident speaker would dominate the conversation. On the other hand, this issue also limited the ability of the more confident speakers to demonstrate their intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity refers to the ability to signpost mutual understanding, and frame one's own contributions in a way that is contingent upon and cohesive with their partner's input (Lam, 2018). Such IC-related behaviors have been shown to be valued by raters (Burch & Kley, 2020).

In response to this, a new test was trialed. This current peer-to-peer paired speaking test (PST) contains two sections. In Part One, each speaker gives a 90-second to two-minute individual monologue. Both monologue topics are unique, but are thematically related and were selected for potential content crossovers with a five-minute paired discussion task in Part Two.

Table 1: Structure of the Speaking Test

Speaker A **Monologue** (90s ~ 2 mins thinking time) *30s preparation time	**Speaker B** **Monologue** (90s ~ 2 mins thinking time) *30s preparation time	**Paired Speaking Task** (4 ~ 5 mins) *1min preparation time
What skills or attitudes do you think are important to be happy and successful in life? You may give multiple answers if you like.	What are some of the most important things that a person can experience in high school? You may give multiple answers if you like.	If you were to create one new subject for Japanese high schools, what subject would you create? Any kind of subject is OK. Please make sure to give reasons and exchange and expand upon your ideas. Please come to a mutual conclusion by the end of the time.

At a base level, the monologue was included to act as a failsafe in the event that a speaker did not adequately contribute ideas for their partner to work with in the discussion. A more optimistic hypothesis was that speakers could use information they learned about their partner (opinions, values, experiences, etc.) as a resource to contextually frame and add depth to their class suggestions, or their partner's class suggestions in Part Two. For example, if in Part One, a student was to mention that participation in club activities helps build positive relationships with peers, building relationships might be utilized as an affective factor in suggesting a class, or responding to a partner's class suggestion. In turn, this would help speakers highlight their ability to establish, and visibly exhibit intersubjectivity. With this goal in mind, the following research question was developed to investigate whether the monologue section in Part One was fulfilling this role.

Research Question

To what extent were ideas generated within speaker monologues in Part One integrated into the paired discussion task in Part Two?

In order to address this question, this paper will first discuss relevant research on IC and intersubjectivity, paired speaking tests, and the use of monologues in IC assessments. A discussion of the context surrounding the study will follow and the methodology is presented and results will be discussed. An evaluation of the functionality of the Part One monologue task will be given along with a discussion of future research possibilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interactional Competence

As mentioned above, the term interactional competence refers to the ways in which speakers use a variety of resources to navigate and co-create meaning and contextual flow with their partner(s) in a dynamic spoken interaction. Over the years, research in IC has come a long way in articulating the key elements of how Kramsch's (1986) "dynamic

process of communication" (p. 368) unfolds. Galaczi and Taylor (2018) have consolidated a number of key ideas from previous research, as well as their own studies, to put forward a construct of IC that categorizes key IC skills and behaviors as follows:

- Topic management: Initiating, Extending, Shifting, Closing
- Turn management: Starting, maintaining, Ending, Latching
- Interactive listening: Backchannelling, comprehension checks, continuers
- Breakdown Repair: Joint utterance creation, recasts
- Non-verbal behavior: Eye contact, facial expressions, laughter and posture.

The connective tissue that ties these components together into a congruent flow is addressed by research into the role of intersubjectivity in IC. Key to this notion is the idea that each turn at talk is contributed with cognizance of its relevance to the flow of conversation. Drawing from Sacks' (1992, as cited in Burch & Kley, 2020) notion of claiming, versus demonstrating understanding, Burch and Kley (2020) posit that intersubjectivity is closely related to a speaker's ability to make their understanding visible to their partner by showing how information has been understood and signposting the relevance of their own contributions. Lam (2018) has categorized this ability to respond or contribute the right content at the right time as contingency and has identified three main ways in which this takes place.

- Formulating the previous speaker's contributions via paraphrasing or summarizing.
- Accounting for agreement/disagreement with previous speaker's ideas by providing reasons and topicalizing the main idea or particular elements of a partner's contributions.
- Extending the previous speakers' ideas with extra detail, such as personal connections etc.

