Research Forum

Is Grammar Anxiety Hindering English Speaking in Japanese Students?

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Researchers and teachers have observed time and again that speaking in the L2 causes anxiety in many Japanese students (Cutrone, 2009; Kitano, 2001); the students seem to be afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers and teachers. Is the reason for this fear anxiety about the speaker's grammar? This study, based on questionnaire data obtained from 54 Japanese EFL students at a university in Japan, explored the relationship between language learners' confidence in their grammatical ability and their actual speaking performance. The relationships were examined between students' perceptions of their grammatical competence (self-evaluation), actual speaking level (scores from the Kanda English Proficiency Test [KEPT]), and overall strength in English (scores from the Test of English for International Communication [TOEIC]). Qualitative data collected from the questionnaire was also analysed. The study did not find a significant relationship between confidence in grammar and speaking. Self-perception of grammatical ability appears to have little to do with how a person performs orally.

　第二言語で話す時、緊張する学習者がいる（Cutrone, 2009; Kitano, 2001）。また先行研究では、生徒たちがクラスメートたちや先生たちの前での間違え恐れている事が指摘されている。日本人英語学習者は、文法を正しく使えることをどれほど気にとめているのだろうか。この研究は、日本にある私立大学で英語を学習している54人の学習者を対象に、アンケート調査を通し、文法に対する自信とスピーキングスキルにつながりがあるかどうかを、学習者の文法への自信（自分の評価）、スピーキングスキル（Kanda English Proficiency Testの成績）、全体的な英語能力（TOEICの成績）に焦点を当てて調査した。さらに、学習者が書いたコメントからもデータを得た。この研究では、学習者の文法に対する自信とスピーキングスキルのつながりがとても少ないことが明らかになった。

T eachers often encounter Japanese EFL students who do not seem confident when speaking in class. Their speech may include numerous and painful pauses which hinder effective communication. This reticence has been noted in many studies and attributed to various factors, including culture (Pritchard & Maki, 2006); cultural misunderstandings between non-Japanese teachers and Japanese students (Saito & Ebsworth, 2004); and personality, motivation, and willingness to communicate (Yashima, 2002). Liu and Littlewood (1997) provide yet another explanation for Japanese students' reticence: In general, they are perfectionists by nature, and as a result, they may feel the need to be absolutely certain of the correctness of their grammar before speaking.

It is well known that English classes in the Japanese education system have traditionally concentrated on grammar. However, the last two decades have seen growing diversity in curricula with the introduction of oral communication classes in junior and senior high schools in 1989 and an emphasis on a four-skills approach in 2003 (Gottlieb, 2008). Still, the Ministry of Education has emphasized that grammar should continue to be taught as a core component of EFL curricula (MEXT, 2003).

Nishino (2008) observes that since 2003, Japanese teachers of English are increasingly embracing communicative teaching methods. She recognizes several challenges, however, including large class sizes, limited class hours, and insufficient funding for in-service training. These issues are compounded by high-stakes university entrance exams which generally focus on grammar and reading skills, despite government attempts at reform.

The impetus for the current study was that researchers noted that although unsolicited, grammar was frequently mentioned in students' speaking journals when they reflected on their English speaking performances. These journals are an element in one nonelective 1st-year course at the university where the study took place. The journals revealed that students had different beliefs about the relationship between grammar and speaking.

Below are excerpts from the journals, taken at the beginning of the academic year:

Student A: *I think I could have confidence while I'm speaking if I know about grammar well. . . . I have to study about grammar more.*

Student B: *I spoke English more naturally than ever because I didn't care about grammar.*

While Student A desired grammatical certainty, Student B seemed to believe thinking about grammar was a hindrance to speaking. Which is more prevalent? If Liu and Littlewood (1997) are correct, Student A should surely be more representative of the typical Japanese EFL student.

Is Japanese students' progress in speaking being hampered by grammar anxiety? This paper will seek to understand students' perceptions of their own grammatical competence and its relation to their speaking. It will attempt to answer whether or not grammatical confidence affects the speaking performance of Japanese university students.

