THE EFFECT OF ORAL-WRITTEN DIALOGUE JOURNALS ON SPEAKING IN EFL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Research in the area of dialogue journals has shown that keeping oral or written journals can improve students' speaking performance. However, nearly no research has been done on the effects of doing oral-written dialogue journals in enhancing speaking English. This study quantitatively and qualitatively explored the impacts of the oral-written dialogue journals on the speaking performance of EFL university-level students. Specific research focuses were the influence of keeping oral-written dialogue journals on overall speaking proficiency and the effect on speaking fluency, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary richness as well as the participants' perceptions of this activity.

The oral-written dialogue journal activity was implemented for three months. The participants were eleven university students who were invited to join this activity. Findings composed of objective measurements and qualitative inquiry revealed that participants' overall speaking proficiency was enhanced through this activity. Their fluency, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary richness were also improved to some extent, particularly fluency and verb tense accuracy. The participants' perceptions of this activity were also positive. They not only became more confident in speaking English and more motivated to speak or learn English but also liked this activity.

This study enabled us to understand in what aspects of speaking EFL learners had made progress as well as why they had improved their speaking performance. Based on the findings, pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research were made.

INTRODUCTION

As English has become a global language, the government, schools as well as enterprises in Taiwan have all emphasized the importance of English. An investigation (Kao, 2003) even reveals that ninety-eight

percent of local enterprises have regarded fluent English communicative ability as a crucial element of employment. Speaking, however, is considered the most demanding of the four basic skills (Bailey and Savage, 1994). It is obvious that speaking should receive much emphasis in English learning, but the fact is that it has often been neglected in junior and senior high schools. For years, one of the most serious problems in learning English for students in junior or senior high schools in Taiwan is that English has always been studied as a required participant, rather than learned as a useful language for communication (Chou, 2003). Even if learners get high grades in English, they may not be able to talk with English natives fluently and confidently. The elements that aggravate the situation include great academic pressure, the big class size and the exclusion of speaking test in JCEE. Under such circumstances, the opportunities to practice speaking English with peers and teachers to improve speaking have become extremely limited. In view of such problems, how to upgrade students' speaking performance is indeed crucial. In my opinion, keeping an oral-written dialogue journal (OWDJ) is an activity that can be implemented as a supplementary practice outside class.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effectiveness of the OWDJ on speaking performance. With the application of the oral-written dialogue journal, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Do oral-written dialogue journals (OWDJs) contribute to overall English speaking proficiency? If so, how?
2. Do EFL learners keeping OWDJs improve their speaking fluency, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary richness?
3. What are the participants' perceptions of this activity?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies (Baudrand-Aertker, 1992; Casanave, 1994; Chen, 1996; Chow, 2001; Holmes & Moulton, 1997; Lucas, 1990; Peyton, 1989; Peyton, Staton, Richardson, & Wolfram, 1990; Song, 1997; Steer, 1998) have found that written dialogue journals allow learners to improve writing and thinking fluency, foster writing quality, develop reflective thinking, enhance grammar accuracy and sentence complexity, elevate confidence, motivation, and positive attitudes toward writing, and

promote academic writing. For instance, Casanave (1994) conducted a research on a small group of intermediate English students in Japan over three semesters. The majority of analyses consisted of various T-unit (defined as an independent clause and all attached dependent clauses and phrases) counts of length, complexity and grammatical accuracy. Students' performance improved, showing upward movement in two thirds of the categories of the 11 kinds of various T-unit counts and most of the progress appeared in the first semester (first-mid). Besides, while most students acknowledged that they came to write more quickly, easily and with greater enjoyment, nearly half of the students in fact did not progress in grammatical accuracy. Although the findings showed that most students' writing became longer, more complex and more accurate, great individual diversity was still found in the quantitative measures. It was concluded that the written dialogue journal is a valuable tool of encouraging and tracking multiple kinds of language development. Therefore, how students' fluency can be improved without sacrificing accuracy needs further investigation.

Chen (1996) explored the results of writing dialogue journals in a junior high school EFL class, including the effect of written dialogue journals on communication in English and the effect of the teacher's and peers' responses on students' writing. The findings revealed that the student-centered activity increased opportunities for interaction between students and their teacher as well as their peers. Peer and teacher responses played important roles in improving students' writing skills and encouraged students to share their opinions and feelings. Through sharing with the teacher and peers, both reading and writing were enhanced. However, one important drawback of this study was that too much time elapsed between entries, which tended to make the writing lose its interactive quality. To avoid such a drawback, the present study asked students to keep their oral journals twice a week.

Chow's (2001) study was aimed at investigating how teachers incorporate journal writing in the course of Guided Writing, how they perceived the implementation of journal writing as well as how students reacted to the use of dialogue journals. The results indicated that the majority of both teachers and students had positive opinions about journal writing. Students considered teachers' comments and error correction helpful in their journal writing, while sometimes they had difficulties in finding topics and ideas to write in their journals. The teachers also emphasized the journal writing's advantages of providing

opportunities for students to express themselves, to enhance their writing fluency, to facilitate risk-taking and to be better understood by their teachers. It was recommended that brainstorming or giving suggested topics to students could be helpful. Furthermore, while error correction received positive responses from the students, care had to be taken to avoid side effect such as writing apprehension and inhibition of idea development.

Additionally, some research (Walworth, 1990; Wells, 1992; Werderich, 2002; Wolter, 1986) revealed that the use of written dialogue journals could enhance reading development, such as reading comprehension and reading strategies. For example, Werderich (2002) described the successful use of written dialogue journals as part of a seventh-grade reading curriculum. The teacher's responses played an important role in personalizing reading instruction. The teacher appealed to students' interests, encouraged students to make discoveries about meanings of titles, etc., made sure that each student was challenged, and used teaching strategies to help students develop reading skills. Similarly, Wells (1992) found that the use of written dialogue journals could contribute to eighth-grade students' reading development. Their journal entries were categorized to include ongoing business, summaries, metacognitive responses, connections, and evaluation of text and author, which appeared to enhance the reading development. Teachers' questions not only prompted students' own thinking but also served as models for students' own questioning. The evidence showed how dialogue journals facilitated reading development. Wolter (1986) investigated whether middle school students who kept written dialogue journals in reading classes would show a significant increase in reading comprehension as compared with students who did not use dialogue journals in reading classes. The statistical analysis of this study indicated that the reading classes which incorporated the use of dialogue journals resulted in significant improvement in students' reading comprehension. Although reading development falls beyond the present study's scope, the findings all point out the importance of a teacher's role in the process of keeping dialogue journals. A teacher's responses can efficiently facilitate the successful interaction with students, which in turn may foster their language acquisition such as speaking development of EFL learners.

Most importantly, written dialogue journals are also shown to facilitate the speaking development of ESL/EFL students (Baskin, 1994; El-koumy, 1998; McGrath, 1992; Poole, 1991). Except E1-koumy's

(1998) study, the rest are qualitative in nature, only eliciting data from a questionnaire. For example, Baskin (1994) examined the thoughts and feelings of ESL high school students on written dialogue journals. The questionnaire results revealed that linguistic and cultural aspects were facilitated through dialogue journals. The students thought that reading the teacher's responses and creating their own entries had developed their knowledge of grammar. They also learned both new and idiomatic expressions. Simply put, they believed that dialogue journals allowed them to improve spoken English and enhance their self-confidence. While participants responded that their speaking had been improved, there was no significant evidence to describe in details which parts of speaking had been improved or to what extent they had progressed. In view of such inadequacies, the present study added some quantitative analyses to examine the effect on not only overall speaking proficiency but also fluency, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary in speaking.

