A Production-Enhanced PPP Approach for Teaching Conversation Strategies

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English communication skills are increasingly emphasized in the Ministry of Education's Course of Study for secondary school. However, students in the EFL context in Japan have little exposure to English on a regular basis and few opportunities to use the target language outside the classroom. Moreover, EFL secondary school teachers do not typically spend enough time on speaking practice in class. The traditional PPP method (present, practice, produce) used by many teachers in secondary schools often only emphasizes the first two Ps, leaving even fewer opportunities for spoken production. This paper presents an instructional sequence for teaching conversation strategies using a *production-enhanced* PPP method in the Japanese EFL secondary school context. It is hoped that production-focused versions of PPP like this one can help to provide more opportunities to develop students' communicative skills.

高等学校新学習指導要領では、英語によるコミュニケーション能力の育成がますます強調されている。しかし、日本のようなEFLの環境下では、学習者は日常的に英語に触れることがなく、授業外で英語を使用する場面も少ない。さらに、高等学校の英語の授業ではスピーキングに十分な時間が費やされていない。また、多くの教師がPPP（Present-Practice-Produce）メソッドを授業に取り入れているが、最初の2つのPに焦点が置かれることが多く、スピーキング（特に「やり取り」）のプロダクションの機会が少ないのが現状である。本論文では、EFLの環境である日本の高等学校で学習者の英語によるコミュニケーション能力を育成するために、Conversation Strategiesを用いたプロダクションに重きを置いたPPPメソッドによる授業デザインを提案する。

English education policy in Japan has undergone major changes in recent years (NITS, 2018, 2022) and communication skills are greatly emphasized due, in part, to the trend toward internationalization and globalization (MEXT, 2021). The Ministry of Education's course of study states that language teachers should carry out tasks and language activities that are well-balanced among the four English skills to develop learners' communicative proficiency and interactive skills (MEXT, 2011).

However, in the Japanese EFL high school context, learners have few opportunities to use English outside the classroom. According to a survey conducted by Benesse (2020), many students have little confidence in their ability to speak English and tend to see speaking as difficult. Therefore, it is quite challenging for teachers to help them develop their English conversation skills. Moreover, government-approved textbooks do not seem to include enough materials for developing learners' interactive skills in English. Depending on textbook content, Japanese teachers of English tend to spend their time mostly developing students' receptive skills such as reading and grammar. Also, as Sato (2010) noted, while teachers in secondary school typically rely on the traditional PPP (present, practice, produce) method to teach grammar, there is a tendency to omit or place less emphasis on the third P (produce).

In this paper, I outline an instructional sequence for teaching conversation strategies using a *production-enhanced* PPP method in Japanese high school EFL classes. The paper begins with a discussion of relevant literature on conversation strategies and their application in the EFL classroom. This review also notes problems including a lack of focus on production in the PPP model, which is commonly used to teach conversation strategies. Based on insights from the literature, I then present a lesson plan for teaching conversation strategies using a production-enhanced PPP method.

Literature Review
Communicative Competence and Conversation Strategies
According to Canale and Swain (1980, cited in Jones, 2021), communicative competence is related to four main parts of spoken language: linguistic competence, strategic competence, discourse competence, and pragmatic competence. These

competencies are essential for second language learners to succeed in communicating effectively in English. Jones (2021) defined communicative competence simply as "the ability to take part in successful conversations" (p. 19). Getting learners to develop communicative competence is the central aim of second language teaching (Jones, 2021). Therefore, it is necessary for EFL teachers to use methods and techniques to help learners improve oral communication skills, and students need to be provided with effective oral communication activities in foreign language classes (Mahdi, 2015).

Communication strategy training has been shown to be effective and beneficial for language learners (e.g., Dörnyei, 1995; Jones, 2021). Conversation strategies offer useful means to develop EFL learners' communicative competence because they focus on specific conversational features, such as how to manage turns and invite others to give their views (Jones, 2021). According to McCarthy and McCarten (2018), there are four categories of conversation strategies (managing the conversation, constructing your own turn, listenership, and taking account of others), and each category includes several sub-categories. For example, as Jones (2021, p. 150) argued, conversation strategies such as showing listenership can be further broken down into sub-strategies such as showing you are following. Each of these sub-categories has linguistic realizations, such as *right*, *uh*, and *I see*. Another conversation strategy described in McCarthy and McCarten (2018) is taking account of others, which is the strategic use of asking a favor in a polite way such as *I was wondering if I could...* (p. 15).

