

# **The Effect of Practical Interaction Task Training on Learners' Motivation and Attitudes**

## **- Usefulness of 3x3 table English training -**

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### **Abstract**

In 2018, “3x3 table English training” was conducted to students at three major universities in Sapporo city in Hokkaido, Japan. After 10 training sessions, their number of words spoken in English increased compared to before training (Naito et al., 2018). In addition, the questionnaire after the training showed that many students felt “3x3 table English training” was fun, that they were less reluctant to speak in English, and they did not mind making mistakes. Given these positive results, we decided to conduct “3x3 table English training” in 2019 to further our research. In particular, through “3x3 table English training”, we decided to study how “3x3 table English training” affects both English language proficiency and the learners' motivations and attitudes. This paper focuses on the questionnaire given before and after the training and summarizes the changes in students' emotional aspects.

## **I . Introduction**

### **A. Social background**

Japanese companies have been expanding overseas since the 1970s. In the 2000s, small and medium-sized enterprises also began to expand overseas. Even now, the tendency to expand is

continuing. Similar trends are seen not only in the Tokyo metropolitan area but also in Hokkaido. Overseas expansion has been increasing among the companies in Hokkaido since around 2005. Every year Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO 2019) conducts a survey on overseas expansion of Japanese companies. In 2018, they surveyed companies' overseas expansion policies for the next three years. Sixty percent of Japanese companies responded that they would like to further expand and start expanding operations overseas in the near future. As a result, there is an urgent need to foster global human resources who are able to assist in the international expansion of companies.

## **B. Previous research**

Naito et al. (2007) conducted a qualitative and quantitative survey of English needs in Hokkaido industries, revealing that in addition to English proficiency, the competency needed to engage in business with enterprises overseas requires the ability to respond flexibly to the environment, the ability to listen to other people's intentions, the ability to logically convey one's own intentions, the ability to solve problems, and ability to actively collect information to solve problems. From an English For Specific Purposes (ESP) perspective, according to the studies of Koike et al. (2010) and Terauchi et al. (2015), many Japanese companies have difficulties in conducting business or various meetings due to lack of English skills. One critical point is correspondence in English with an unfamiliar accent, which in the Japanese context basically means an English accent besides those of North America, the United Kingdom or Oceania. The second point is conveying and listening to subtle nuances. The result is a lack of both English proficiency and competency to work on in an organized and suitable manner due to unfamiliarity with genre theory or business conventions needed in English-speaking settings. Shibata (2013) points out that the oral skills need to be strengthened in terms of the basic English proficiency required in industries. Ishikawa and Yamada (2019) suggest that interaction

tasks make a positive effect in English education at universities. The interaction tasks allow students to respond to things flexibly and make them aware of communicating with their partner; therefore, students actively practice speaking English and improve fluency.

### **C. 3x3 table English training (Naito (2021, in press))**

The teaching style known as “3 x 3 table English training” is a very simple teaching material that shows information and objects in 3x3 cells, which students look and describe at the 3x3 table to the other party who is not looking at them. This speaking task is regarded as an interaction task performed by students in pairs. A major feature of training using this teaching material is that the elements to be described increase as the training progresses. Therefore, complexity increases. It is not just about using simple expressions repeatedly. It is necessary to combine and devise new expressions. By learning “3x3 table English training”, learners' English ability, communication ability, and logical thinking ability are expected to be improved. However, it has not yet been clarified how “3x3 table English training” will influence English learners' emotional aspects such as motivations and attitudes.

## **II. Purpose of research**

The purpose of this research is to clarify what changes can be observed in learners' English language skills, emotional aspects, motivation, and attitudes before and after “3x3 table English training”. In particular, this research intends to gauge how quickly students respond to the tasks given on the spot without prior preparation, which is a feature of “3x3 table English training”, speaking in English itself, and whether there is a change in learning ability.

## **III. Research method**

### **A. Subjects**

Two-hundred sixty-eight first-year students from four universities in Sapporo who received “3x3 table English training” participated in this questionnaire survey. We analyzed 242 students who completed the questionnaire both before and after the training.