Literature Review

Anxiety and the Desire for Corrective Feedback

Anxiety and poor self-perceptions have been extensively studied in the field of SLA. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) described anxiety as the "subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry" (p. 125). Language learning anxiety varies among individuals and is situation dependent; a lack of confidence in their language abilities could cause students to be anxious. Their "self-perceptions of genuineness in presenting themselves to others may be threatened by the limited range of meaning and affect that can be deliberately communicated" (p. 128).

A commonly held belief is that Japanese students are perfectionists and that they are concerned about saving face (Tomizawa, 1990). Liu and Littlewood (1997) noted that even though Japanese students wish to speak more actively in the language class, they may experience anxiety from high performance expectations. That is, even though others may deem a student's speaking performance satisfactory, this individual will believe that his or her skill is not adequate. Some students even expressed that "they must speak perfectly in order to be judged competent as a person" (p. 376).

Katayama (2007) explored what kind of speaking errors Japanese EFL students preferred to have corrected. She found that 77.6% of the participants in her study wanted correction. They were most interested in having pragmatic errors corrected, followed by phonology, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse. Only 19.8% of the students *always* wanted their grammatical errors corrected compared with 61.8% of students for errors of pragmatics. Still, 35.8% of the students said that they sometimes wanted their grammar corrected, and 32.4% said they often wanted their grammar corrected.

Yuen (1996) found that students' self-consciousness and attitudes towards their peers were important indicators of how well they performed in

class. Comfort level with peers affected performance. If the students knew each other well, they were more likely to speak to each other without fear of making grammatical mistakes. On the other hand, students seemed very self-conscious of their speech around those whom they did not know well.

Kitano's (2001) study, involving students of Japanese as a foreign language at an American university (79.2% native speakers of English, 9.4% Chinese, 7.5% Korean, 3.9% others), corroborated Yuen's (1996) findings. Results indicated that fear of negative evaluation and anxiety had a direct correlation. Kitano warns teachers to watch for learners setting their goals at native-speaker levels. Unrealistic expectation "inevitably makes them perceive their ability as insufficient and causes them anxiety" (p. 559).

Cutrone (2009) suggests that the Japanese school system's evaluation paradigm is to blame for students' fear of making mistakes while speaking. From an early age, Japanese students take many tests with enormous bearing on their future. The "school system, consistent with the values ingrained in Japanese society, places a great emphasis on the evaluation" (p. 59).

The literature reviewed suggests that the reticence of Japanese students in the EFL context is linked to their anxiety about making mistakes when speaking English. Further factors include anxiety related to self-perception of speaking ability, as well as comfort level with peers.

While there are many areas in which speaking errors can occur (e.g., pragmatics, phonology, vocabulary, and grammar), this paper focuses on the grammatical aspect of speaking. In the present study, since it was judged difficult to measure the construct of anxiety directly, the researchers have chosen to measure the perceived grammatical confidence of students.

Methodology

Setting and Participants

The study took place in a foreign language university in Japan where many teachers implement L2-only policies, and the freshman courses with native-speaker teachers are generally based on content and language learning strategies. Grammar is addressed, however, in connection with pragmatics and vocabulary, and also in writing classes. There are also elective test preparation (e.g., Test of English for International Communication [TOEIC]) and dedicated grammar and English for Specific Purpose (ESP) classes available to all year groups. The participants were 54 first-year students (all Japanese nationals, 76% female), enrolled in an international communication course 6 months into the academic year. Their TOEIC scores ranged from 290 to 770 with the mean being 522.

Instruments

The questionnaire (*N* = 54), available in English and Japanese, was derived from data collected in two focus groups conducted in Japanese (*n* = 9), concentrating on the issue of grammar and other factors influencing confidence in speaking. A moderator and assistant moderator, employed by the researchers, led the discussion following a semi-structured format. Proceedings were recorded for later analysis.

During analysis, factors affecting participants' confidence in speaking and their beliefs about grammar were noted. From this data a questionnaire was subsequently created (see Appendix A) to investigate the research question.

The questionnaire's aim was twofold: to assess (a) students' confidence in grammar, and (b) their confidence in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Although the original aim had been to use all the data collected, it was decided to use only the confidence in grammar and confidence in speaking data for this study. The questionnaire was administered on SurveyMonkey.com (2010), which provides a private Internet address to restrict access to invited participants only.