In a recent large-scale study of communication strategies conducted in a Japanese university, Jones (2021) reported that participants perceived the instruction of conversation strategies as useful. The study also found that their use lowered learners' anxiety over expressing their ideas in the target language. In another study, also in the Japanese university context, Talandis and Stout (2015) found that students' use of conversation strategies increased in amount and variety through the repetition of activities that prompted the use of particular conversation strategies. The authors found that even low-level students improved in fluency and accuracy over the course of the year through the repetition of activities that prompted the same types of conversation strategies. Therefore, conversation strategies seem to help develop learners' conversational skills and their repetition can give learners many opportunities to use the target language in class.

Another aspect of communicative competence outlined in Canale and Swain (1980, cited in Jones, 2021) that is closely related to strategic competence is pragmatic competence. Pragmatics is defined as "the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms" (Yule, 1996, p. 4). By producing utterances, speakers intend to convey their messages to the hearer (Yule, 1996). As Ishihara and Cohen (2014) pointed out, in order to succeed in communicating orally in a foreign language, learners need to know how to say what they want to say appropriately in the target language.

Of course, not all phrases are appropriate for all communicative contexts. Ishihara and Cohen (2014) presented three major elements, social status, distance, and intensity (SDI), among a number of extra-linguistic contextual factors that influence communication in conversation. The elements of SDI indicate respectively, "the relative social status of the speaker (writer) and listener (reader)...the level of social distance and psychological distance...[and] the intensity or severity of the act" (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014, p. 12-13). Analyzing context with SDI parameters helps learners notice how people communicate differently in specific contexts with respect to the SDI components, helping them to develop their communication skills (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). According to Ishihara and Cohen (2014), learners' attention and awareness of pragmatic information must be consciously attended to, which enhances their noticing, intake, and long-term memory.

Corpus-Based Materials

One challenge in developing communicative competence is identifying the language features needed to realize different strategies and functions. Fortunately, recent advances in corpus linguistics can be of much help with this. Corpora help teachers to create appropriate materials for enhancing students' English oral communication skills. According to Ishihara and Cohen (2014), "[a] language corpus is a large, purposively assembled collection of computerized texts in spoken or written form" (p. 175). As Jones (2021) indicated, "corpora provide us with clear data on how people manage and interact with each other in conversations and the language they use" (p. 23). They offer evidence about linguistic use, especially frequency of use in spoken and written language, which can help ESL and EFL teachers decide what they should teach (Gavioli & Aston, 2001). For example, in both the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the British National Corpus (BNC), the question, *what do you think?* which is used in managing a conversation, shows a high frequency. As Carter and McCarthy (2017) pointed out, "spoken corpora enabled new insights into the grammar of everyday speaking" (p. 1). According to Campbell-Larsen's (2015) discussion of reported speech forms (e.g., *she said/stated that*...), there is a gap between how these forms are actually used in authentic speech and how they are commonly presented in teaching materials. The authors explained that while backshifting of tenses (*she said that he had*...) in reported speech is often emphasized in EFL coursebooks, this rule is often not adhered to and "does not accord fully with the findings of corpus studies" (Campbell-Larsen,

2015, p. 341). Instead, according to corpus data, a common form that occurs in reported speech constructions is the past progressive, as in *he was saying that he will visit Kyoto next month*. Thus, corpus findings can help to reveal gaps between the actual use of spoken grammar and the grammatical functions that learners encounter in textbooks.

Moreover, Jones (2021) used The UCLan Speaking Test Corpus (USTC) and VOICE 2.0 Online to analyze the use of conversation strategies by ESL speakers and EFL speakers. In one example, USTC found that *yeah*, which is usually used to show listenership, is also used to buy time when considering what to say next and that the formulaic sequence *so yeah* can be used to signal that a turn has finished. On the other hand, VOICE 2.0 Online showed that *yeah* can be used to show agreement and understanding (Jones, 2021). Thus, the expression *yeah* can be defined as a multifunctional item according to the corpus analysis (Jones, 2021). In addition to the selection of language features, there is the issue of how to introduce and practice them in an actual class.