## **B. Survey method**

In April 2019, before “3x3 table English training,” and in July 2019, after the training, a questionnaire using Google Forms was conducted. As for the question items, the pre-training questionnaire consists of 25 questions, most of which are six-step Likert-scale-type selections. The remaining questions ask respondents to self-evaluate their current and future English proficiency levels. Five questions were added in the post-training survey to further investigate “3x3 table English training,” two questions about “3x3 table English training” (Q16, Q17) and three open-ended questions (Q21, Q22, Q23).

The survey process has three stages: “Before”, “3x3 table English Training,” and “After”. In the first stage, a questionnaire was conducted in the “Before” stage, before carrying out the activity. The second stage was the training period of “3x3 table English training”, which was conducted 10 times at all universities using the same teaching material. Since it is basically given as part of each class, the time taken for each lesson was about 10 minutes. (Naito, 2021 in press) The third stage was the “After” stage, given after all ten training sessions were completed.

## **IV. Questionnaire results**

### **A. Questionnaire results before and after “3x3 table English training”**

Table 1 shows the overview of the questionnaires. Average scores are mostly positively changed after the training.

**Table 1***Questionnaire results before and after the “3x3 table English training”*

1: Disagree strongly - 6: Agree strongly

(N = 242)

	Before training	After training	Difference before and after training
Q1. I like to communicate with people	4.19	4.39	0.19
Q2. I enjoy learning English	4.04	4.48	<b>0.44</b>
Q3. I can speak English with confidence	2.27	2.85	<b>0.58</b>
Q4. I don't mind if I make a mistake in English class	3.29	3.64	<b>0.35</b>
Q5. I have feelings of resistance toward studying English	2.51	2.69	0.19
Q6. I am trying to learn new English vocabularies and expressions	4.55	4.36	-0.19
Q7. I can use English only after I remember English words or rules.	4.36	4.41	0.05
Q8. It is important for me to practice English through actual communication.	4.76	4.91	0.15
Q9. I often confirm whether my understanding is right or not.	3.95	4.23	0.28
Q10. I decide how to explain in advance when I need to use English.	3.88	4.19	<b>0.31</b>

Q11. I like working in pairs in my English class.	3.98	4.33	<b>0.36</b>
Q12. It is important for me to speak English fluently.	4.00	4.06	0.06
Q13. I pay attention to my English pronunciation.	4.33	4.27	-0.06
Q14. I pay attention to other people's English pronunciation.	3.00	3.19	0.19
Q15. I worry about my English grades.	4.36	4.24	-0.12
Q17 / 19. I hesitate to speak English without requiring preparation in advance	4.35	3.65	<b>-0.70</b>
Q18 / 20. I am afraid of conveying information verbally about a given task as soon as possible	4.54	4.14	<b>-0.40</b>
Q24 / 29* <sup>1</sup> . Please select the one that best describes your current English level	2.17	2.52	<b>0.35</b>
Q25 / 30* <sup>2</sup> . What level of English do you want to acquire as a college student?	4.65	4.52	-0.13

\*1 \*2 **Table 2***CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) Levels*

No.	CEFR Level	Descriptions
7	C2	I have no difficulty in understanding any conversation and summarize it using accurate language nuance.
6	C1	I can use language appropriately and effectively for complex subjects and make a logical assertion.

5	B2	I can follow and engage in a variety of conversations at normal speed and express my ideas with reasonable fluency.
4	B1	I can understand the main points of extended discussions around me and express opinions with reasons.
3	A2	I can interact in predictable everyday situations, using a wide range of words and expressions.
2	A1	I can understand short conversations about familiar topics and answer simple questions.
1	A0	I can catch short, simple instructions and convey information such as names and feelings, using basic phrases and formulaic expressions.