E1-koumy (1998) investigated the effect of dialogue journal writing on the speaking skills of EFL history major students. Participants in the experimental group wrote weekly on any topic, and the teacher wrote back to each student — making comments, offering opinions, requesting and giving clarification, asking and answering questions. The findings showed that students in the experimental group scored significantly higher on the oral posttest than those in the control group, suggesting that the dialogue journal writing helped improve speaking skills. Since these studies found that students could improve speaking skills through keeping written dialogue journals, it was assumed that speaking could be improved through a more direct way — keeping oral dialogue journals. In addition, while possible explanations for beneficial effects of the written dialogue journals were proposed, they were not very objective and convincing because they failed to specify which parts of speaking had been improved. Therefore, in the present study, quantitative measurements, questionnaires as well as interviews were conducted to not only gain objective evidence but also understand learners' thoughts and feelings for in-depth qualitative inquiry.

McGrath's (1992) study aimed to investigate the attitudes of ESL learners toward the written dialogue journal and the value of this activity for conversational development. A comparison of the questionnaire answers obtained at the midpoint and the final point of the semester found that the students perceived the dialogue journal as a valuable tool to prepare them to speak. The teacher's questions and comments within

the written dialogue journals were considered helpful to stimulate conversation. They also noticed that the teacher gave more corrections by the end of the semester. Finally, their attitudes toward the class became more positive. It was suggested that the areas of trust, motivation and culture be examined more closely in further research on dialogue journals.

With respect to the effect of using oral journals, several studies (Allen, 1991; Brown, 1996; Foley, 1993; Henry, 1994) indicated that the audiotape or oral dialogue journal indeed contributes to learners' speaking fluency, vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and self-confidence. These studies also revealed that such practice allows learners to assess their speaking development by themselves so as to enhance learner autonomy, further serving as a useful and effective assessment tool in the language classroom. For instance, Allen (1991) investigated tape journals recorded by his class of Japanese university students whose major was mostly English education. The questionnaire results showed several benefits of this activity. Firstly, with an opportunity to practice spoken English, most of the students thought they had improved their fluency to some extent. Secondly, most students thought the teacher's feedback had improved their oral accuracy and many remarked that they had become aware of certain mistakes for the first time such as the pronunciation of certain words or the appropriate use of lexical items. Thirdly, the tapes also opened a channel for students to clarify their knowledge of certain expressions, to expand their vocabulary and to have a chance to use them. Finally, the teacher's comments gave them listening practice. Listening to their own tapes was also a way to assess their own development over time. From the teacher's perspective, the tapes provided a much better record of each student's performance, from which the teacher learned a great deal about the students, both personally and culturally.

Brown et al. (1996) examined the use of audiotaped dialogue journals produced by EFL Chilean university students. The results revealed that this activity helped enhance participants' vocabulary acquisition. The one-on-one interaction allowed the teacher to give vocabulary at the i + 1 level, which met the need of individual students. Free choice of topics also contributed to the acquisition of vocabulary. Furthermore, accuracy in the use of articles increased from the early entries to the late entries. Moreover, they also derived positive affect from the taped journals. Nevertheless, the study was unable to prove this

activity as the only possible cause of the students' improvements and did not explain how this activity facilitated the article acquisition process.

Foley (1993) suggested using talking journals with students to develop spoken English. It was concluded that students could benefit from this activity. Students could talk about topics in which they were interested and build a personal relationship with the teacher. Listening to their own journals could prompt them to re-evaluate their speaking performance. The fact that the journals were not graded also produced no pressure on students. Apart from students, the teacher also derived many benefits from this activity. It offered the teacher an opportunity to give attention to individual students and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the students. By listening to the students' journals, which reflected feedback toward the course, the teacher could do some reflection on and make adjustments to the lessons. Moreover, students' journals helped build a personal relationship with the teacher to facilitate mutual understanding.

It is therefore proposed that the combination of oral and written dialogue journals might be more appropriate to improve participants' speaking performance. However, most studies on the effect of oral or audiotape journals on speaking are qualitative in nature and cannot prove the usefulness with quantifiable evidence. Furthermore, the effect of using dialogue journals is also mostly explored from students' perspectives. It is these inadequacies that encouraged the researcher to conduct the present research to investigate the use of OWDJs in enhancing speaking English. That is, learners keep oral journals, a more direct way than written journals in advancing speaking English. Meanwhile, the researcher keeps written dialogue journals with the students in order to have more time to not only ponder what feedback to give in response to students' oral journals but also consult the dictionary or check other resources to ensure more accuracy in the feedback.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of eleven English non-majors from two national universities in Taipei were recruited in this study. To recruit them, the researcher went to several classes to introduce this activity. Attracted by the idea, they decided to participate in this project. They also passed this

information to their friends and invited them to join. The reason why they were motivated to take part in this activity was because they desired to gain more opportunities to practice speaking English and to improve their oral English. Among these students, nine of them were females and two of them males. Eight are sophomores, and three juniors. Their majors are also different including biology, geography, health education, industrial education, Chinese literature, special education, botany, and electrical engineering. Concerning the English proficiency level, two participants' level is higher-intermediate, another is lower-intermediate and the others are intermediate.

Instruments

In order to answer the research questions of the study, instruments were designed, which included questionnaires, proficiency tests, speaking learning logs, objective measurements, and the interview.

Questionnaires (Appendix A)

An open-ended questionnaire and a five-point Likert scale questionnaire were given to the participants before the implementation of this activity to examine their weaknesses and difficulties in speaking English as well as to inquire what types of feedback they would like to get from the researcher. The question items in the first part of the five-point Likert scale were mainly based on the researcher's observations and the analysis of the speaking performance of a small sample of three university students in a pilot study. The question items in the second part of the scale were based on the results of literature. According to some studies (El-Koumy, 1998; Henry, 1994; McGrath, 1992; Peyton, 1991; Peyton and Seyoum, 1989; Todd, et al., 2001), teachers usually give responses related to the students' content, ask and answer questions, request and give clarification, suggest, support as well as correct errors. The researcher mainly adopted Todd et al.'s (2001) categories, with some adjustments. Therefore, "adding information," "suggesting," "probing," "supporting," and "correction" were used in the questionnaire. "Adding information" included sharing information and opinions, responding to the topics that students recorded, answering questions and giving clarification. "Suggesting" contained the tips that could facilitate learners' speaking or the alternatives that might help learners view problems in another way. "Supporting" referred to the empathy that was given to show understanding and encouragement to the

participants. "Probing" included requesting clarification to deal with the incomprehensibility of students' speaking or asking questions to prompt them to think critically. The way to give "correction" was to model correct forms in the researcher's written journals or to point them out at the end of each journal in the "P.S." part, similar to "grammatical P.S." suggested by Jones (1988, p. 66, cited in Peyton, 1991, p. 14), in which teachers correct grammar and syntax without inhibiting the dialogue by adding a "grammatical P.S." at the end of a student's entry.

Pre-test

As the research aims to answer the question related to improvement in overall English speaking proficiency, it is necessary to administer a speaking proficiency test to assess the participants' speaking performance. The General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) high-intermediate speaking test (Appendix B) was adopted as a pre-test to evaluate the participants' entry levels. It was administered in a language laboratory during their free time, lasting about 20 minutes. Their answers were recorded on the audiotapes and then evaluated by two raters following the criteria of the GEPT speaking test (Appendix C). The two raters were students in the graduate school of the TESOL program in a national university. They were trained in a pilot study to evaluate oral performance and it was found that the interrater reliability had reached .94.

Post-test

After the three-month experiment, the GEPT high-intermediate speaking test was conducted to examine the participants' speaking performance. There were several reasons to use the same test for the pre- and post tests. First, in order to ensure fairness and consistency, the same test was adopted as the post-test. Second, the participants were not told that they would take the same test again, so they were probably not psychological prepared, not to mention highly motivated to find out the correct answers. Third, the test is not a factual memory test; instead, it tests students' speaking skills by fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. Therefore, the carry-over effect should be limited.