Sequencing Conversation Strategy Instruction: The Three Ps

One well-known pedagogic procedure for the application of conversation strategies is present, practice, produce (PPP). According to Thompson (2018), PPP can involve "explicit grammar instruction of target linguistic features which are then practiced using controlled activities before allowing the learner to use the form in free productive use" (p. 43). A recent study by Lakuana and Siojam (2020) found that applying the PPP method in English classrooms helped students effectively perform functions such as making suggestions and offers.

According to Shintani (2011), the first phase of PPP, present, involves presenting students "with explicit information about a target feature to establish declarative knowledge" (p. 99). When introducing conversation strategies in the classroom, the initial awareness-raising phase before practice can be used to explicitly teach conversation strategies (Dörnyei, 1994, 1995; Jones, 2021; Talandis & Stout, 2015). Texts, audio recordings and visual aids can be used to demonstrate situations when providing explicit information about a target strategy (Kostoulas, 2012).

Since it takes time to master pragmatic concepts, learners need to spend some time practicing target conversation strategies (Talandis & Stout, 2015), which is the focus of the practice phase of the PPP sequence. According to Shintani (2011), this phase provides "practice in the form of controlled production activities to develop procedural knowledge" (p. 99). Students need to practice using key expressions in contexts in which they normally occur (McCarthy & McCarten, 2018; Jones, 2021). Jones (2021) also notes

that knowledge about conversation strategies alone is not enough to gain the ability to use them. Controlled practice activities should be used in class (Timmis, 2012) and guided practice with spoken language can lead learners to notice differences between their L1 and the L2 (Nation, 2013). Practice activities suggested in Kostoulas (2012) include "drills, multiple-choice exercises, gap-and-cue exercises, transformations, etc." (para. 3).

After students master the form and learn how to produce it during the present and practice phases, they can go on to the produce phase, where teachers "engage learners in free production activities by means of structure-based production tasks" (Shintani, 2011, p. 99). While accuracy, the ability to produce the form correctly, is emphasized in the practice phase, fluency, the ability to produce the form naturally, is the goal of the produce phase (Kostoulas, 2012).

The PPP method has received some criticism, especially by advocates of task-based language teaching and focus on form (e.g., Ellis, 2003; Long, 2016). However, some studies have shown positive results of PPP in teaching conversation strategies (e.g., Jones & Carter, 2014; Lakuana & Siojam, 2020). Jones and Carter (2014) found that learners considered the practice phase of PPP especially useful and that they performed better on the posttest than the non-PPP group, who received inductive instruction that did not use the practice phase. As Sato (2010) pointed out, "the traditional PPP type approach is still practical and beneficial in Japanese secondary schools" (p. 196). However, as Sato (2010) also noted, for the PPP framework to be effective in the EFL environment, it is necessary to make it more communicative by putting more emphasis on the produce stage. Also, as Jones and Carter (2014) pointed out, "there is a need to regularly revisit target items in class, over an extended time period" (p. 51).

In sum, the PPP method provides an appropriate instructional sequence for teaching conversation strategies in the EFL classroom. However, it is important that the produce phase receives adequate focus and that learners are provided with regular opportunities to produce English in class.

Lesson Plan
Applying Conversation Strategies in Class

The lesson sequence outlined in this section follows a PPP structure with an enhanced production stage, which is achieved through the regular repetition of communicative activities. Lists can be created by teachers to suit the levels and needs of their learners. One list, developed by the author and shown as an example in Table 1, is formed by

corpus frequency findings from such sources as *The Longman Grammar of Written and Spoken English* (Biber et al., 1999). It is also informed by the author's own judgment about the functions and phrases that are most suitable to the teaching context. The expressions one chooses should be less challenging at first, and then the list can be updated by adding other expressions based on learners' progress. The expressions on the list are categorized based on conversation strategies, whose usage might be easier for students to understand. The list can be provided as a printed handout and a digital version uploaded to a learning management system, where students can access the lesson materials online. Also, the target spoken language can be sequenced from less to more challenging over the course of the school year.