Ultimately, a speaker's ability to exhibit the behaviors and skills mentioned above helps the speaker to move towards a collaborative model of interaction where speakers have a balance in the amount of speaking and conversational moves, and engage in uptake of both self, and other-initiated topics (Galaczi, 2008). This is in contrast to an asymmetrical interaction, where one speaker dominates the conversation, or parallel in which both speakers contribute ideas but there is no connective tissue between turns or content (Galaczi, 2008).

Paired Speaking Tests

Paired speaking tests (PST) have become commonly used in both low and high-stakes assessment contexts (May, 2011). Research has noted a number of positive aspects of PSTs in relation to the testing of interactional competence.

For example, in their research on the use of PSTs with Spanish as a second language speakers, Ducasse and Brown (2009) made the case that PSTs allow for an assessor to gain insight into how speakers participate in interactions outside of the confines of an interviewee role. They note that compared to interviewee style tests, peer-to-peer interactions, speakers contribute to the "equal flow of the conversation as the two interactants move equally between speaker and listener roles, and participate equally in the management of the interaction" (p.440). Brooks (2009), suggests that PSTs are more authentic as they more closely reflect the kinds of speaking tasks used in classrooms, noting that compared to interview style tests, PSTs produced more complex interaction characteristics such as prompting, elaboration, finishing of sentences, reference to interlocutor's ideas, and paraphrasing. Galaczi and Taylor (2018) have similarly noted that PSTs may enable speakers to demonstrate their IC behaviors more effectively. However, Brooks (2009), drawing from He & Dai (2006) does note that these positive attributes are dependent on the requirement that test takers be attuned

to each other, and work towards cohesion and mutual negotiation of meaning rather than focusing on one's own individual contributions, and using a partner's speaking time as an opportunity to prepare and organize their own ideas.

In addition to this collaborative attitude, general language ability plays a role in the extent to which speakers can display IC strategies. When speakers are more easily able to perform processes such as sentence formation and decoding meaning and messages, their "working memory can be freed to allow them to engage more collaboratively in the interaction and to display successful IC strategies." (Galaczi, 2008, p. 20). Finally, concerns regarding the impact of one speaker on another (May, 2011) and the complexity that arises from the unpredictable nature of PSTs, creates challenges for the creation of reliable and fair assessment constructs (Brooks, 2009) have been noted.

Monologues and IC

There appears to be little research done in relation to the function of monologues in IC as they were used in this study. The general theme of most IC research tends to align with Roever and Kasper (2018) who state that IC cannot be observed without co-participants jointly engaging in reciprocal talk. Thus, monological speaking tasks are largely eliminated as assessment options for IC. They do temper this claim with an acknowledgment that monologues can be set up and delivered with a recipient audience in mind, which is an aspect of IC, but note that research in this area is lacking. By and large, the sentiment seems to be that without the "co-" to go with the "construction", monologues are of limited value in assessing IC. It is hoped that this study, which positions the initial monologues in Part One as a platform for speakers to gain insights into the values and opinions of their partner, and later operationalize these insights in a discussion task, will be of value to other researchers and educators.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The EFL Context in Japan

Recently, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has shown a push towards a more communicative language teaching model for Japanese students. This is reflected in the most recent course of study for English education (MEXT, 2018), which positions speaking interaction as a core goal for Japanese high school English Communication I, II, and III classes, as well as the recently added Logic and Expression classes for first, second and third year high school students.

However, there has historically been a dissonance between the well-intentioned communicative goals of MEXT and the realities of how language teaching actually occurs in English classrooms in Japan (Koby, 2015, Tahira, 2012). In addition, the main insight that Japanese universities have into the English ability of incoming students comes from the Common Test for University Admissions. The test is a partial determinant of students' eligibility to enter national and prefectural universities, and at many universities, is a large determinant of their English class level placement once they enter. The current test format, initially rolled out in 2021, takes the form of a multiple-choice mark sheet (Kamiya, 2024) with no speaking or conversation component.