Speaking learning log (Appendix D)

Smith (1996) notes that the learning log allows learners to reflect upon their own learning and such records help the instructor make timely changes in the classroom in order to get the intended result. Thus, the

primary goal of the speaking learning log in the present study was to provide the participants with an opportunity to self-examine their speaking performance, to reflect on the speaking process, and to contemplate which aspects of speaking should be improved and what efforts to make during the rest of the time. The researcher could also get feedback from the logs and immediately make necessary changes. In the middle and at the end of the project, the participants had to fill out the speaking learning log designed by the researcher. Items checked include confidence, fluency, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary and pronunciation. After listening to their own tapes, they not only checked the appropriate statements but also explained their reasons in this learning log.

Interview

One purpose of conducting the interview was to explore the participants' perceptions of and reactions toward the project of keeping the oral-written dialogue journals. Another purpose was to investigate in which aspects of speaking the participants considered they made improvement, especially in fluency, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary. Still another purpose was to explore the role of the researcher's written feedback in contributing to their speaking learning process. Finally, their observations on any flaws of this project and their suggestions for improvement were investigated.

Procedure

Before the activity began, the two questionnaires were distributed to the participants, whose responses were then collected and analyzed. The pre-test was then conducted to investigate the participants' initial speaking performance. Following the pre-test was the orientation for this research. The purpose of the study, the time, the content and the procedure of this activity were introduced to the participants and the handout of the introduction (Appendix I) was passed out to ensure that they understood the whole activity clearly. Then, they began to engage in the oral-written dialogue journal activity for three months. The participants recorded whatever they liked, including their interests, concerns, problems, complaints or opinions about certain issues, etc. If they could not think of any topics to talk about, they could select a topic from a list of reference topics given by the researcher. But they were told that the topics were only for their reference, and they should not depend

on the list too much. After all, this activity is learner-centered with an attempt to improve English speaking through real communication between the participants and the researcher. As to the length of the recording, the minimum recording time was five minutes every time and no more than ten minutes at most. After receiving the tapes from the participants, the researcher listened to their tapes and gave individual feedback to each of them by e-mail. The types of feedback will be discussed in the following section. Basically, such interaction was maintained twice a week for three months. Every participant kept a total of twenty-six oral journals for the project. In the mid and end stages of this experiment, they were asked to fill out the speaking learning logs to evaluate their own speaking performance. Then, the post-test was administered to examine their speaking performance at the end of this activity. Last, the interview was administered to explore their perceptions of this activity and verify the quantitative analyses and the learning log results.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed by employing both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Prior to the activity, the questionnaires were analyzed to gain the information on how to respond to the participants' oral journals. The results of the five-point Likert scale questionnaire (Appendix E) indicated that the most serious problems these participants encountered in speaking English were confidence, anxiety, pauses, repetitions, errors of tense, prepositions, participant-verb agreement, plural forms, failing to find appropriate words to express themselves and failure to express ideas. Regarding types of feedback, the data showed that most of the participants considered it necessary to include all five types of feedback — suggesting, adding information, probing, supporting, and grammar correction. On the other hand, while obvious individual differences could be discerned, the findings of the open-ended questionnaire demonstrated a trend among these participants in terms of weaknesses, difficulties in speaking English and types of feedback. The results are shown in Appendix F, G and H respectively. With the comparison of analysis of the five-point Likert scale and the open-ended questionnaire, the findings indicated that vocabulary, fluency, and grammar were the major concern of the participants. They were eager to make improvement in these aspects. Accordingly, the researcher's feedback included "adding information," "suggesting," "supporting,"

"probing," "correction," "vocabulary," "appropriate expression," and "pronunciation." As mentioned earlier, the "P.S." section was similar to "grammatical P.S.," but the difference was that besides grammar and syntax, the researcher corrected the participants' word choices, inappropriate expressions and pronunciation in the "P.S." section based on the participants' needs.

In order to obtain objective evidence, the researcher analyzed the oral journals at the entry, mid, and final stages of the research. The first and second oral journals in the first week were selected for the representation of participants' entry speaking performance. The thirteenth and fourteenth entries were chosen for data analysis at mid stage. The last two tape entries (25th and 26th) served as the final speaking performance. These entries were transcribed orthographically for analyses of fluency, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary richness. In terms of fluency, the coding of the data included rate of speech, the number of filled and unfilled pauses per 100 words, repetitions per 100 words, the length of fluent speech runs and the ratio of hesitation pauses in the total time of speaking. Grammatical accuracy is another important focus. On the basis of the results of the questionnaire conducted before the experiment (Appendix E), errors of tense, prepositions, plural forms and participant-verb agreement were found to be the most serious errors. Thus, the four types of errors were chosen to measure the participants' grammatical accuracy over time. Based on Nation's (1989) method by calculating the number of errors made per 100 words, grammatical accuracy was measured by counting errors of verb tense, prepositions, plural forms, and S-V agreement per 100 words, the same unit as that in measuring dysfluency markers (i.e. repetitions and pauses) in the present study. Concerning how to measure vocabulary acquisition, the researcher used two measures of lexical richness to assess the vocabulary development. One was the ratio of different words (Types) to the total number of words (Tokens), known as type-token ratio (TTR) to measure vocabulary variation, and the other was VocabProfile analysis (Cobb, 2001). Cobb's (2001) VocabProfile (VP), which is available online and allows color as well as numeric visualization of output, compares words in a text with words lists that accompany the program. The four levels consisted of the most frequent 1000 words of English, the second most frequent thousand words of English, i.e. 1001 to 2000, the Academic Word List (AWL), and the remainder which are those words not found on the other lists. The lists are from West's (1953) General Service List,

which contains 2000 word families and the Academic Word List (AWL) made up of 570 word families which occur with high frequency and wide range in the academic corpus. In this present research, these four levels were divided into two levels. One is basic vocabulary including the most frequent 1000 words and the other is non-basic vocabulary composed of the words beyond the 1000 words, i.e. the second most frequent 1000 words, the AWL and the words not found on the other lists. Finally, comparisons of means (F-test) on the journals at entry, mid, and end stages were carried out between the percentages of words at the two levels.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Contribution to Overall English Speaking Proficiency

The t-test results revealed that the overall English speaking proficiency was significantly different between pre-test and post-test (Table 1). That is, keeping oral-written dialogue journals can be counted as the causal factor in advancing learners' speaking in English.

Table 1.   T-test of Pre- and Post-test (N=11)

Test	Mean	SD	t-value	p
Pre-test	37.36	23.48		
			-5.94*	.001
Post-test	51.41	19.67		

Improvement in Speaking Fluency, Grammatical Accuracy, and Vocabulary Richness

In response to the second research question, the participants made improvements in fluency and grammatical accuracy, especially verb tense accuracy. The one-way ANOVAs (repeated measure) were conducted to examine if there were significant differences in the oral journals in three different periods (entry, mid, end) in terms of fluency judged by speaking rate, number of pauses, ratio of pause time to total speaking time, average speaking runs and number of repetitions.

First, concerning the speaking rate (words per minute), the results, as shown in Tables 2 and 3, revealed that, the participants' oral

performance was found to be significantly different through keeping oral-written dialogue journals.

Table 2.   Speaking Rate (*N*=11)

Stage	Mean	SD
Entry	51.842	16.383
Mid	53.218	11.305
End	62.788	13.851

Table 3.   Summary Table of ANOVA on Speaking Rate

Source	SS	df	MS	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	4681.07	10			
Within Groups	1981.58	22			
Period	782.09	2	391.05	6.52*	.007
Residual	1199.49	20	59.97		
Total	6662.65	32			

Second, a significant difference was found between the oral journals in the three periods with regard to the number of pauses per one hundred words, as displayed in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4.   Number of Pauses per 100 Words (*N*=11)

Stage	Mean	SD
Entry	17.520	5.203
Mid	13.725	3.305
End	11.549	3.741

Table 5.   Summary Table of ANOVA on Number of Pauses per 100 Words

Source	SS	df	MS	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	329.59	10			
Within Groups	391.20	22			
Period	200.88	2	100.44	10.55*	.001
Residual	190.32	20	9.52		
Total	720.79	32			

Third, as identified by the statistical analysis in Tables 6 and 7, the oral journals at entry, mid and end stages exhibited significant difference in ratio of pause time to total speaking time.