This English level descriptor list was retrieved from NHK English Programs Level Chart.<sup>1</sup>

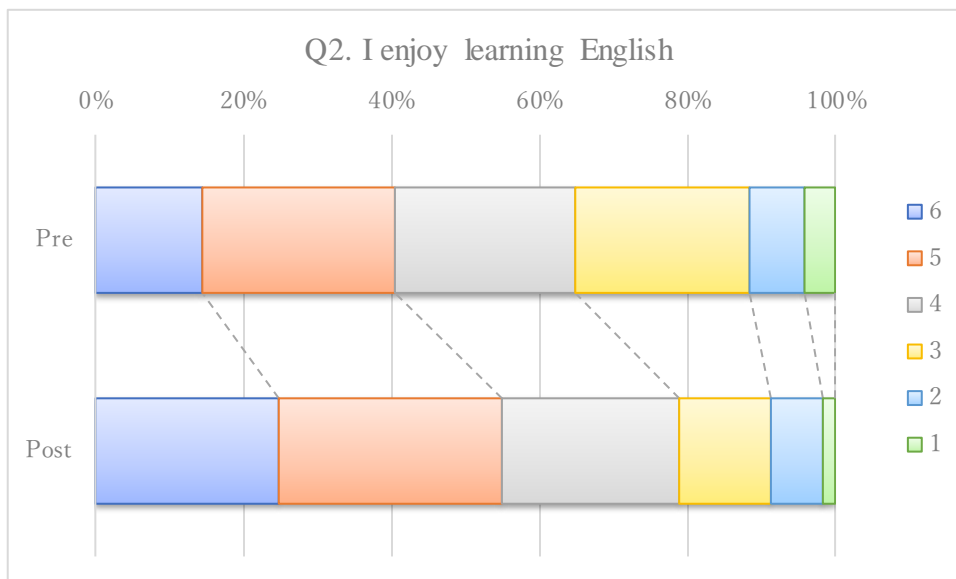
“Q2. I enjoy learning English” has risen 0.44 points (Table 1). As a result, it became clear that more students enjoyed learning English using “3x3 table English training”. About 80% of the students answered positively (4, 5, 6) in the post-training survey, compared with 65% in the pre-training survey.

### Figure 1

*Q2. I enjoy learning English*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eigoryoku.nhk-book.co.jp/cefr> (accessed on March 31, 2019) The descriptor list was originally written in Japanese, and the language used in the survey was also Japanese. The English translation was made by our group.



**Table 3**

*Q2. I enjoy learning English*

	Agree strongly			Disagree strongly		
	6	5	4	3	2	1
Pre	35 14.46%	63 26.03%	59 24.38%	57 23.55%	18 7.44%	10 4.13%
Post	60 24.79%	73 30.17%	58 23.97%	30 12.40%	17 7.02%	4 1.65%
	25 10.33%	10 4.13%	-1 -0.41%	-27 -11.16%	-1 -0.41%	-6 -2.48%

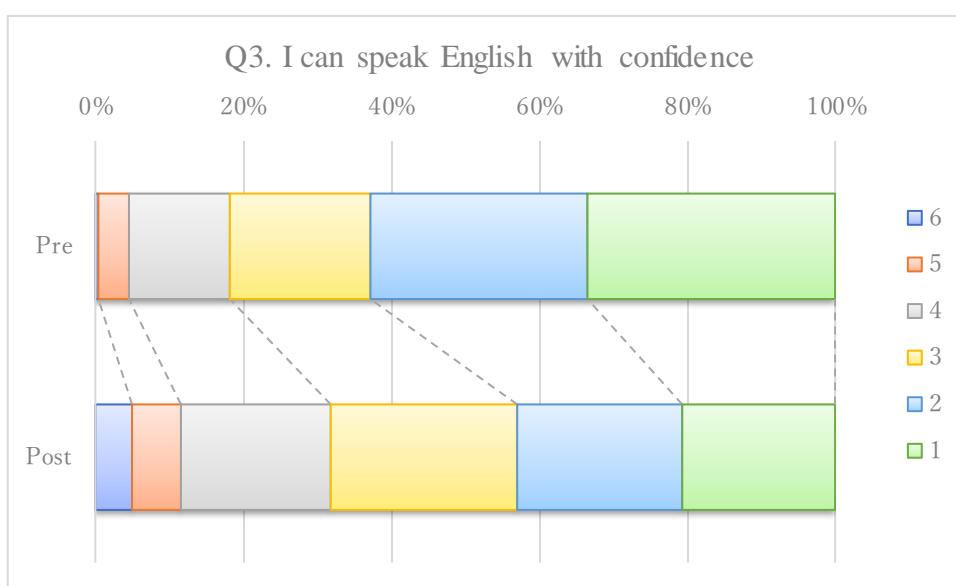
“Q3. I can speak English with confidence” has gone up by 0.58 point in Table 1. Both before and after the training, the average score is low. This shows that many students could not speak English with confidence, but it had been found that they could become confident in speaking in English by conducting “3x3 table English training”. Positive rating of 20% (4,5,6) for