Questionnaire regarding high school English learning experience

As a precursor step to the creation of this speaking test, a voluntary questionnaire was administered via Google Forms to incoming first-year students at three universities (2024 intake). The questionnaire, initially given to students in Japanese, was undertaken to gain insights into previous experiences of incoming students to inform task design elements. In all, 686 first-year students from 35 different prefectures responded. However, it should be noted that the majority of respondents had completed the majority of their high school in the Northern Tohoku region of Iwate (32.5%), Miyagi (11.4%) and Aomori (10.7%) as well as

11.1% from Ibaraki Prefecture in the Kanto region, where one member of the research team is based. The vast majority (roughly 85%) were from the public education system with the remaining 15% coming from private schools. Students who responded that they had undertaken the majority of their high school outside of Japan were not included in the results. Key findings pertinent to the creation of this test are given below.

Results indicate that despite MEXT's pushes for more communicative English classes, a lot of class time is still being dedicated to teacher explanation time with 46.8% of all respondents reporting that 70% or more of their English classes was spent listening to teacher explanation.

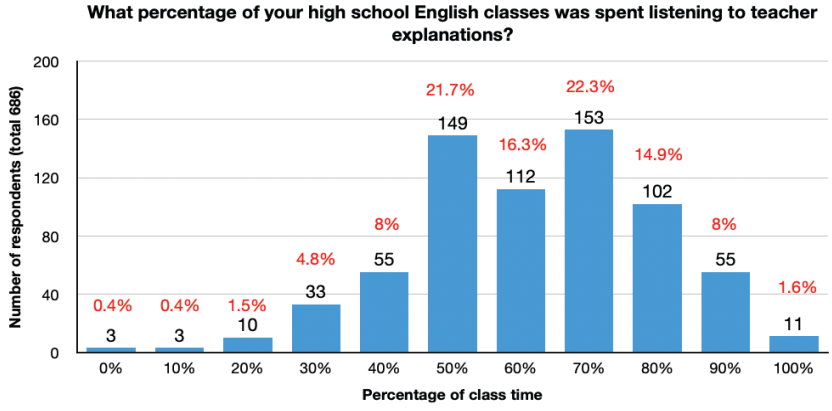

Figure 1: Student Responses regarding the Amount of English Class Time Spent Listening to Teacher Explanations

Not surprisingly, the time students spent actively using English is roughly the inverse of Figure 1. Roughly 40% of respondents reported spending 20% or less of their English class time actively using English. More alarmingly, just over 20% of students reported spending less than 10% of their English class time actively using English. This amounts to 5 minutes of active English use in a 50-minute class, which is the general standard in Japanese high schools.

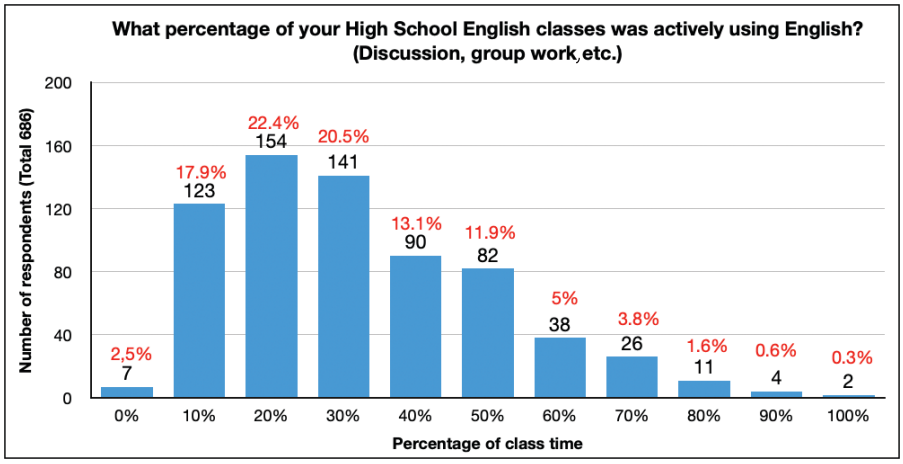

Figure 2: Student Responses Regarding the Amount of English Class Time Spent Actively Using English

The end result of this English language learning experience is reflected in Figure 3. Overall, the vast majority of first-year university students surveyed lack confidence in their ability to engage in impromptu conversations, with 40% of respondents stating that they had no confidence at all.

