

## **Effects of Free-talking Sessions on EFL University Students' Attitudes and Speaking Progress\***

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The present study explored the effects of free-talking sessions (FTSs) in an English Café on Korean university students' reflective progress and affective attitudes toward English speaking. Participants were four groups of two to three students who took *Practical English II*, a required freshman English conversation class once a week in the fall of 2015. Data consisted of open-ended questionnaires, interviews, free-talking activity logs and self-reports from nine students, a questionnaire survey and direct one-on-one interviews with six international professors (IPs) who participated in FTSs. To identify the impact of a Korean professor (KP)'s teaching methodology, the researcher utilized three speaking enhancement techniques in regular classes. Qualitative case study methodology was utilized. The findings suggest that the KP's and IPs' Positive Feedback Loop teaching methodology had a positive influence on improving students' basic speaking progress, empowering students' self-assessed attitudes towards English speaking and reducing their speaking anxiety, expressing appreciation for their involvement, building their gradual confidence and facilitating a high willingness to communicate in FTSs. IPs demonstrated some different applicable activities and suggestions in FTSs for more efficient administration, preferred semi-structured FTSs and proper time-management.

[free-talking sessions/affective attitude/speaking enhancement technique/  
positive feedback loop/  
프리토킹세션/정의적태도/말하기강화기법/긍정적피드백순환]

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the era of real-time communication and World Englishes, it seems inevitable to put more emphasis on productive skills such as speaking and writing in English. If these had been the focus from the time Korean students started learning English, perhaps they could speak English fluently or at least have a basic command of communicative skills via productive activities. However, in a researcher's class, many students have expressed the reason they are not able to speak more accurately or confidently is because receptive skills based on the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) had been the focus. This was especially true in Korean high school when it was extremely important for them to improve their communication skills along with a wealth of vocabulary development.

In reality, students struggle to express their ideas or opinions on certain topics in English. In Korean universities, English speaking practice chiefly outside of class is called "free-talking" which was started at the beginning of English conversation classes when there were only a few international professors (IPs) working at Korean universities (N. Kim, 2011). The idea behind this type of English practice is to give students a chance to practice communicating outside of the class with native speakers using what they have learned inside of the classroom. Such native speakers are dumbfounded when they come to Korea and find it extremely hard to lead the conversation class because they try to interact with students who "participate" in conversation classes without speaking. The most notable reason is that Korean EFL students tend to have high barriers such as the fear of making errors and losing face in front of others (J. Kim, 2015; N. Kim & Dirks, 2011). Some researchers have reported that we need to provide a relaxed environment and comfortable speaking activities as well as low affective-domain (J. Hwang, 2002; S. Kim, 2000).

In line with this, Korean professors (KPs) need to equip students to improve their basic speaking skills and some methods of communication skills before free-talking sessions (FTSs). As N. Kim (2011) observed, a number of students have participated in FTSs where free-talking becomes "talking-free" because IPs continue to speak themselves while students are clueless about what they are saying. In a sense, it is a waste of time for some students, especially basic-level students who do not know where to begin and how to organize their thoughts. Little research has been conducted on enhancing basic-level students' speaking progress and attitudes from a controlled practice to a freer practice.

Thus, we need to take necessary steps for basic-level students to get into FTSs, making the most of their known lexical knowledge. The purpose of this study was to implement complementarily interactional teaching methodologies of both KP and IPs and to explore the effects of FTSs in an English Café in terms of students' reflective progress and affective attitudes toward English speaking. The specific research questions are as follows:

- 1) What types of activities can Korean professors utilize to help basic-level EFL students participate more proactively in free-talking sessions at an E-café?
- 2) What is a more effective free-talking approach to enable students to speak out in a more communicative manner?

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 1. Free-talking Sessions and Affective Attitude

When it comes to the definition of free-talking, N. Kim and Dirks (2011) revealed that 54.6% of students and 42.9% of IPs thought of free-talking as small talk. This means free-talking could be considered small talk if the conversation starts with students asking professors to free-talk. They could start by talking about simple topics such as weather or daily life and then eventually delve into deeper discussion on diverse topics through Q & A sessions as students build their confidence through speaking practice. In general, free-talking includes the concept of practicing English outside of the classroom with a native speaker like a free conversation in a stress-free environment (N. Kim & Dirks, 2011). N. Kim (2011) has described the purpose of free-talking as “Speaking English in Korea through ‘free-talking’ to give students a particular chance to practice communicating with an international English speaker outside of class about what they have been learning in class” (p. 138). Not many studies have concentrated on the investigation of free-talking from both an in-and-out-of-class point of view. If students do regular class activities in preparation for free-talking outside of class, then students will be more inclined to have less stress than if they interact with IPs without any preparation. Also a KP can help students increase their confidence in speaking English with a native speaker, and facilitate them to make the most of what they have learned in class through rendering real-life situations beforehand. Through this controlled practice with KPs and a freer practice with IPs, students can maximize their perceived speaking progress.