answers in the pre-training survey became approximately 30% in the post-training survey. Negative answers (1,2) have dropped greatly in the post questionnaire. Thus, it is assumed that the students have gained a sense of achievement or have gained useful insight into how to communicate in English after the training.

**Figure 2**

*Q3. I can speak English with confidence*



**Table 4**

*Q3. I can speak English with confidence*

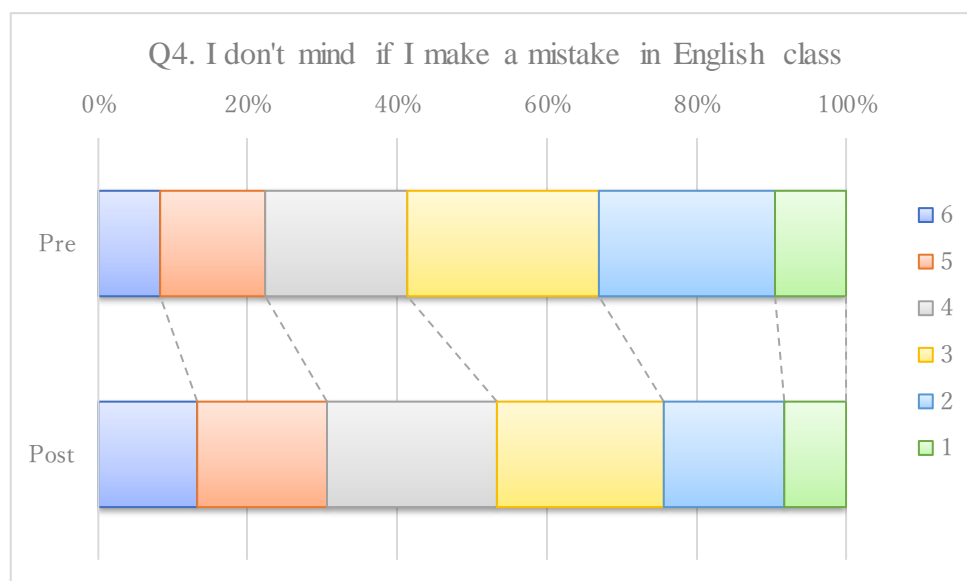
	Agree strongly			Disagree strongly		
	6	5	4	3	2	1
Pre	1 0.41%	10 4.13%	33 13.64%	46 19.01%	71 29.34%	81 33.47%
Post	12 4.96%	16 6.61%	49 20.25%	61 25.21%	54 22.31%	50 20.66%

11	6	16	15	-17	-31
4.55%	2.48%	6.61%	6.20%	-7.02%	-12.81%

“Q4. I don't mind if I make a mistake in English class” has risen by 0.35 points as shown in Table 1. Before “3x3 table English training”, students felt reluctant to make mistakes in English class. “3x3 table English training” allowed the students to use different words and expressions many times in order to make their partner understand, so students had the opportunity to repeat their practice again and again even if they made mistakes. Therefore, students become more comfortable about making mistakes in English class. More than half of the students answered positively (4,5,6) after the training. Negative answers (1,2) have also decreased 20%. Since more than 60% of the students answered negatively (1,2) in the pre-training survey, this point should be noted as a major positive influence of the training.