During construction of the questionnaire, the *Course of Study for Foreign Languages* (MEXT, 2003), which is the official Japanese government guidance on EFL curriculum for Japanese schools, was consulted to establish which aspects of grammar respondents should be familiar with from their previous study of English. MEXT makes it clear that students should start their English learning career with simpler grammatical and linguistic constructs and progress to more complicated ones. It stipulates that "language elements should be graded in levels of difficulty, from easy to more difficult, according to the learning stage." It also states that in senior high school (SHS), what was introduced in the junior high school (JHS) should be reviewed, suggesting that the students in the study should have had repeated exposure to the simpler grammar that they learned in JHS.

For the purposes of the research, nine grammatical constructs were chosen to create the nine grammatical confidence questions in the questionnaire. Four constructs were randomly picked from "JHS grammar" (i.e., past tense, present tense, comparisons, and relative pronouns) and labeled as "easier and more familiar" grammar. In addition, five constructs were randomly picked from "SHS grammar" (i.e., past perfect, modals, passive voice, conditional, and future perfect continuous) as "more complicated" grammar. During regression analysis, it was decided to establish whether students were more likely to use easier and more familiar grammar in their speech than more complicated constructs.

A 5-point Likert scale allowed for the indication of confidence for each question, giving a total grammar confidence figure of a possible 45; the mean respondent score was 29.5.

The four skills confidence levels were obtained by three virtually identical, but differently worded, statements on each skill. For example:

1. I can speak well in English.

2. I am good at speaking in English.

3. I feel confident in my ability to speak English.

The rationale for this was to increase the reliability of the questionnaire by determining if respondents were answering consistently (see Table 1). The Likert scale allowed a maximum score of 15 points for each skill with a total of 60 points for the four skills.

Furthermore, a compulsory, qualitative open-ended comment box required further data on each of the four skills to give the results more depth. As this research concentrated on speaking rather than the other three skills, the 54 responses related to speaking were analysed and classified into three categories: positive, negative, and positive and negative (where both positive and negative elements were present).

To establish participants' actual speaking level, the Kanda English Proficiency Test (KEPT) was administered. The KEPT is an in-house test of spoken and written English which has been used at Kanda University of International Studies since 1989. Research on KEPT (Bonk and Ockey, 2003; Van Moere, 2006) has examined the facets of the speaking test's administrations (i.e., examinee, prompt, rater, and rating items) and their contribution to score variance, finding that the Rasch model reliably separates examinees by ability (Bonk and Ockey). Van Moere investigated test-taker reactions to the group discussion format and found that the test was a reliable measure of a candidate's ability in L2 speaking.

The administration of the speaking exam involves three or four examinees participating in an impromptu conversation for 8 minutes after reading a short topic prompt. The test measures four facets of English speaking: (a) fluency, (b) lexis and grammar, (c) pronunciation, and (d) conversation skill, which are then added together for an overall numerical grade (see Appendix B for the rating scale). In the present study, the tests were marked by two independent assessors chosen by Rasch analysis for their reliability.

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In the present research, each participant's TOEIC score, obtained from the university, was used as a covariate to decrease the possibility of the other variables affecting the outcome. The TOEIC is an internationally recognised exam which has provided a secure and respected measure of English language proficiency for over 30 years (Educational Testing Service, 2011). Regression analysis performed for this research indicated TOEIC and KEPT scores correlated highly, $p = .014$.

Quantitative Findings From the Regression Analysis

To investigate the relationship between grammatical confidence and speaking performance in Japanese students, a regression analysis was performed using SPSS version 17 following the linear model, with alpha set at .05. TOEIC was used as the covariate for all calculations; Table 1 reports the statistics on research variables, but due to lack of item level data, the reliability of TOEIC cannot be reported on.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Research Variables

Variable	Cronbach's α	*M*	*SD*
KEPT Overall	.67	10.3	1.67
Questionnaire Data (Grammar score)	.929	29.5	7.90
Speaking Confidence	.941	6.625	2.86
TOEIC	Item level data unavailable, reliability incalculable.		

To investigate the relationship between confidence in grammar and speaking performance as measured on the KEPT, the correlation between overall grammar confidence and overall KEPT score was analysed. The overall grammar confidence and KEPT fluency were also correlated; neither was significant ($p > .05$).