Table 6.   Ratio of Pause Time to Total Speaking Time (N=11)

Stage	Mean	SD
Entry	0.4413	0.1114
Mid	0.3460	0.0674
End	0.2875	0.0715

Table 7.   Summary Table of ANOVA on Ratio of Pause Time to Total Speaking Time

Source	SS	df	MS	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	0.1309	10			
Within Groups	0.2222	22			
Period	0.1325	2	0.0663	14.73*	.001
Residual	0.0897	20	0.0045		
Total	0.3531	32			

Fourth, the statistical analysis revealed a significant difference across the oral journals in the three periods on average speaking runs. The results are presented in Tables 8 and 9 below.

Table 8.   Average Speaking Runs (N=11)

Stage	Mean	SD
Entry	6.31	2.38
Mid	7.75	2.39
End	9.39	2.59

Table 9. Summary Table of ANOVA on Average Speaking Runs

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	115.29	10			
Within Groups	117.79	22			
Period	52.10	2	26.05	7.93*	.003
Residual	65.69	20	3.28		
Total	233.08	32			

Fifth, in terms of the number of repetitions per 100 words, there was significant difference found across the oral journals in the three different periods during this activity, as shown in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 10. Number of Repetitions per 100 Words (*N*=11)

Stage	Mean	SD
Entry	5.074	5.382
Mid	5.269	5.037
End	2.693	3.359

Table 11. Summary Table of ANOVA on Number of Repetitions per 100 Words

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	557.90	10			
Within Groups	143.53	22			
Period	45.25	2	22.62	4.60*	.023
Residual	98.28	20	4.91		
Total	701.43	32			

In short, during the three-month training with oral-written dialogue journals, all participants improved their speaking in many aspects including an increase in speaking rate and the average speaking runs and a reduction in pauses, pause time and repetitions. While most of the participants improved fluency, there were still individual differences among them. For example, in terms of speaking rate, the participants who were at the higher-intermediate and lower-intermediate levels did not have obvious improvement. For the higher-intermediate level

students, one possible explanation is that their speaking at the beginning of this experiment seemed to have reached a level that could not be elevated in such a short period of time. As for the lower-level student, it seemed that such practice was still not enough for him to improve his fluency; so more practice might be needed.

In this study, grammatical accuracy is defined as being accurate in tense, prepositions, plurals, and participant-verb agreement. As to tense accuracy, the quantitative analyses indicated that a significant difference was found as shown in Tables 12 and 13.

Table 12.   Tense Errors per 100 Words (N=11)

Stage	Mean	SD
Entry	4.776	1.675
Mid	2.763	1.633
End	2.084	1.415

Table 13.   Summary Table of ANOVA on Verb Tense Accuracy

Source	SS	df	MS	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	28.63	10			
Within Groups	89.25	22			
Period	43.12	2	21.56	9.35*	.001
Residual	46.13	20	2.31		
Total	117.88	32			

Prepositional errors refer to wrong prepositions used, missing preposition, two-word verbs incorrectly used and preposition intruder, categorized in Lay's (1991) study. In this case, "My mother want to check if I get better or not, but I would have a meeting at Saturday night" is an example of wrong prepositions used. "I arrive Taipei Taipei Station at six o'clock and got a train…" is an example of missing prepositions. As for two-word verbs incorrectly used, "…if the plant is transformed with…" is an example of this kind. "In the several days ago, …" is an example of preposition intruder. As to prepositional accuracy, no significant difference was found across these oral journals over time. That is, students did not display obvious progress in this aspect. The findings are shown in Tables 14 and 15.

Table 14.   Errors of Prepositions per 100 Words (*N*=11)

Stage	Mean	SD
Entry	0.753	0.606
Mid	0.461	0.379
End	0.613	0.808

Table 15.   Summary Table of ANOVA on Prepositional Accuracy

Source	SS	df	MS	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	5.22	10			
Within Groups	6.89	22			
Period	0.47	2	0.23	0.73	.495
Residual	6.42	20	0.32		
Total	12.11	32			

Errors of plural forms refer to "missing S in plural nouns," and "adding S in words where they should be singular." For example, the error in the sentence "we partitioned the freshmen into six part" belongs to the former case, and "the second activities is wonderful memory in my life" the latter one. Regarding the accuracy of plural forms, it was found that the change, as shown in Tables 16 and 17, was not statistically significant. In other words, it seemed that the improvement in this aspect was very limited.

Table 16.   Errors of Plural Forms per 100 Words (*N*=11)

Stage	Mean	SD
Entry	0.731	0.419
Mid	1.166	0.587
End	0.740	0.435

Table 17.　Summary Table of ANOVA on Accuracy of Plural Forms

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	2.73	10			
Within Groups	5.72	22			
Period	1.36	2	0.68	3.12	.066
Residual	4.36	20	0.22		
Total	8.45	32			

　　Errors of participant-verb agreement refer to the case in which verbs do not change in form from singular to plural or vice versa. Examples like "…they always has different opinions" and "He still have a distance with us" are of this kind of errors. With regard to the accuracy of participant-verb agreement, there was no significant difference found across the oral journals in three different periods; that is, improvement in this aspect was too trivial. Findings are shown in Tables 18 and 19.

Table 18.　Errors of Participant-verb Agreement per 100 Words (*N*=11)

Stage	Mean	SD
Entry	0.777	0.843
Mid	0.525	0.505
End	0.473	0.253

Table 19.　Summary Table of ANOVA on Accuracy of Participant-verb Agreement

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	4.70	10			
Within Groups	6.18	22			
Period	0.58	2	0.29	1.04	.372
Residual	5.60	20	0.28		
Total	10.88	32			

　　As stated earlier, lexical acquisition is one of the components worthy of investigation because the problem of facing lexical deficiency when speaking English was identified in most participants' questionnaire reports before this activity. In this paper, lexical richness was measured

by two methods including type-token ratio (TTR) and VocabProfile (VP) analysis. Tables 20 and 21 present the results of analyses, i.e. changes in lexical variation and changes in lexical profile. In terms of changes in lexical variation, Table 20 shows that no significant difference was found across the oral journals in the three different periods during this activity. Although the figures showed a trend of progress, the change was not statistically significant. In terms of changes in lexical profile, Table 21 displayed the distribution of basic and non-basic vocabulary. A view of the lexical profile indicated no significant difference; that is, the non-basic words in the oral journals did not show significant increase throughout this activity and the basic words did not show significant decrease. It seemed that participants did not improve in vocabulary because they used more and more basic words in speaking English. However, the results of TTR within the first level (basic 1000) showed that the participants indeed increased their lexical variation, as shown in Table 22. In other words, they became more capable of varying the basic words they knew, rather than repeating the same words.

Table 20.   Changes in Lexical Variation Throughout this Activity

	Entry		Mid		End		F	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Lexical Variation	0.422	0.085	0.428	0.105	0.434	0.091	0.20	.820

Table 21.   Changes in VP Throughout this Activity

	Entry		Mid		End		F	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Basic 1000	0.904	0.012	0.909	0.022	0.912	0.031	0.27	.764
Beyond 1000	0.096	0.012	0.091	0.022	0.088	0.031	0.27	.764

Taking the qualitative data from speaking learning logs and interviews, an overall picture was then configured to reveal how these participants enhanced speaking proficiency from this activity. First of all, oral-written dialogue journals provided the participants with more opportunities to practice speaking English, which not only strengthened their organizational ability but also facilitated them to speak English more easily and spontaneously. Speaking involves more than reception; it required participants to be more actively involved. They needed to turn

their communicative intentions into spoken linguistic forms. In this sense, when the activation and retrieval of English words were made repeatedly, processing became more automatic and rapid, and thus enhanced fluency.