At this point there are several types of programs and physical venues for activating speaking activities such as “English Village,” “English Camp,” “English Intensive Program/Course” and “English Café,” which are viable alternatives to English study-abroad programs. These kinds of venues here in Korea create an English-speaking atmosphere, and are a viable substitute for study-abroad programs which are extremely expensive and are outside the world of possibilities for lower-income households (M. Seong, Reed, & H. Chang, 2012). However, the disadvantage of those venues is that they are short-term, temporary programs. Therefore it is not certain that the results justify the effort students make because the time is too short for them to internalize what they have

learned.

In the affective domain, Korean EFL learners tend to fear speaking English in front of others since they consider making errors a matter of losing face. Affective barriers such as the fear of making errors and losing face are the main factors which prohibit them from developing English-speaking skills. Thus, it is essential for language teachers to provide an environment where students can concentrate on language and meaning, rather than on fear of failure and negative evaluation (J. Hwang, 2002; Y. Kim, 1995).

A body of research on language learning anxiety has been conducted with Korean learners of English who have inappropriate psychological attitudes toward English learning (S. Kim, 2000; J. Song, 2009). When KPs teach students English, they need to seriously evaluate students' levels. Basic-level students who have great anxiety even looking at a native speaker or do not even say anything but rather glare with fearful looks feel excessive anxious about going to a central location to interact with native speakers.

However KPs can guide those students exposed to an English-speaking environment freely. In order to overcome affective attitudes such as these vague fears and anxieties as well as low confidence and motivation, before students directly participate in the FTSs, KPs can coach students to be more motivated to improve their speaking skills in the classroom through "controlled practice" suggested by Thornbury (2006). KPs set up a similar environment where IPs can communicate with free-talkers who want to talk with a native speaker so that students can utilize what they have learned in class. This process is completed through "practiced control" which students can use by practicing having open conversation with each other while the IP simply functions as a language resource and facilitator by stimulating the process of free-talking (N. Kim & Dirks, 2011).

In order for basic-level students to participate in FTSs with IPs at first, students need to increase their confidence and they need a positive attitude toward English-speaking and native-speakers, because self-confidence and positive attitudes play an essential role in learning a foreign language, especially freer speaking. Negative attitudes and fearfulness can be the biggest barriers for free-talking with IPs.

## 2. Speaking Enhancement and Speaking Practice

When EFL learners of English try to write or speak English naturally, they quite often face difficulties connected with the combinability of words, or collocational competence. As Lewis (1997) advocates, since language quite often consists of multi-word prefabricated chunks, speaking is also part of chunking or a series of meaningful sequence of words. Thus, speaking practice is based on the idea that language is made of lexical units rather than grammatical structures. The units are words and chunks formed by collocations and fixed or semi-fixed expressions. As part of finding the best method for

speaking enhancement, the study of regular word combinations has attracted much attention in recent decades (B. Kim, 2013; Lewis, 1997, 2000; Schmitt, 2004).

A collocation, a basic unit of connecting words for speaking, consists of two or more words that are often used together extending far beyond the level of multi-word units to convey a specific message or information to others. Practically formulaic language such as lexical chunks and collocations sound familiar and natural to native speakers (McCarthy, 1990; Stubbs, 2001; Wray, 1999, 2002), but are difficult and challenging for EFL learners of English who lack the intuition of native speakers. In other words, non-native speakers try to laboriously select a proper word for expressing a certain situation or topic and combine words to make a full sentence or to carry out language functions.

In addition, in a real situation, one of the greatest challenges existing in the EFL English learning context in Korea is to overcome the great mismatch and gap between input of what students have learned and the output of the same content. In other words, although students have spent a lot of time and energy memorizing a number of single words in a purely-paired translation-equivalent way, students cannot use the language they have learned (N. Kim, 2003). The biggest reason is that learners studied for reading in an initial input phase of learning English.

Another reason is that many students feel so fearful of speaking English in public because they are afraid of errors resulting from first language interference. In order to activate output elements to overcome these problems, a wide variety of research has been conducted in recent years such as EFL learners' spoken or written English diary practices (Foley, 1993; J. Kim, 2015), English camp programs (M. Seong, Reed, & H. Chang, 2012), and Free-talking Sessions (N. Kim & Dirks, 2011).