**Figure 3**

*Q4. I don't mind if I make a mistake in English class*



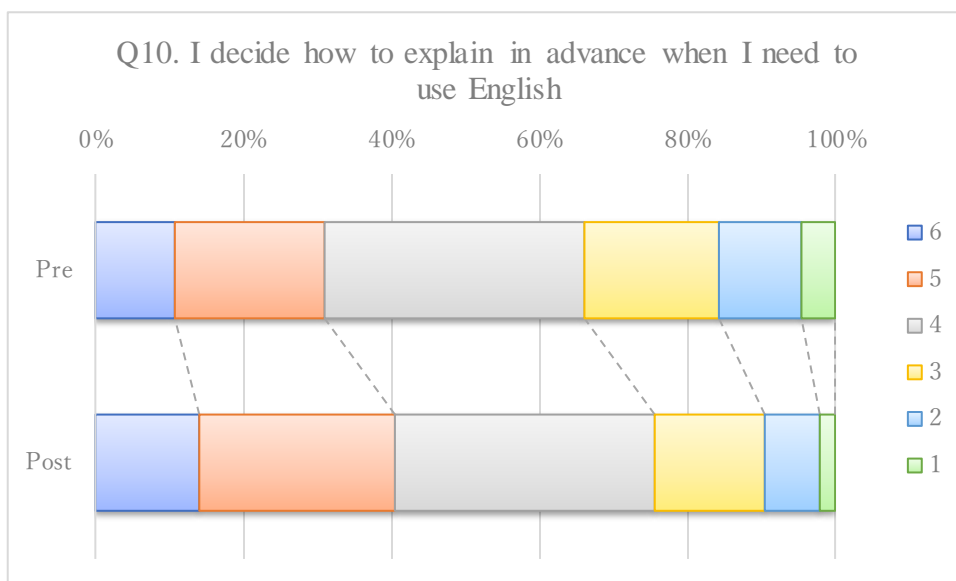
**Table 5***Q4. I don't mind if I make a mistake in English class*

	Agree strongly			Disagree strongly		
	6	5	4	3	2	1
Pre	20 8.26%	34 14.05%	46 19.01%	62 25.62%	57 23.55%	23 9.50%
Post	32 13.22%	42 17.36%	55 22.73%	54 22.31%	39 16.12%	20 8.26%
	12 4.96%	8 3.31%	9 3.72%	-8 -3.31%	-18 -7.44%	-3 -1.24%

“Q10. I decide how to explain in advance when I need to use English” has increased 0.31 points in Table 1. The degree of change itself seems subtle, but interestingly, all negative answers (1,2,3) decreased in the post-survey. Oral interactions in English classes often end up in practice for practice’s sake like translating from Japanese to English and vice versa. As a result, students tend to be responsive to simple questions and are able to express at word, phrase or sentence level; however, when it comes to detailed description or explanation in English, they are undertrained and inexperienced in how to elaborate their utterances in a communicative way and often do not know how to sustain their interactions or gain a deeper understanding of their counterparts. In “3x3 table English training”, ease of communication changes depending on how it is explained. One important point in this training is that each speaker decides, which cell to explain, in what order and how to describe the details of the picture or image in the cell. Therefore, it may be concluded that some students become more aware of word order and effective communication when explaining in English.