Table 22.   Changes in Lexical Variation Within the Basic 1000 Words

	Entry		**Mid**		**End**		*F*	*p*
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Lexical Variation	0.396	0.088	0.399	0.104	0.403	0.084	0.09	.915

Second, noticing a gap between what they wanted to say and what they could say triggered them to recall what they had learned and retrieve English words from memory. Although noticing a problem is not enough to solve a problem, the awareness of a problem may lead to not only more attention to relevant information in the input but also incentives to solve the problem. Several participants stated that they would consult the dictionary for the words they did not know how to say or were unsure of the meaning after they finished recording. Another admitted that though she did not look up the words in the dictionary, when she happened to see the words that she failed to say before, she tried to memorize them and use them in the oral journals as much as possible. In addition, as the participants' descriptions indicated, they applied some strategies such as approximation, word coinage, and circumlocution to prevent them from stuttering.

Third, recognizing their weaknesses in speaking such as in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation was another influencing factor that led to speaking improvement. The researcher's feedback played an important part in this aspect, guiding them to work on their deficiencies and correct their errors. It seemed that the researcher's feedback was one of the causal factors in improving participants' speaking performance because it was responsible for raising their consciousness, which triggered them to monitor their internal and external speech. Internal speech is the process of silently speaking to oneself or saying something in the head. External speech is a self-produced overt speech. Most of the participants remarked that they learned the expressions and words used in the researcher's feedback, "adding information" category. In addition, all of the participants considered the "suggesting" part a reminder, from which they knew where they should improve, for example, grammar and

fluency. Most of the participants also regarded the "P.S." part as useful. Ellis (1992, p. 234) views consciousness-raising as essentially "concept-forming," which requires learners to pay attention to the targeted forms (cited in James, 1998, p. 256). In other words, the "P.S." part in the researcher's feedback provided the participants with correction which enabled them to notice their errors in speaking and then to avoid them next time.

Fourth, this activity offered a channel for hypothesis testing. When there were no other means available to express themselves, the participants used the words they could think of or simple words when speaking. Later, they received appropriate corrections from feedback or they consulted the dictionary to make sure if their expressions were correct. So, they learned and improved from making errors.

Fifth, with the practice of using various language functions, namely, description, narration, comparison, expression of one's emotions, the participants became more flexible in expressing themselves. They not only narrated and described things, but also expressed their opinions and emotions. Cathy reported that she understood how to talk about things from certain angles or learned to express ideas in a more organized way. Sheree commented that at the beginning of this activity, she only described things that happened in daily life, but from the researcher's feedback, she tried to think about the questions provided and then responded in English accordingly.

Last, talking about a variety of topics stimulated the participants to employ different words in various fields, broadened their perspectives of thinking and strengthened their organizational ability, which further elevated overall speaking proficiency. Amal stated that talking about different topics every time pushed her to not only employ various vocabulary but also figure out ways to express new ideas more completely.

More specifically, how the participants improved fluency, verb tense accuracy, and vocabulary are summarized as follows based on the results of the speaking learning logs and the interview.

In terms of fluency, first of all, gaining more opportunities to practice speaking English was the most important reason that resulted in the improvement in fluency. Frequent practice contributed to the ease of organizing and thinking in English and becoming more relaxed and less worried about making errors. Second, the desire to express ideas quickly and clearly in a short time also increased fluency. Third, the reminder in

the researcher's feedback played a crucial role in reminding the participants to be aware of their weaknesses in fluency. Fourth, development of a breadth of thinking and ease of topic elaboration also contributed to the progress in fluency. Fifth, the appropriate use of strategies such as switching to a new topic and using other words to explain the ideas helped increase fluency. Sixth, the improvement in grammar and vocabulary also facilitated fluency. Seventh, making English part of their lives was also one of the reasons for fluency enhancement.

Concerning grammatical accuracy, the majority of students made significant progress in verb tense accuracy. Because of the researcher's feedback, especially "suggesting" and "P.S.," the participants started to become aware of tense problems and gradually self-monitoring of tense became a habit. This also coincides with Ellis's (1993) suggestion on grammar teaching, namely, awareness-raising for noticing and for explicit knowledge. The former means inducing learners to notice and understand features of grammar in the input processing. The researcher supplied the participants with the correct form, meaning and examples in the part of "P.S." The latter refers to providing learners with the data that they need to discover the rules for themselves. The researcher modeled the correct form in the "adding information" feedback, from which the participants could discover their grammatical problems. More importantly, the tense correction did not operate at the sentence level; instead, it operated at the level of text. The participants put the correct sentences back into the text from which they came and saw that the appropriate use made perfect sense. Then, they made a comparison between their sentences and the researcher's corrections. As proposed by Larsen-Freeman, Kuehn, & Haccius (2002), it is insufficient to learn verb tense independent of other related tense forms. It is equally important for students to learn appropriate verb tense use in discourse. Fingado (1981) also advocates that verb tenses have to be taught in a "relevant" context, through dialogues, anecdotes, reading and writing "as human as possible" (p. 7, cited in Shin, 1999, p. 65). Moreover, Wang (1993) suggests that the teacher cannot assume students understand the meaning of different verb tenses even if they can correctly recognize the form. Instead, besides explaining morphological tense markers and tense meanings, the teacher should increase the amount of meaningful practice. Consequently, this may explain why the participants made improvement in verb tense use. By contrast, most of the participants did not have

significant improvement in accuracy of plural forms, S-V agreement, and prepositions. Concerning plural nouns and S-V agreement, this finding is not surprising because the phenomenon occurs frequently, especially in impromptu speaking. If students are required to take a quiz in the form of blank-filling or multiple choice to test their use of plural forms or S-V agreement, they will definitely have no problem since this kind of grammatical rules has been taught in junior high. So, making this kind of errors in speaking does not result from lack of appropriate knowledge; instead, it is a lack of "processing ability" in difficult operating conditions (Johnson, 1988, p. 90). One possible explanation of not improving the "processing ability" is that in terms of comprehensibility, this kind of grammatical inaccuracy does not impede the overall intelligibility of speakers' messages, so learners tend to ignore this kind of errors in speaking. Even if they make errors in "plurals" or "S-V agreement," they still can get the message across. So, it can be inferred that lack of desire or need to eradicate these kinds of errors is likely to impede the progress. Besides, it was found that participants noticed and recognized the correction from the researcher's written feedback, but they had other things on their mind, including the ideas they wanted to express and ways of expressing them when speaking. So, even though they tried to pay attention to this kind of errors, they still could not avoid it. For those who thought they had made progress in the accuracy of plural forms, the truth was that they were not really making progress. Feeling more aware of this kind of errors only meant that they monitored their internal speech, but that did not ensure the accuracy of external speech.