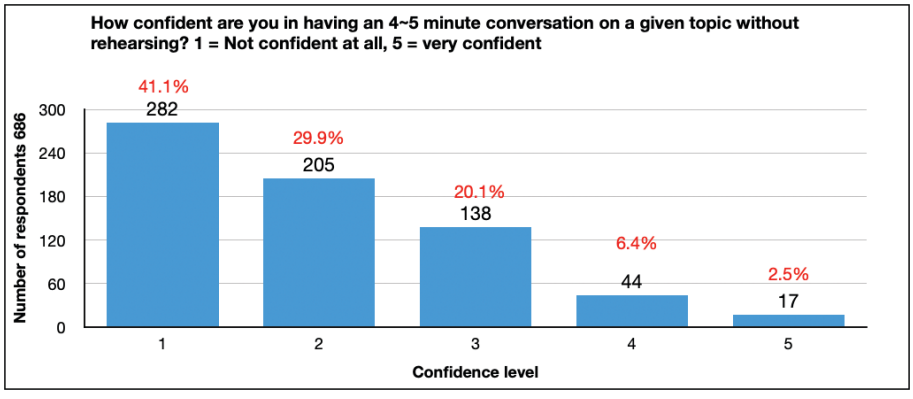

Figure 3: Student Responses Regarding Confidence Levels in Impromptu Conversations

The key implication from these results is that many incoming first-year students may not have had sufficient opportunity to engage in discussion tasks and develop the confidence and interaction skills that will be required of them at university. Thus, a diagnostic test to measure students' interactional abilities may be of use to university educators to guide the necessary instruction to help students develop confidence and be able to engage in productive interactions.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in this study were first-year students from a national university in the Tohoku region of Japan. In total, 30 pairs took the test, and from these, twelve pairs (24 individual students) were selected for analysis. The selection process was random apart from ensuring that there was a balance between pairs from beginner, intermediate, and advanced classes, with four pairs from each level. As is the case with most universities in Japan, the class levels are decided by the students' scores on the English section of the Common Test for University Admissions. Unfortunately, the researchers have no other metrics by which to judge their language ability (for example, private English tests or CEFR levels). However, as this is often the case for many EFL teachers at universities in Japan, working with broad English class levels reflects the reality that teachers would encounter in actual classes.

Volunteers were recruited as pairs from the same class. This means that each pair were either friends or at least knew each other from class. This also meant that pairs were made up of students from the same English class level (beginner with beginner, intermediate with intermediate, and advanced with advanced). No pairs consisted of two students from different English class levels.

Test instructions

The content of the test (including thinking and speaking times) was explained in the introduction section. In addition, based on inferences from the questionnaire results, instructions were given in Japanese for both the overall structure of the test, and the behaviors speakers were encouraged to show. Key points conveyed to test takers were that they should cooperate in the conversation together, use active listening, ask questions and build on each other's ideas, and try to keep the conversation balanced and flowing. Immediately before the conversation task in Part Two, speakers were encouraged to use information that they had learned about their partner in their Part One monologue. Test takers were also given pencils and paper to take notes during their partner's monologue.

Test administration and instructions

The test instructions and task prompts were all delivered to the students in video-delivered format. The video presented instructions and task prompts with an audio track presented alongside written instructions. This approach was chosen for two main reasons. Firstly, in trials of the previous test, speakers would unfortunately direct their answers at the assessor/interviewer rather than their partner so this format helped to avoid this problem. In addition, in previous face-to-face trials there had been inconsistency in the ways that interviewers behaved with regards to giving test takers support moves and clarifications. Having each pair receive their task prompts from a pre-recorded video-delivered format was a move to make the test more consistent and fairer across pairs.