As the relationship between the overall grammar score and speaking performance was shown to be nonsignificant, it was thought that the participants might be more likely to use simpler and more practiced JHS grammar so as to avoid making grammatical mistakes in speaking. However, the data

again indicated a nonsignificant ($p > .05$) relationship between JHS grammar and students' overall KEPT scores.

In addition, both JHS and SHS grammar were run with the KEPT fluency score to see if participants were more likely to speak more fluently, rather than more accurately, when they were confident in their grammatical ability with either the JHS or the SHS grammar. Both scores still indicated no statistical significance ($p > .05$).

Furthermore, the relationship between speaking confidence and overall KEPT score was also not significant ($p > .05$). This unanticipated finding indicates that even confident speakers are not necessarily graded higher on the KEPT. This suggests that examiners are able to effectively grade speaking proficiency without being influenced by speaker confidence alone.

Table 2. Coefficient of Variation Values for Confidence in Grammar and Speaking

Independent variable	Dependent variable	β*	*t*-value	*p*-value
Grammar Overall	KEPT Overall	-.049	-.353	.725
Grammar Overall	KEPT Fluency	-.088	-.637	.527
Difficult Grammar	KEPT Overall	-.093	-.673	.504
Easy Grammar	KEPT Overall	.016	.115	.909
Difficult Grammar	KEPT Fluency	-.124	-.898	.373
Easy Grammar	KEPT Fluency	.109	.792	.432
Speaking Confidence	KEPT Overall	.008	.056	.956
Speaking Confidence	Grammar Confidence	-.205	-1.513	.136

*Standardized

Regression analysis indicated that despite the many correlations investigated, confidence in grammar has no statistical relationship to actual speaking performance, and speaking confidence is not necessarily predictive of better performance on the KEPT.

Qualitative Findings From the Questionnaire's Open-Ended Comment Boxes

Students' comments in reaction to the statement, "I feel confident in my ability to speak English," were analyzed for qualitative data. One of the com-

ments was deemed irrelevant; therefore only 53 comments were taken into account.

The comments were overwhelmingly negative (see Table 3).

Table 3. Answers to "I feel confident in my ability to speak English"

Classification	Number	Percentage*	Number mentioning grammar as a factor
Positive	4	7.5%	2
Negative	45	83.0%	5
Positive and Negative Elements Present	4	7.5%	2
Disqualified	1	2.0%	

*All percentages rounded up to the nearest half percentage point.

Only nine (17%) comments referred to grammar, with five specifically mentioning grammar as a negative factor when speaking. The five comments followed this pattern:

> *I always can't explain what I want to say, because I often think about grammar. I don't have a large vocabulary and I'm not good at pronunciation and grammar.*

One of these recognised that communication may be hindered by discounting grammar:

> *I don't really care about grammar . . . so sometimes I can't make people understand what I want to say.*

The other four comments on grammar followed this pattern, which suggests that most of the participants in this research prefer to concentrate on fluency rather than accuracy:

> *When I speak English, I can't think about grammar.*

The remaining 44 comments indicated that a host of other perceptions were causing anxiety. These included speaking with foreigners, lack of vocabulary, shyness, lack of fluency in both Japanese and English, bad pronunciation, speed of speech, and low English proficiency. Lack of vocabulary was the most frequent worry.

These comments give extra weight to the finding that for most participants, confidence in grammar is not a major factor in speaking, but they also reveal that most participants suffer from a lack of confidence in their speaking ability.

Limitations

The present study was small-scale with only 54 participants, and it needs to be replicated with a larger university student population. Furthermore, as it is clear that "Japanese students" does not automatically constitute any kind of homogeneous body; the findings may be limited to the type of person attending the university where the study was conducted (i.e., those who are motivated to learn foreign languages). It would be interesting to conduct the study at a university that does not necessarily specialise in languages. Students at such a university may have different perceptions about grammar and speaking. In addition, the study should include a wider cross-section of participants with different previous educational experiences in order to increase generalizability.

Secondly, as the study attempts to establish a connection between confidence in grammar and speaking in an environment where fluency, rather than accuracy, may be emphasized, the study design may be questioned. It is possible that this could have affected the participants' speaking, regardless of their level of confidence in grammar. Conducting the study in another environment with a different linguistic focus may produce different results.