Table 1
Sample List of Conversation Strategies

Functions	Useful Expressions for Conversation
1. Showing listenership	Yeah. / I see.
	Really?
	That's true.
	That's right. / Exactly.
	That's nice (good / bad / great).
2. Giving opinions (Managing your own turn)	I think (believe, guess).
	In my opinion...
3. Giving reasons (Managing your own turn)	...because...
	One reason is...
	Another reason is...
	That's because...
4. Giving examples (Managing your own turn)	For example...
	One example is...
5. Asking opinions (Managing the conversation)	What do you think?
	What is your idea (opinion)?
6. Requesting (Taking account of others)	Can you...? / Could you possibly...?
	Would you mind if...? / I wonder if you could... / I am wondering if you could...

The Present Phase

To raise learners' awareness of target conversation strategies in the present phase, authentic materials related to everyday life and students' interests need to be collected and presented, such as online resources and examples from movies and dramas. Teachers can transcribe the script from those resources and extract the video clip to show learners in class. With those materials, teachers can teach the target language explicitly, which may enable students to pay more attention to the target expressions. For example, online resources such as *BBC Learning English*, "Make Polite Requests 05: English at Work," (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWBwCoecvkM) can be used for the *present* stage. It may be necessary to modify the discourse to make it easier to use in the practice phase.

Another option in case it is difficult to find appropriate materials for the present phase is for teachers to create the materials on their own. The demonstration of the original discourse including the target expressions can be video-recorded with the help of a native English-speaking teacher and an ALT.

After learning the expressions and context of the discourse materials in the *Presentation* phase, students analyze the discourse based on the SDI components to help them understand the pragmatic concepts as shown in Figure 1. They can be encouraged to notice the gap between English and their L1 and how to manage a conversation in the target language. Students first analyze the dialogue individually, share their ideas in pairs, then share with the class. At the end of the task, they summarize the context in which the target expressions are used.

Figure 1
Sample Material for the Present Phase

1. Watch a video clip and check the target expressions.

2. Read the following discourse between Anna and her boss.

Situation: Anna wants to print out a file, but the printer has not been set up. As a result, she is now asking Tom, one of her colleagues, for help. Tom is busy writing an email to an important client.

Anna: **Could you possibly** help me with the printer?

Tom: Er... I really need to finish this email. It's to a really important new client.

Anna: But it's really urgent. **Would you mind** writ**ing** your email later?

Tom: OK. Let's have a look.

3. Analyze the discourse using SDI components.
   *SDIの要素を用いて、会話を分析してみよう!

	Anna	Tom
Status (地位)	low・・・・high	low・・・・high
Distance (距離)	close・・・・distance	close・・・・distance
Imposition (要求の度合い)	low・・・・high	low・・・・high

Note: Sample material developed from *BBC Learning English*, "Make Polite Requests 05: English at Work."

The Practice Phase

Once students are exposed to the key functions of the expressions for conversation strategies, they need to do some controlled practice in the practice phase. In this phase, they are provided with scenarios in which the target conversation strategies can be used, as shown in Figure 2. Students read the scenarios and create the utterances of the person in the situation by using the target expressions. First, they work on the tasks in pairs and then share their ideas in groups, which helps students complete the task collaboratively. In this way, they can clarify and deepen their understanding of the usage of the target conversation strategies.

Figure 2
Sample Controlled Practice

Task: Read each scenario. Then write appropriate utterances using the target conversation strategies.

Scenario 1: Keiko, an office worker, wants to take Friday off because of her son's school entrance ceremony. She will ask her boss, Ms. Brown, in a polite way.

Keiko's request to Ms. Brown

A further series of practice exercises designed to foster students' learning should then be carried out. Referring to the materials in the present phase and tasks in the practice phase as models, students make original scenarios and English dialogues in pairs. Several requirements for completing the task should be set in order to make the task clear to students (see Figure 3). Students are allowed to use their L1 when creating original dialogue with the target expressions related to conversation strategies. After creating the dialogue, they video-record their demonstration with their own ICT devices and upload them to online platforms such as Google Classroom, Flipgrid, and LoiLo so that teachers can assess their work. This is very useful for assessment purposes as teachers can observe demonstrations repeatedly and note improvement as the course progresses. Also, the video clips of student demonstrations can be used for self- and peer-assessment by having students share their videos with each other.

Figure 3
Sample Task in the Practice Phase

Referring to the previous tasks, create your original scenario and dialogue using the target expressions.	
Requirement 1	You need to use at least one of the following target expressions in your original dialogue. "Could you possibly ….?" "Would you mind ~ing?" "I was wondering if you could ….?
Requirement 2	Each person in the dialogue has at least three lines (turns).
Requirement 3	You need to cooperate with your partner. You will video-record your performance and submit it on Flipgrid.