**Figure 4**

*Q10. I decide how to explain in advance when I need to use English*



**Table 6**

*Q10. I decide how to explain in advance when I need to use English*

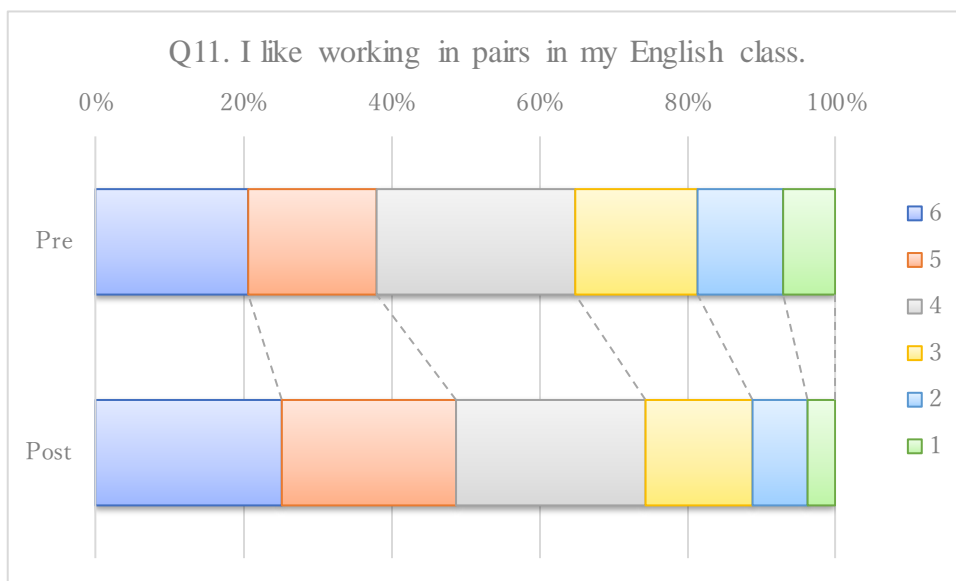
	Agree strongly			Disagree strongly		
	6	5	4	3	2	1
Pre	26 10.74%	49 20.25%	85 35.12%	44 18.18%	27 11.16%	11 4.55%
Post	34 14.05%	64 26.45%	85 35.12%	36 14.88%	18 7.44%	5 2.07%
	8 3.31%	15 6.20%	0 0.00%	-8 -3.31%	-9 -3.72%	-6 -2.48%

“Q11. I like working in pairs in my English class” has gone up by 0.36 points (Table 1). Increase is found only in 5 and 6, which means strong positive assertion. Paired tasks between partners

was favorably accepted. Students seemed to have enjoyed learning and making conversations in using English.

**Figure 5**

*Q11. I like working in pairs in my English class*



**Table 7**

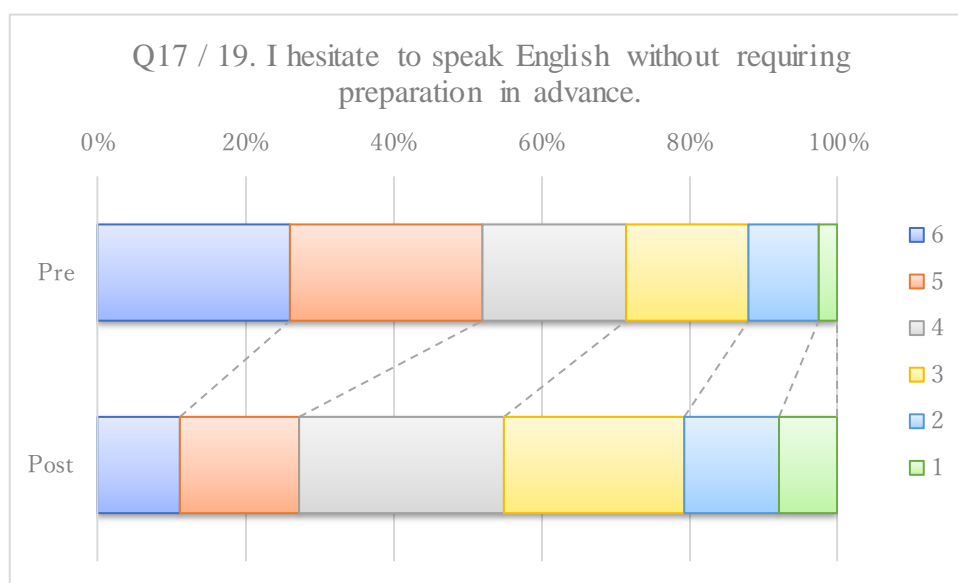
*Q11. I like working in pairs in my English class*

	Agree strongly			Disagree strongly		
	6	5	4	3	2	1
Pre	50 20.66%	42 17.36%	65 26.86%	49 20.25%	28 11.57%	17 7.02%
Post	61 25.21%	57 23.55%	62 25.62%	35 14.46%	18 7.44%	9 3.72%
	11 4.55%	15 6.20%	-3 -1.24%	-14 -5.79%	-10 -4.13%	-8 -3.31%