Secondly, on a practical level, using the video-delivered format helped economize the time and effort in administering the test. It allowed one researcher to administer the test to multiple test takers at once in a "bulk test" recorded simultaneously in the same room using iPads, with the video being played on the large screen projector at the front of the classroom. The maximum number of students in these group settings was eight students, but this was actually due mostly to the number of

recording devices available. Due to scheduling, some pairs took the test as an individual pair in a room with the test administrator, although the test delivery and recording methods remained the same.

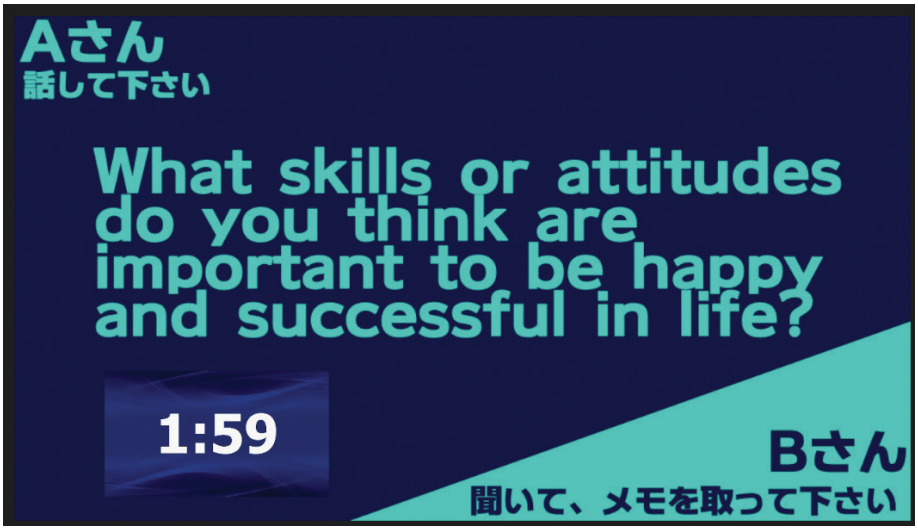

Figure 4: Screenshot of Example Monologue Prompt Seen by Test Takers

Data collection and analysis

Test taker performances were recorded on video using iPads and both the Part One monologues and Part Two discussions were transcribed. From there, discrete ideas generated within each monologue were identified and broken down into individual key ideas or themes, and supporting ideas. This step involved some paraphrasing by the author. The number of both key and supporting ideas was documented. After this, the Part Two conversation of each pair was analyzed to determine whether, and to what extent, key or supporting ideas from either speaker's monologue were mentioned again in the conversation task.

Analysis process

The analysis process is explained below using excerpts from an actual test taker performance.

Speaker A Monologue

"I think… to be happy and successful in life, um, we have to do keep do my best, all, everywhere, every time so…I think being happy and successful is ah, accomplish my goal and, so, umm, so… to achieve the goal, we have to do our best and never give up, and, also I think we, we don't have to think someone do something for me, so… um… it is important to think for someone to do but, but I think it is important to do myself… so… I think I have to do my best myself."

Speaker B Monologue

"OK, I think it is relationship with friends because HS has many activities for example, school trip, sports festival and school festival and club activity so, we can make many friends through a lot of activities. And, especially I think club activity is very important because HS has many kids of club activities and we can choose club activities that I want to do and.. yeah.. I was belonged to high school club in my high school days. I could make so many friends because brass band club has a lot of member so I could enjoy like concert and … school festivals concert. Um, so I think relationship is very important things that a person can experience in High School. Yeah. That's all."

The first step was to identify how many potential content points were present in each speaker's monologue. In this pair, Speaker A put forward two key ideas (1- Doing one's best and 2- Doing things for yourself without relying on others). However, they only offered one supporting idea (That doing one's best is important for achieving goals). This would be considered as three content points that Speaker B could potentially capitalize on and integrate into the Part Two conversation.

Speaker B only offered one key idea (Building relationships with friends) but offered two supporting ideas (1- High schools have lots of activities to make friends and 2- A personal anecdote of their experience in the

brass band club). This would also be considered as 3 potential content points that their partner could reference in the Part Two conversation.