Thirdly, similar to Kitano's (2001) findings, students' comments in the open-ended boxes indicated that they do experience anxiety over their speech errors. However, there were no comments about the fear of negative evaluation by teachers and peers. This suggests that the Japanese population studied may be more comfortable with speaking than Kitano's American population.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research reveals that there is no statistical correlation between confidence in grammar proficiency and actual speaking proficiency in Japanese students at the university in question. All of the regression analyses performed between confidence in grammar and actual speaking performance showed no significance. Although it was expected that there would be at least some correlation between confidence in easier (JHS) grammar and speaking proficiency, even this was not significant.

The lack of correlation between confidence in speaking and actual performance was unanticipated. It appears to contradict Liu and Littlewood's (1997) ANOVA analysis, in which significant correlation was found between confidence in speaking and speaking frequency, as well as between speaking frequency and actual oral output. The relationship, or lack thereof, between confidence in speaking and actual oral performance needs to be explored more deeply.

It is possible that there was a mismatch between participant self-perception and reality: students assessing their grammatical ability too modestly, resulting in low questionnaire confidence measures but high KEPT scores. As the whole point of the research was to measure self-perception rather than actual proficiency, this is not necessarily a negative research outcome, but it may be that actual rather than perceived grammar proficiency in reality does have a correlation with speaking. More research needs to be done in this area also.

More data on participants' previous educational experiences should be collected. With Japanese EFL curricula in a state of change, no easy assumption of previous English language learning experiences can be made. It may be that the participants in this research came from senior high schools where fluency, rather than the traditional grammar-translation approach, was emphasised. It could equally mean that these students were capable of adopting new language learning practices and beliefs in a short space of time upon entering university, regardless of their previous education. It could also mean that students hold their own beliefs, regardless of what style they have been taught in.

The common perception from the literature, however, is that Japanese students have a tendency towards perfectionism and are anxious about making speaking errors. This study revealed that, at least in the field of grammatical accuracy, this perception does not apply to the population studied, with most of the students preferring to concentrate on fluency rather than grammatical accuracy. As much as challenging common perceptions, results also suggest that any study treating "Japanese students" as a homogeneous entity must be called into question.

Whatever perceptions and given truths are challenged by this research, whatever gaps need to be investigated further, there is one very clear message that comes through: Japanese students are individuals and have individual beliefs about speaking in English and the place of grammar within it.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A.

Questionnaire

1) What is your name?

For the following items, circle the number (from 1 to 5) that best describes you.

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree

2) My high school English class met with a native speaker of English.

	1	2	3	4	5

3) I can read well in English. 1 2 3 4 5

4) I think about grammar before I speak. 1 2 3 4 5

5) I am confident that I know how to use *who, which, that, what, whatever, whoever, whichever.* 1 2 3 4 5

6) I am good at listening to English. 1 2 3 4 5

7) I am confident that I know how to make comparisons in English.

	1	2	3	4	5

8a) I feel confident in my ability to read English.

	1	2	3	4	5

8b) Please explain your answer.
9a) I feel confident in my ability to write English.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

9b) Please explain your answer.
10a) I feel confident in my ability to listen to English.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

10b) Please explain your answer.
11a) I feel confident in my ability to speak English.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

11b) Please explain your answer.
12) I am confident that I know how to form the present tense.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

13) I am confident that I know how to use the conditional.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

14) I can listen well in English.   1   2   3   4   5

15) I am confident that I know how to use the future perfect continuous tense. ("*I'll have finished reading this book by the end of this month.*")

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

16) I can speak well in English.   1   2   3   4   5
17) I am good at writing in English.   1   2   3   4   5
18) I am confident that I know how to use the passive voice.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

19) I am good at speaking in English. 1   2   3   4   5
20) I am confident that I know how to use the past perfect tense.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

21) I feel nervous when talking in English to ELI teachers.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

22) I feel nervous when talking to native speakers besides ELI teachers, for example exchange students or when on holiday.