“Q17 / 19. I hesitate to speak English without requiring preparation in advance” has dropped 0.70 points as in Table 1. In this question, an increase is found only in 5 and 6 again. Usually, many students have difficulty speaking English extemporaneously because they always talk mainly in Japanese. Before the training, the average score is in the range of 4 points, indicating that many students feel uncomfortable speaking English. In “3x3 table English training”, training starts at the same time as the signal to start, so students suddenly have to speak English. Due to the nature of the training, the resistance to spontaneous speaking in English can be reduced through repetitious practice of speaking extemporaneously during a short time period.

**Figure 6**

*Q17 / 19. I hesitate to speak English without requiring preparation in advance*



**Table 8**

*Q17 / 19. I hesitate to speak English without requiring preparation in advance*

Agree strongly

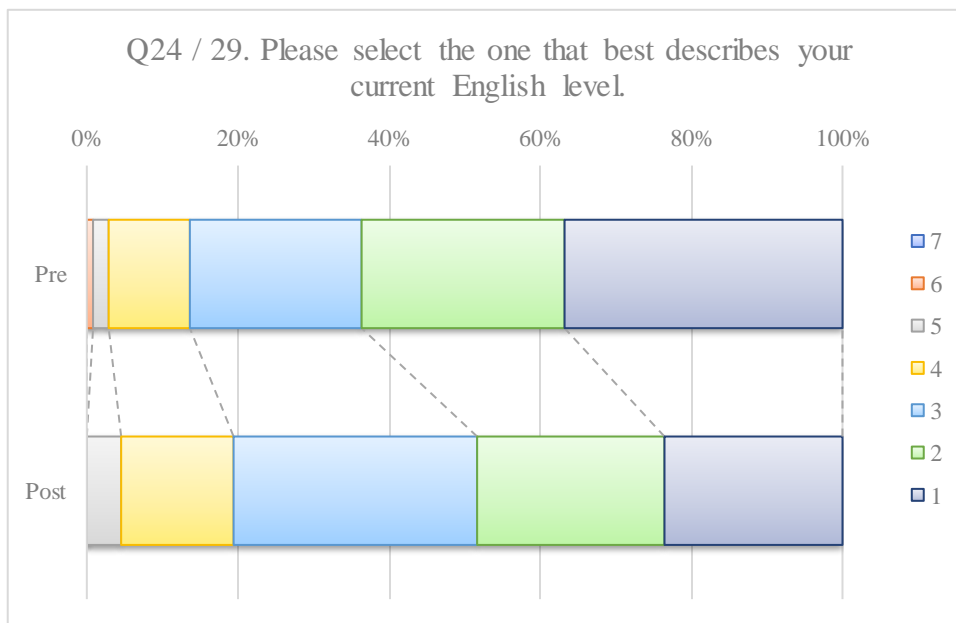
Disagree strongly

	6	5	4	3	2	1
Pre	63 26.03%	63 26.03%	47 19.42%	40 16.53%	23 9.50%	6 2.48%
Post	27 11.16%	39 16.12%	67 27.69%	59 24.38%	31 12.81%	19 7.85%
	-36 -14.88%	-24 -9.92%	20 8.26%	19 7.85%	8 3.31%	13 5.37%

“Q24 / 29. Please select the one that best describes your current English level” has increased 0.35 points (Table 1). The number of students who categorized themselves as novice beginner (1) and beginner level (2) decreased dramatically in the post survey. Prior to the training, students may have had little opportunity to evaluate their English level and/or have little confidence in using English. In this training, students explain the items in 3x3 tables in English and tell them to their partners. Having a number of successful experiences of communicating in English to another person could lead to realizing that one's English level has improved and higher self-evaluations for what they can do in English. In other words, students gain confident in their English proficiency.