Prepositions are a different story. There are two possible explanations. It is implied that the prepositional errors are something that the participants were unable to pay attention to when speaking English because this kind of errors usually does not impede communication. As Kormos (1999) asserted, "studies of divided attention show that attentional limitations will affect the efficiency of the monitoring processes and, as a result, the number and type of errors noticed by the speaker" (p. 312). From this line of argumentation, we may assume that they might not be capable of monitoring every aspect of grammar such as tense, preposition, plural forms and S-V agreement at the same time since the English proficiency of these participants was considered to be intermediate, on average. All they could do was grip the points they could handle. The other explanation is that, as can be seen from the

speaking learning logs, "prepositions" are something that they were not very familiar with; that is, they only had shallow linguistic knowledge about its usage. It is not surprising to obtain such results. Indeed, several studies have indicated the difficulty of English prepositions (Lay, 1991; Rastall, 1994; Yang, Hsu, & Lin, 2005; Zughoul, 1979). According to Lay (1991, p. 31), "prepositions in English are a constant problem for Chinese students." Some common problems learners may encounter, categorized by Lay (p. 31) are "distinctions between in, on, at, during"; "using the right preposition after verbs"; "using a preposition intruder"; and "general confusion of prepositions." Yang, et al.'s (2005) research also indicated that EFL college students' difficulties with prepositions came from three sources. First, previously acquired knowledge, such as strong collocations might have misled learners. Second, an isolated concept of prepositions might have impeded learners from seeing the correlations between the prepositions and the referred objects. Third, the confusion between particles and prepositions was another factor that resulted in learners' difficulties. These sources might cause learners' difficulties in using prepositions accurately. Moreover, as Zughoul (1979) pointed out, there are several sources of difficulty with preposition use. One obvious source is that each preposition carries many meanings. Another factor is that collocating different prepositions with the same word yields different meanings. Still another difficulty is that different parts of speech of the same root word require different prepositions. In view of such difficulties, it is apparent that the participants were unable to acquire thorough knowledge on prepositions, not to mention use them correctly in speaking.

As for vocabulary, although the quantitative analysis did not show significant improvement among these participants, most of the participants perceived progress in this aspect. First, the researcher's feedback, a significant factor in facilitating vocabulary development, aroused their interest to not only read the message but also notice the words. They not only benefited greatly by learning the words, phrases and expressions used in the feedback but also recognized which words were used inappropriately. Without the engagement and attention of the learners, there can be little opportunity for awareness to take place. Second, noticing occurred when learners realized that the words filled a gap in their knowledge of the language. When recording oral journals, oftentimes the participants encountered lexical gaps. In this case, seeing the specific words that they wanted to say but failed to say in the

researcher's feedback, they became attentive and impressed. They were also motivated to refresh their memory of English and to consult the dictionary after they finished recording. Third, learning to use communication strategies when they faced lexical gaps kept them from being stuck when speaking English. It can be regarded as an important component of vocabulary ability. According to Chapelle (1994), strategies of vocabulary use are defined as one component of vocabulary ability. "The strategies are employed by all language users to manage the ways that they use their vocabulary knowledge in communication" (cited in Read, 2000, p. 33). From this activity, in order to overcome their lack of vocabulary knowledge, the participants learned how to paraphrase, how to use simple, familiar words to express their ideas to avoid being stuck when they did not know the right words. Fourth, through constant practice in speaking English, the active words could be further consolidated. The participants not only reinforced the impression of the usage of the words but also accumulated the words commonly used in speaking. As Baddeley (1990, p. 156) suggests, it is important to produce repeated opportunities to retrieve the item which is to be learned. Each retrieval of a word strengthens the path linking form and meaning, and makes subsequent retrieval easier. Fifth, stimulated by this activity, the participants made English part of their lives. More attentive and sensitive to how others speak English, thinking about how those words were used in oral journals, and thinking in English as much as possible showed how they made efforts in developing or enhancing vocabulary.

However, it is worth discussing the reasons of not showing obvious quantitative improvement in vocabulary richness. Nearly fifty-five percent of participants acknowledged that when failing to express certain ideas, they tended to use simple and familiar words or paraphrase to express themselves. This phenomenon might serve as a reasonable explanation of why the quantitative analyses did not display significant improvement in increasing the words beyond the basic 1000 words. Besides, three participants stated that they did not check out the words they could not say or were not familiar with whenever they finished recordings. Among them, Clare and Jessie reported that they did not do so because they were lazy. Another reason for lack of apparent changes in vocabulary richness might be that owing to talking about different topics and issues every time, the participants hardly recycled and reused the words they activated from memory or learned from this activity. Under such a circumstance, they did not have many chances to increase

vocabulary capacity in certain fields. It is not hard to imagine that whenever talking about a new topic, the participants tended to use words familiar to them because they had not practiced the words in that field yet. All they could do was quickly activate the words they had learned before and tried to speak them out. Even though afterwards they consulted the dictionary for those words they could not think of when speaking English, they might not talk about the same issues next time. As Waring (2002, para. 6) stated, "research suggests that it takes between 8-20 meetings of a word before we can say that we have 'learned' it." Likewise, according to Truscott (1999), for a correction to have a long-term impact on the learner's use of language, the information it conveys must be incorporated into the developing interlanguage, making possible its accurate, automatic use in the future. In order to achieve this goal, the learner must "not only notice and understand it, but also deliberately rehearse it and make use of it" (p. 446). In this study, although the participants could clearly understand the usage of certain words in certain contexts, they might not reuse them. As a result, the words could not be internalized and put into automatic use. As some participants suggested, after specific errors are corrected, opportunities should be given for them to make use of the correct expressions. Otherwise, those expressions would be easily forgotten before long. Finally, another explanation for the lack of improvement in vocabulary is that the participants learned from the researcher's feedback which expressions or words were used inappropriately; however, the correction in the researcher's feedback only pointed out specific errors, rather than provided the learners with the word use in different contexts. This may not enable the learners to deal with them in various contexts, that is, beyond the one in which the correction was made.

As shown above, whether in fluency, grammatical accuracy or vocabulary, feedback always played an important role in this activity. Both "adding information," which inspired the participants to think from different perspectives and "suggesting," which reminded them of their weaknesses in fluency led to improvement in fluency. In terms of improving grammatical accuracy, "suggesting" and "P.S." played indispensable roles. "Suggesting" served as a general reminder, while the "P.S." part pointed out the specific examples of their errors. Although "suggesting" and "P.S." pointed to the same problem in two different ways, they were both effective in reducing errors. Concerning vocabulary, "adding information" and "P.S." both served as important

factors in facilitating vocabulary expansion. In "adding information," through the sharing of ideas and experiences in English, the participants observed and learned different ways of expressing themselves. They also recognized whether their words were used inappropriately from the "P.S." part.

Participants' Perceptions of this Activity

In response to the third research question, all of the participants had a positive attitude toward keeping oral-written dialogue journals. They considered it "worthwhile," "great," "meaningful," and they were fond of being members of this activity. They not only became more confident in speaking English and more motivated to speak or learn English but also liked this activity. Concerning the confidence in speaking English, the reasons for gaining confidence are summarized as follows. Frequent practice allowed the participants to become more comfortable in speaking English. The sense of achievement that resulted from perception of their own progress in speaking is another reason that contributed to confidence enhancement. The researcher's feedback also resulted in the increase of confidence. The supportive words in the feedback were beneficial in increasing their confidence. Regarding the motivation from this activity, they recognized their deficiency in speaking English and they were motivated to take action to learn English. Besides, the researcher's supportive and encouraging words also gave them incentives to continue.

CONCLUSION

Several findings can be summarized from the present study. First, the participants made improvement in overall speaking proficiency after keeping oral-written dialogue journals on speaking English. Second, fluency was the most improved aspect, while verb tense accuracy saw better improvement than the other three indices, namely, prepositions, plural forms and participant-verb agreement in grammar accuracy. Third, all of the participants had a positive attitude toward keeping OWDJs. They liked this activity and they became more confident in speaking English and more motivated to speak or learn English.

Overall, the study revealed that keeping oral-written dialogue journals indeed enhanced speaking performance. Like written or audiotape dialogue journals, it has been proved that the combination of

written and audiotape dialogue journals can attain upbeat outcome in speaking English; therefore, it is argued that it is not necessary for the teacher or researcher to keep oral journals all the time, written dialogue journals can also increase learners' speaking. This activity is precisely suitable for the EFL environment (e.g. Taiwan) where it is probably unrealistic and impracticable for teachers to exchange oral dialogue journals with a large number of students in a class. With the convenience of written journals via e-mail, teachers' feedback can be accessed as soon as possible.