The second step involved analysis of the Part Two conversation to determine whether, and how monologue ideas were represented. Key aspects of this process were as follows:

- Whether it was a reference to one's own ideas (self) or their partner's (other)
- Whether or not the relevance of the reference was signposted (made explicitly visible)
- Whether or not the reference was accompanied by any meaningful topic extension.

This process is explained below using an excerpt from the Part Two discussion of the same pair.

Except from Part Two conversation

1. *B: I, I think, uh…mmm.. haha, I choose make movies class*
2. *A: Ahh!*
3. *B: Because uh… make movies class, uh.. all students,*
4. *B: high students, first grade, second grade, third graders*
5. *B: all students participate in make movies class, so we can make relationship with many friends.*
6. *A: Ahh*
7. *B: It is challenging, so we can learn never give up, never give up (gestures to partner)*
8. *A: Ohh!*
9. *B: *Nods*
10. *B: And we can learn... how of achive the goal. Yeah. How about you?*
11. *A: Uh, I think, eh, social manner (rising intonation)*
12. *B: Uh huh. Yeah?*
13. *A: I think now I am university Student and it is difficult for me to choose the clothes.*

In line 5, Speaker B connects their own suggestion to the idea of the importance of building relationships from their monologue. However, the relevance is not explicitly unpacked. Following this, in line 7, they refer to an idea from Speaker A's monologue (The importance of never giving up) and gestures to their partner. In this instance the gesture to Speaker A was taken as an explicit signposting of relevance as it is in effect saying "This is how my class idea applies to what you have said". The emphatic "Ohh!" from Speaker A in Line 8 indicates that both speakers recognize this connection and the class suggestion has been contextualized in what has previously been said, adding depth to the "sphere of intersubjectivity". However, as Speaker B quickly throws the conversation back to their partner, neither speaker engaged with the referenced idea in any meaningful way. This positions the inclusion of the Part One idea as a simple reference that did not serve as a platform for any meaningful expansion. No other references to content from Part One were made and the characteristics of the conversation were noted in the following format.

Table 2: Example of Idea Notation Method from Part Two Discussion

	Key Idea / Supporting ideas	**Part Two**	**Reference by self / other**	**Function of reference**	**Relevance Clearly signposted**	**Meaningful Extension**
A	Do one's best and never give up	✓	Other	Applying partners information to signpost relevance of own suggestion	Yes	No
	Accomplish goals.	✓	Other	Applying partner information to signpost relevance of own suggestion	No	No

	Key Idea / Supporting ideas	Part Two	Reference by self / other	Function of reference	Relevance Clearly signposted	Meaningful Extension
B	Do things for oneself and not rely on others.	X				
	Build relationships with friends	✓	Self		No	No
	Can make friends through activities (club activities, school events)	X				

This process was applied to selected test performances, and cumulative results for beginner, intermediate, and advanced pairs were compiled.

RESULTS

The cumulative results of the analysis process are represented in the following table.

Table 3: Cumulative Results of Analysis of All Pairs

	Beginner Pairs (4)	Intermediate Pairs (4)	Advanced Pairs (4)
Total number of Key ideas	13	16	18
Average number of key ideas per speaker	1.6	2	2.25
Total number of Support ideas in Part One monologue	12	22	29

Average number of support ideas per speaker	1.5	2.75	3.6
Total number of references in Part Two	4	4	3
Referenced by self / Referenced by other	Self: 3 Other: 1	Self: 2 Other: 2	Self: 1 Other: 2
Total number of instances where relevance of idea was explicitly signposted.	1	1	0
Total number of instances of further expansion.	1	0	2

In the monologues, beginner speakers averaged 1.6 key ideas and 1.5 supporting ideas per speaker yielding a total of 13 content points for possible reference across the four pairs. However, across all discussions, only four monologue content points were integrated into the Part Two conversation. Three of these were self-references, and only one was a reference to a partner's idea. Explicit signposting of the connection between ideas raised within the discussion to the previous monologues only occurred on one occasion, and only one monologue idea was utilized as a springboard for meaningful extension.