### Figure 7

*Q24 / 29. Please select the one that best describes your current English level*



**Table 9**

*Q24 / 29. Please select the one that best describes your current English level*

CEFR	C2	C1	B2	B1	A2	A1	A0
	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Pre	0 0.00%	2 0.83%	5 2.07%	26 10.74%	55 22.73%	65 26.86%	89 36.78%
Post	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	11 4.55%	36 14.88%	78 32.23%	61 25.21%	57 23.55%
	0 0.00%	-2 -0.83%	6 2.48%	10 4.13%	23 9.50%	-4 -1.65%	-32 -13.22%

**B. Discussion**

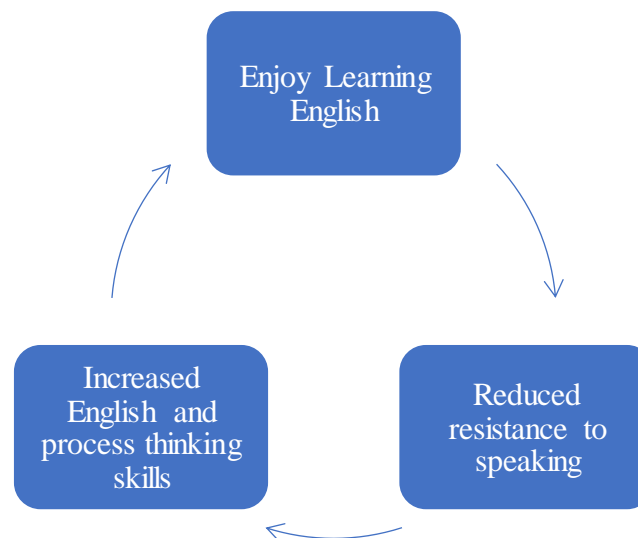
The survey taken from the “3x3 table English training” activity yielded three observations: 1) a more positive attitude towards studying English, 2) an increased willingness to engage in English learning and 3) improved self-management skills when communicating in English. We



suggest that these positive outcomes regarding English language learning and studying were facilitated by the use of the “3x3 table English training.” Furthermore, we propose that the aspects listed above occurred in a systematic order that was mutually beneficial and not in a randomly exclusive manner. This led to the “3x3 table English training” significantly contributing to an effective cycle of studying and learning among the students. As a result, the learners’ awareness of English language learning can be developed as shown in Figure 8.

### Figure 8

*Effect of “3x3 table English training” on learners*



The first step is to enjoy learning English, the second step is to reduce resistance to speaking, and the third step is to increase skills in English and thinking about process to explain things efficiently.

#### 1. Enjoy learning English (Q2 and Q11)

Having “3x3 table English training” will make learning English fun. Students like pair work among students, and motivation for learning increases.

## 2. Reduced resistance to speaking (Q3 and Q4)

Students communicate with others, feel the joy of communication, and gain confidence. Students do not mind making mistakes when speaking in English. Students feel less reluctant to speak English.

## 3. Increased English and process thinking skills (Q10, Q17/19, and Q18/20)

Learning increases learner's English level. In addition, since the explanation is made while considering word order, ability to think about process is improved.

## V. Conclusion

The results from this survey suggest the “3x3 table English training” positively influenced the learners' English proficiency (Q24-29), the learners' attitudes toward learning English (Q2,10,11), and the learners' motivation (Q3,4,17-19, 18-20). By partaking in this activity, it appears that students were able to enjoy learning English, increase their motivation, speak without hesitation due to fear of making mistakes, experience less resistance to speaking, and improve their English proficiency and their thinking process through explaining themselves in English. These observations support our position that “3x3 table English training” is an excellent training method for students to improve their English communication skills in an attentive manner. Further research is needed to clarify the amount of and the reasons for the learners' increased English proficiency as this survey was limited to recording the learners' subjective evaluations. In addition, the subjects of this survey were limited to freshman university students so it will be necessary to expand the subject range of the current study and to further explore how the training affects emotional states.

However, in this survey, the increased English proficiency is limited to a learner's subjective evaluation, and it is necessary to clarify the increase in English proficiency through further research. In addition, since the survey subjects are limited to freshmen in university, it is

necessary to expand the subject range of the current study, and to further explore how the training affects emotional states.

### **Acknowledgements**

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