<div align="center">1   2   3   4   5</div>

23) I am good at reading in English.   1   2   3   4   5
24) I can write well in English.   1   2   3   4   5
25) I am confident that I know how to form the past tense. ("*He walked home.*")   1   2   3   4   5
26) I am confident that I know how to use modals. (*may, must, could, should, would, have to, be able to*)   1   2   3   4   5

Appendix B

KEPT Test Oral Rating Bands

	Pronunciation • Think about: • Word level • Sentence Level: ability to "blend" or link sound within or between words. • Stress, rhythm, and intonation • Accent	**Fluency** • Think about: • Automatization: ability to formulate utterances quickly and speak smoothly • Speaking speed • Hesitations and pausing	**Lexis / Grammar** • Think about: • Correct grammatical form • Suitability of vocabulary • Displaying ability to use (or attempting to use) different grammatical structures and vocabulary suitably in context. • Collocations and correct word choice	**Conversational skill** • Think about: • Participation and smoothness of interaction (turn-taking, responding to others, asking questions and introducing new gambits, paraphrasing, hedging)
0 ~ 0.5	**Unacceptable pronunciation** • Very heavy accent that would lead to a breakdown in communication • Only uses katakana-like phonology and rhythm; words not blended together	**Unacceptable fluency** • Fragments of speech • Halting, often incomprehensible • Communication nearly impossible	**Unacceptable lexical & grammatical usage** • No evidence of grammar knowledge • Knows few words, and uses them in isolation • Unable to share simple ideas • Communication not possible	**Unacceptable conversational interaction** • Shows no awareness of other speakers; may speak, but not in a conversation-like way • Communication not possible
1.0 ~ 1.5	**Poor pronunciation** • Uses somewhat Katakana-like pronunciation; does not blend words • Likely to have comprehension difficulties with interlocutors	**Poor fluency** • Slow strained, *unnatural* speech • Frequent *unnatural* groping for words • Long *unnatural* pauses • Communication difficult	**Poor lexical & grammatical usage** • Some very limited grammar knowledge evident • Limited vocabulary but inexpert usage • Little or no attempt at complex vocabulary or grammar • Ideas can be shared, but with likely comprehension difficulties	**Poor conversational interaction** • Does not initiate interaction • Uses mostly a monologue style • May show some basic turn-taking but does not relate ideas well, or give much explanation

2.0 ~ 2.5	**Fair pronunciation** • Has not mastered some difficult sounds of English, but should be mostly understandable to interlocutors • Makes regular attempts to blend words but may still stress words incorrectly	**Fair fluency** • Speech is hesitant; somewhat *unnatural* • *Unnatural* groping for words and unfilled spaces may persist, but it does not completely impede communication • May overuse fillers, or demonstrate other *unnatural* usages	**Fair lexical & grammatical usage** • Overly reliant on a small range of simple grammar and vocabulary to express ideas • Shows little or no evidence of ability to control difficult grammar or vocabulary	**Fair conversational interaction** • Consciousness of turn taking • Maintains interaction by responding to others without unnatural gaps or pauses • Shows meaningful agreement or disagreement to others' opinions (assent / dissent, etc.)
3.0 ~ 3.5	**Very good pronunciation** • May not have mastered all the sounds of English, but has good control of sentence stress and intonation • Accent does not interfere with comprehension; can blend words consistently	**Very good fluency** • Occasional misuse of fillers, groping and frequent repair may still be evident, but is not overly distracting to listeners	**Very good lexical & grammatical usage** • Shows evidence of ability to control difficult grammar or vocabulary and attempts to use a range of forms • May continue to make mistakes, but should be comprehensible	**Very good conversational interaction** • Appears confident • Responds appropriately to others • May direct conversation • Shows ability to negotiate meaning quickly and naturally • May begin to use paraphrase or clarification as a means to scaffold for lower level interlocutors
4 ~ ?	**Excellent pronunciation** • Appears to have mastered much of the sound system of English • Accent does not impede communication	**Excellent fluency** • Conversation should proceed smoothly, with little impediment • Uses fillers, markers, lexical chunks effectively • Groping may occur, but seems natural & fluent.	**Excellent grammar & vocabulary usage** • Demonstrates excellent control of a range of grammar and vocabulary • Mistakes may still occur, but these should not impede meaning • Chunked lexical items, such as idioms and collocations, may be present and used correctly	**Excellent conversational interaction** • Very confident and natural • May ask others to expand on views • Negotiates, holds and relinquishes turns appropriately • Explains how own and others' ideas are related, interacts smoothly