In comparison with other studies mainly focusing on qualitative inquiry, this research added objective quantitative measurements to analyze the speaking data, such as speaking rate, pauses, repetitions, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary richness, which made the outcomes more convincing and verifiable. A comparison between pre- and post-test results showed that the participants' overall speaking proficiency increased because of this activity. The improvement was attributed to the influence of oral-written dialogue journals, which corroborated literature findings on the benefits of dialogue journals.

The chief contribution of implementing the oral-written dialogue journal activity in the present study is to enhance speaking performance. Four pedagogical implications can be derived from the findings of this study.

First, keeping the OWDJ is an effective method worth trying outside class to elevate learners' English speaking in their free time. Teachers are encouraged to adopt this activity. Without taking class time, which is limited and valuable, learners' speaking fluency and accuracy can still be increased with more opportunities to practice speaking English.

Second, rather than a stiff and meaningless activity, this activity is meaningful and interactive to both students and teachers. This activity provides students with opportunities to freely express their ideas in English, rather than just read articles aloud or recite something. Not assigned any specific topics to address, learners are encouraged to actively talk about any topic they would like to share with the teacher. It is not uncommon to find that learners in an EFL learning environment hardly have a chance to speak English freely. Under such a circumstance, they may not be conscious of their problems in speaking. Perhaps they know their pronunciation problems from class, but they may not be aware of fluency and grammar problems. Thus, through such an activity, they become aware of their problems in speaking English because the

teacher not only shares things with them, but also points out and corrects their speaking errors. Apart from that, learning to think and organize ideas in a short time, instead of reading others' works, helps involve learners in real communication to achieve purposeful and meaningful learning goals.

Third, although the format of feedback is the same, the content is individualized. It is an efficient and effective way to provide individualized tutoring. Learners can clearly recognize their deficiencies and weak points in speaking without taking the risks of being laughed at by other classmates in a large class. Besides, everyone has different problems in speaking. Some can speak English very fluently, but not necessarily correctly and appropriately, while some cannot speak English fluently because they think too much about structures and grammar. The individualized feedback is a good way to point out individual speaking problems, build learners' confidence and stimulate motivation. In short, the interactive and privacy-keeping nature of this activity plays a primary role in facilitating English speaking.

Fourth, while this activity resulted in limited improvement in grammatical accuracy, it may still serve as a supplementary practice for students. Without sacrificing fluency, students can practice grammar in meaningful context, rather than in drill practice. On the other hand, through the teacher's feedback, students can not only observe appropriate grammar use in "adding information" feedback but also be constantly reminded of their grammatical errors in the section of "suggesting" and "P.S." In doing so, students are expected to achieve grammatical accuracy.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

To prevent the participants from getting impatient and the activity burdensome, the researcher conducted this experiment for only three months. The time span of three months is not really a long time for learning English, so it seems unrealistic to expect the participants to have great improvement in speaking English in such a short time. Further research is suggested to prolong the period of implementing oral-written dialogue journals to investigate its effect on speaking.

In addition, it should be noted that the number of participants involved in this study is limited, so future research is suggested to

include more participants with different English proficiency levels to investigate whether English proficiency might be another variable. Besides, among the eleven students, only two males were included, which could not prove whether the effect on female and male students is different. Thus, gender might be another variable in future research.

Also, further research is recommended to include students from the same class so that the external variable can be better controlled. The external variables refer to the class environment students are exposed to and the teacher's teaching methods and style, and so on. If these variables are well controlled, the findings will be more convincing because the progress can be attributed to only the effect of the oral-written dialogue journals, rather than other external variables.

Furthermore, a recommendation for future research is to include an experimental group and a control group. The former consists of those who join this oral-written dialogue journal activity, while the latter is composed of those who do not keep OWDJs. By comparing the experimental group with the control group, the researcher can determine whether the significance of the improvement in speaking performance results from other practice or actually from OWDJs.

Moreover, the researcher's perspectives, viewed as important evidence to justify the findings, were not included in the present study. Thus, future research is suggested to include the researcher's observation for analysis.

Furthermore, the activity has been proved to be an effective method to improve the participants' English speaking such as overall English speaking proficiency, fluency, and verb tense accuracy. However, this study did not investigate whether the participants improved their speech performance such as in public speaking or using language in different contexts for various purposes. Therefore, further research is suggested to examine whether the participants can improve their speech performance in different contexts.

Another interesting point worth exploring is that while the participants improved their speaking through such one-on-one interaction, can they really apply the speaking skills developed from this activity in real life situations such as in face-to-face conversation? Whether they can speak well in public as well as in private deserves further investigation.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Questionnaire

Hi everyone,
Please spend a little time filling out this questionnaire, which will facilitate the process
of oral-written dialogue journal activity and improve this activity.   I appreciate your
valuable opinions very much.

1. In terms of English speaking ability, what do you think are your strengths?
2. In terms of English speaking ability, what do you think are your weaknesses?
3. When speaking English, what do you think are your difficulties?
4. What kinds of written feedback do you think I should give?
5. How do you expect the oral-written dialogue journal activity will help you solve your
   speaking problems?   Please explain in detail.

✧ When you fill out the questionnaire, please circle the answer that most fits your
   situation.
Department & year：
Name:（Chinese）   （English）
Gender：
Your English score on Joint College Entrance Examination:
Telephone：（H）＿＿＿＿＿＿＿（M）＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿ E-mail:＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
The following are the conditions that you may encounter in speaking English:
5: Very serious   4: Serious   3: Common   2: Slight   1. Slightest

1.	No confidence	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Anxiety	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Pauses	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Repetitions	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Tense errors	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Confusion of she & he	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Errors of prepositions	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Errors of subject-verb agreement	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Errors of plural forms	5	4	3	2	1
10.	Failing to find appropriate words to express themselves	5	4	3	2	1
11.	self-corrections	5	4	3	2	1
12.	English speaking that fails to express ideas	5	4	3	2	1
13.	Confusion of active and passive voice	5	4	3	2	1
14.	Errors of the verb after auxiliaries（can, will, should, must, may etc.）	5	4	3	2	1

The following are the researcher's written feedbacks:

5: Strongly agree   4: Agree   3: Not sure   2. Disagree   1. Strongly disagree

15. You think the feedback should include "suggesting."   5   4   3   2   1
16. You think the feedback should include "adding information."   5   4   3   2   1
17. You think the feedback should include "probing," such as "this 5   4   3   2   1
     is one reason for learning English, but there are many others.
     What other reasons for learning English can you think of?"
18. You think the feedback should include "supporting," such as   5   4   3   2   1
     encouraging remarks.
19. You think the feedback should include grammar corrections.   5   4   3   2   1

Appendix B. High-Intermediate Level Speaking Test

Form Code: HS

Self-introduction: My registration number is ＿(Number)＿, and my seat number is
＿＿(Number)＿＿.

Part I   Answering Questions

For questions 1 to 5, you will have 15 seconds to answer each question.
For questions 6 to 10, you will have 30 seconds to answer each question.

Part II   Picture Description

Look at the picture, think about the questions below for 30 seconds, and then record your answers for 1½ minutes.
  1. What is the woman doing?
  2. Why is she doing this?
  3. Do you do this? Why or why not?
  4. If you still have time, please describe the picture in as much detail as you can.

Part III   Discussion

Read the questions, think about your answers to the questions for 1½ minutes, and then record your answers for 1½ minutes.
The Internet has become very popular these days. Do you use it? What can we do with the Internet and what problems might it cause? Please explain.

Self-introduction: My registration number is   (Number) , and my seat number is
         (Number)   .