Intermediate speakers were able to produce slightly more content points in their monologues, averaging two key ideas and 2.75 supporting ideas per speaker. However, integration of monologue content points into the Part Two conversation remained quite low with only four ideas being referenced across all conversations. Of these, two were self-references to one's own ideas, and two were references to the partner's ideas. Explicit signposting of relevance remained very rare, only occurring on one occasion. No ideas from the Part One monologue section were used as a springboard for further topic expansion.

Unsurprisingly, advanced speakers were able to deliver more content points in their monologues. The number of key ideas was similar to the

intermediate group, with an average of 2.25 per speaker. However, they were able to produce much more detail in their contributions, producing an average of 3.6 supporting ideas per speaker. Even so, only three of these ideas explicitly made it into the Part Two conversations and across the four conversations, only two ideas were developed beyond a surface-level reference.

DISCUSSION

The Part One monologue section was intended to provide a resource of content points for speakers to draw from in order to explicitly show depth of relevance and intersubjectivity with their partner when discussing class suggestions in the Part Two discussion. However, the results of this trial seem to indicate that, in terms of the original research question, uptake of partner's key concepts and ideas from the monologue section was minimal. The vast majority of speakers did not integrate ideas that they had learned about their partner into the discussion as anticipated. This suggests that the Part One monologue stage was not a visibly useful resource for speakers to utilize when undertaking the Part Two discussion.

Ultimately, while each student contributed to a foundation of ideas that could potentially be operationalized in Part Two, it is a push and pull situation. That is, despite the test instructions encouraging the students to use what they have learned about their partner in Part One (the push) there is nothing within the Part Two task itself which actually necessitates this step (the pull). If other educators were hoping to use this style of test, a bridging task where each speaker is given time to respond to their partner's idea could potentially help necessitate the formulating, accounting, and expanding identified by Lam (2018) as a component of intersubjectivity. By extension, this could give further insight into a speaker's interactional competence.

There are some limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size is quite small and was limited to one task prompt. In

addition, reliance on researcher paraphrasing is also a potential issue. Some monologues were not delivered in a smooth manner and consisted of multiple restarts and grammatical errors. While it was possible for a native English speaker with EFL teaching experience to parse the speaker's meaning, this does not mean that all ideas generated were necessarily understandable to partners. This means that not all content points from the monologues were necessarily viable options for test takers to use in the discussion task.

Although the Part One monologue did not seem to function as intended, that is not to say that the test did not allow test takers to exhibit their IC skills. In many cases the Part Two discussion elicited a healthy back and forth and exchange of ideas, albeit not necessarily ones that could be directly attributable to the monologue section. One notable example was a pair who spoke about building relationships and the importance of smiles in their respective Part One monologues, but ended up having a lively discussion about how they didn't know anything about taxes and how it should be taught in high schools in their Part Two discussion. It could be said that one could not find two topics as unrelated as smiles and taxes. The actual discussion section in a vacuum produced a number of dynamic interactions, more so than had been observed in the previously trialed 'travel destination' version of the test explained above. In this, it seems that the explanation of desired behaviors in Japanese was a positive step and test takers seemed to respond well. Also, the video-delivered test format was deemed to be an effective tool. Both in terms of test administration and the performance of test takers, it seemed to work smoothly and may be a practical option to lessen the burden on teaching staff when administering paired speaking tests to a large number of students. One point of interest is that the students who took the test in a bulk test in the same room as other pairs, seemed more relaxed and comfortable than those who took it alone with the researcher. This is an unexpected but noteworthy observation that would likely benefit from further research in the future.

CONCLUSION

As has been indicated by the results of the questionnaire regarding students' high school English experience, an IC-focused diagnostic test which gives insight into how students are able to interact with their peers has merit. As the changes to the high school English curriculum in Japan take root, students' interactional abilities will likely show changes and it is important for universities to stay abreast of these developments. While, in this instance, the use of monologues did not seem to promote intersubjectivity between speakers and the uptake and expansion of partners' ideas in a paired speaking task, the video-delivered testing method and first-language instruction on desired communicative behaviors in the task description seem to hold promise in creating paired IC-focused assessments. It is hoped that this account of the intentions, process, and observations will enable other educators to adapt the format to suit their own needs and contexts.

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