

Conversation Journals:

Using a Written Journal for Better Conversation

Michael P. Geary

English Department

National Kaohsiung First University of Science and Technology

Abstract

Due to several years of English training in a *non*-communicative learning environment where reading and writing were emphasized to the detriment of speaking and listening skills students in Taiwan have problems speaking fluently in the English foreign language. Students coming from such an environment must participate in a learning environment that enables them to use speaking and listening skills as much as possible so their confidence is fostered. To that end, at the university level I devised using a *Conversation Journal* for my conversation classes. The use of a written journal as a springboard for conversation can assist students in overcoming their lack of fluency in the target foreign language. Through using a journal containing their own personal daily activities and their feelings and opinions about them as a reference (not as material to be read), students overcome their insecurities surrounding speaking. The *Conversation Journal* seems to work because they have had the opportunity to minimize problems, i.e. vocabulary and pronunciation, during the time spent writing their journal entries, and they become confident as they talk about themselves in the target language in personally relevant ways. This paper seeks to outline and describe the use of the *Conversation Journal* in aiding students to become more fluent so that other teachers may use it in their classes with the same promising results.