Appendix C. Grading Criteria for GEPT High-Intermediate Speaking Test

Level	Grade	Description
5	100	The response content is appropriate and to the point; fluent speaking as well as clear and well-organized expression of ideas; correct and natural pronunciation and intonation; correct grammar and spontaneous use of vocabulary; Even with occasional errors, the candidate is still be able to achieve effective communication.
4	80	The response content is generally appropriate and to the point; pronunciation and intonation are generally correct and natural; vocabulary and grammar are good enough for communication; Even with errors, the candidate can spontaneously communicate on common topics without affecting communication.
3	60	Being able to respond to familiar topics; although utterances are not fluent enough and errors sometimes affect communication, yet the candidate possesses basic grammar knowledge and vocabulary. Pronunciation and intonation are frequently incorrect.
2	40	Enough to be able to respond to familiar topics; there are many errors in pronunciation and intonation; vocabulary and grammar knowledge are limited; although the candidate makes strenuous effort to express ideas, utterances are mostly fragmented and communication is frequently inhibited.
1	20	Barely being able to respond to very simple topics; there are tremendous errors in pronunciation and intonation; grammar knowledge and vocabulary are extremely inadequate; the candidate's ability to express ideas is extremely limited and has great difficulty communicating.
0	0	No answer／Equal to no answer

Appendix D. Speaking Learning Log

Date: _____   Weekday: _____
Name:

* Before answering the questions, please listen to the tapes you have recorded over the
  past one and a half months carefully.

1. Do you think is there any change in your confidence?
   Confidence increases☐   Confidence decreases☐   No change☐

2. Do you think is there any change in your fluency?

   a. Speaking rate   Increase☐ Decrease☐ No change☐

   b. Number of pauses   Increase☐ Decrease☐ No change☐

   c. Number of repetitions   Increase☐ Decrease☐ No change☐

   d. self-corrections   Increase☐ Decrease☐ No change☐

3. Continuing the previous question, please explain your reasons in detail.

4. Do you think is there any change in your grammatical accuracy?

   a. Tense errors   Increase☐ Decrease☐ No change☐

   b. Errors of prepositions   Increase☐ Decrease☐ No change☐

   c. Errors of plural forms   Increase☐ Decrease☐ No change☐

   d. Errors of subject-verb agreement   Increase☐ Decrease☐ No change☐

5. Continuing the previous question, please explain your reasons in detail.

6. Do you think is there any change in vocabulary?

   a. Failing to find appropriate words to   Shows improvement☐   Worse☐
      express themselves   No improvement☐
   b. English speaking that fails to   Shows improvement☐   Worse☐
      express ideas   No improvement☐

7. Continuing the previous question, please explain your reasons in detail.

8. Do you think is there any change in your pronunciation?
   Shows improvement☐   Worse☐   No improvement☐

9. Continuing the previous question, please explain your answer with examples.

Appendix E. Results of the Five-point Likert Scale

Item	Extent					Percentage (%)
	1 (f, %)	2 (f, %)	3 (f, %)	4 (f, %)	5 (f, %)	
1. No confidence	(0, 0)	(1, 9.1)	(4, 36.4)	(5, 45.5)	(1, 9.1)	91
2. Anxiety	(0, 0)	(2, 18.2)	(5, 45.5)	(3, 27.3)	(1, 9.1)	82
3. Pauses	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	(1, 9.1)	(6, 54.5)	(4, 36.4)	100
4. Repetitions	(0, 0)	(3, 27.3)	(2, 18.2)	(4, 36.4)	(2, 18.2)	73
5. Errors of tense	(0, 0)	(1, 9.1)	(3, 27.3)	(6, 54.5)	(1, 9.1)	91
6. Confusion of she & he	(5, 45.5)	(4, 36.4)	(1, 9.1)	(1, 9.1)	(0, 0)	18
7. Errors of prepositions	(1, 9.1)	(0, 0)	(6, 54.5)	(1, 9.1)	(3, 27.3)	91
8. Errors of participant-verb agreement	(2, 18.2)	(1, 9.1)	(8, 72.7)	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	73
9. Errors of plural forms	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	(7, 63.6)	(4, 36.4)	(0, 0)	100
10. Failing to find appropriate words to express themselves	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	(2, 18.2)	(4, 36.4)	(5, 45.5)	100
11. Self-corrections	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	(7, 63.6)	(3, 27.3)	(1, 9.1)	100
12. English speaking that fails to express ideas	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	(7, 63.6)	(2, 18.2)	(2, 18.2)	100
13. Confusion of active and passive voice	(2, 18.2)	(3, 27.3)	(6, 54.5)	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	55
14. Errors of the verb after auxiliaries	(4, 36.4)	(4, 36.4)	(3, 27.3)	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	27
15. Suggesting	(0, 0)	(2, 18.2)	(1, 9.1)	(5, 45.5)	(3, 27.3)	73
16. Adding information	(0, 0)	(1, 9.1)	(1, 9.1)	(6, 54.5)	(3, 27.3)	82
17. Probing	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	(3, 27.3)	(4, 36.4)	(4, 36.4)	73

18. Supporting	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	(2, 18.2)	(8, 72.7)	(1, 9.1)	82
19. Grammar correction	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	(0, 0)	(3, 27.3)	(8, 72.7)	100

Note. Item 1-14　　1: Very slight; 2: Slight; 3: Fair; 4: Serious;
　　　　　　　　5: Very serious
　　　Item 15-19　　1: Strongly disagreeable; 2: Disagreeable; 3: Not sure;
　　　　　　　　4: Agreeable; 5: Strongly agreeable
　　f = Number of the participants　　Item 1-14: Percentage = 3 + 4 + 5
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Item 15-19: Percentage = 4 + 5

Appendix F. Participants' Weaknesses in Speaking English

	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Vocabulary	8	73
Fluency	6	55
Grammar	6	55
Pronunciation	5	45
Listening	4	36
Planning Time	3	27
Anxiety	3	27
Intonation	1	9
Short sentences	1	9

Note. N (number of participants) =11; F= the number of participants

Appendix G. **Difficulties in Speaking English**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Vocabulary	8	73
Fluency	4	36
Anxiety	3	27
Grammar	2	18
Attitudes towards speaking English	2	18
Confidence	2	18
Planning Time	2	18
Opportunity of speaking English	2	18
Intelligibility	1	9
Unsure whether the expression is what is intended to say	1	9
Pronunciation	1	9
Organizing Ability	1	9

Note. N (number of participants) =11; F= the number of participants

Appendix H. Types of feedback

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Vocabulary	7	64
Appropriate Expression	5	45
Pronunciation	5	45
Suggestion	5	45
Grammar Correction	3	27
Correction	3	27
Fluency	2	18
Intonation	2	18
Responses to the Content	1	9
Organizing Ability	1	9

Note. N (number of participants) =11; F= the number of participants

Appendix I. **The Activity of My Thesis: Oral-written dialogue journal activity**

Purpose: To help you improve English speaking ability

Time: This activity will last three months in total － from August second to November first.

Method: You will record your oral journals twice a week. After you give me (Vivian) your tapes, I will give you written feedback by e-mail. After reading the feedback, you can record the follow-up oral journals and then give me the tapes. You have to decide the content by yourselves. Make sure you record important events or feelings － not every detail. If you cannot figure out what to say, you can refer to the topics I provide for reference, but <u>you should not rely on them too much</u>. <u>You are not allowed to write scripts</u> before recording. You only have <u>two minutes</u> to prepare what you are going to say in English. To avoid confusion, <u>make sure you include the correct date with each entry.</u> You cannot press *pause* or *stop* because that will affect the overall performance. In addition, whenever you hand in the tapes, please make sure you rewind your tapes to the beginning of the new entry to avoid confusion. More importantly, <u>make sure you don't erase entries.</u> If you finish your tapes, I will give you new ones, so don't worry.

The Length of Recording: The length of every recording is 5 to 10 minutes, no more than 10 minutes.

The Time to Hand in Your Tapes: Hand in your tapes before 12:00 every Tuesday and Friday to Yu-fan Lin's mailbox on the 8th floor's graduate students' lounge in Cheng building.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Telephone: leave out

E-mail: leave out