The Repeated Production Phase

As previously mentioned, repetition of speaking activities can help learners develop their speaking skills. Therefore, a free conversation activity during the produce phase should be conducted regularly in class. This enhanced production phase provides plenty of opportunity for students to freely use conversation strategies on a regular basis. As the third P (produce) often does not get enough attention in Japanese secondary school classrooms (Sato, 2011), regular practice of this kind helps to address this issue.

The free conversation activity described here is conducted as a warm-up at the beginning of each lesson. Myskow et al. (2020) outlined a simple procedure called the CUE technique (choose, use, evaluate), which can be used to provide routine practice with conversation strategies. In this procedure, students are given a conversational prompt and then individually choose from a list of conversational strategies that they have already practiced (e.g., showing listenership). Then in pairs, they have conversations while trying to use the expressions they have selected. They can talk about any topic they wish to talk about but must try to use the expressions they have chosen. The allotted time for the activity can be changed and extended based on learners' proficiency level and developmental stage. Finally, students evaluate their use of the strategy after the conversation by checking what items on the list they used. Figure 4 shows a

sample worksheet using the CUE technique to teach target conversation strategies in the author's teaching context. As can be seen, students choose which expressions and strategies they want to review by writing a check/circle next to them and then when they are done, they evaluate their use of those expressions and strategies.

This conversation activity using the CUE technique needs to be repeated regularly over the course of the school year so that students can increase the number of expressions they are able to use.

Figure 4
Sample Worksheet for Enhanced Production Using the CUE Technique

1. **Choose** the expressions you want to use in the activity from the list.
2. **Use** the self-selected expressions in a conversation with your partner.
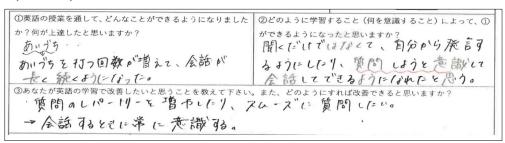3. **Evaluate** by reflecting on your conversation and your use of the chosen expressions.

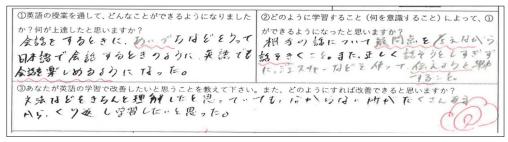| Functions	Useful Expressions for Conversation	Choose & Use	Evaluate
1. Showing listenership	Yeah. / I see. Really? That's true. That's right. / Exactly. That's nice (good / bad / great).		
2. Giving opinions (Managing your own turn)	I think (believe, guess)…. In my opinion, …		
3. Giving reasons (Managing your own turn)	…., because ---. One reason is …. Another reason is …. That's because ….		
4. Giving examples (Managing your own turn)	For example, …. One example is ….		

Student Responses to the Approach

This approach was conducted by the author in a Japanese high school and the production phase was implemented repeatedly for about 6 months. Figure 5 shows two students' reflections on the approach, indicating that they tried to improve their performance by utilizing the expressions related to conversation strategies and thus raising their awareness of how to interact with each other in more natural ways. It also shows that this approach promoted a proactive attitude toward learning English. Of course, longer-term implementation is necessary in order to get more objective results. However, this approach can be effective for high school students to some extent.

Figure 5
Reflections of Two Students

Conclusion

Through a careful consideration of important issues in the EFL context, this paper presented a lesson plan for implementing conversation strategy instruction in English class. The regular repetition of target conversation strategies through the production-enhanced PPP sequence helps increase the number of opportunities for students to speak English, which can help them to develop their speaking proficiency. Also, a wide variety of lesson resources and materials can be developed by selecting useful expressions from corpora. Although this approach might be time-consuming in terms of both creating a variety of materials and repeating conversation activities, it will foster EFL learners' oral communicative skills and fluency in English. By utilizing production-enhanced PPP through regularly repeated communicative activities, I hope teachers can contribute to developing EFL learners' speaking proficiency and communication skills.

Bio Data

Tomoko Noda is a high school teacher in Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan. She received a Master's degree in TESOL from Kanda University of International Studies in 2022. Her current research interests are learner autonomy, task-based language learning (TBLT), and content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

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