Whereas some studies have reported limitations on interruptive speaking environments, according to J. Chang (2003), such constraints as large classes, the length of the course, small numbers of class hours, inadequate teaching methods and teachers' low English proficiency are likely to account for making the communicative approach less successful than expected in the Korean EFL context. With regard to successful practice, Thornbury (2006) contrasts "controlled practice" with "practiced control" saying this: "Practiced control, involves demonstrating progressive control of a skill where the possibility of making mistakes is ever-present, but where support is always at hand" (p. 63).

In an effort to strengthen speaking enhancement techniques for facilitating learners' reflective speaking progress, N. Kim (2011), and Dirks and N. Kim (2014) suggest three proactive methods: 1) chunks and chunking, 2) shadowing, and 3) windowing. The idea of these methods is appropriated with the TOEIC speaking test framework. "Chunks and chunking" is adopted from Lewis' (1997, 2000) theories which are suitable for building a framework of English communication but whose practicability seems to be in its infancy stages comparable to windowing. A multi-word chunk is a vocabulary item which consists

of two or more words, forming a meaningful and inseparable unit semantically and/or syntactically (N. Kim, 2003). The applicability of this approach is that if students are able to think in terms of chunks, they will be more successful in conveying their thoughts by speaking those thoughts in intelligible English. Knowledge of lexical chunks is essential for speaking competence or spoken discourse as well as written language (DeCarrico, 2001; Newell, 1990; O'Keefe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007; Schmitt, 2004).

### III. METHOD

#### 1. Participants

As shown in Table 1, four groups of two to three students who took *Practical English II*, a two-hour English speaking course taught by a KP, participated in weekly one-hour FTSS and received bonus points for their participation in the EC outside of class. Each group consisted of two to three students in order to give them multiple opportunities to speak in English in order to maximize their time and effort. Also each group free-talked with different number of IP in order to identify the advantages and disadvantages from students' responses. The participants were freshmen majoring in IT and Information & Communication. The students' English speaking ability was elementary. Their vocabulary level was high. But students struggled to form sentences or comprehend the meaning of common or slightly more difficult English expressions. The participants scored a 4.8 on their average CSAT based on students' submitted data. Most of these students had few experiences free-talking at the college level before this study was conducted.

**TABLE 1**  
Summary of Participant Variables

	N	Average CSAT English level (Among 9)	Gender	
			F	M
G1	2	5.2	1	1
G2	2	4.8	2	
G3	2	5.0	1	1
G4	3	4.5		3
Total	9	4.8	4	5

\* CSAT refers to College Scholastic Ability Test, the Korean university entrance exam.

A total of 9 freshmen students participated in this experiment. The first group (G1) consisted of 2 students who were required to keep track of the same IP during 10 weeks. The second group (G2) and the fourth group (G4) consisted of 2 to 3 students who were required to rotate to a different IP every 3 weeks for a total of 10 weeks. The third group

(G3) consisted of 2 students who were required to rotate IPs almost every week during the same period. Participants were required to join the weekly one-hour sessions of free-talking at EC, the designated venue for FTSS. Students enrolled in a regular English conversation class for 2 hours led by a KP to improve their basic speaking skills using a basic TOEIC speaking textbook that consisted of 6 parts. Of the 6 parts students covered the first 4 parts during the fall semester of 2015.

## 2. Materials and Procedures

### 1) Materials

#### (1) Free-talking activity log and self-report

The first type of data utilized for this study was that of students' free-talking activity logs. The logs were utilized once a week for ten weeks. The logs were a weekly journal which they wrote after each group practiced on a pre-arranged date. Each group participated in FTSS on a day that fit into their schedules. The researcher asked each group to keep a log after free-talking activities and submit it in the next regular English conversation class. The log included the date and time, group members and the IP's name, activity preparation, activity contents and activity reflection, and feedback (see Appendix).

The feedback was vital to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and provide information on how to improve the next FTSS. Through such reflective feedback, the IP provided feedback on students' fluency through pronunciation correction, vocabulary use, sentence structure, what to prepare for next time as well as positive feedback. This was not intended to be a negative evaluation but constructive feedback via developmental coaching/tips. The KP also gave feedback to students based on the activity log and IP's comments. The KP also provided some tips on how to prepare or use English more effectively for the next FTSS.

With these logs, the researcher asked students of each group questions in order to gather more detailed information on their attitudes toward free-talking activities, involvement in the activities, and some difficulties they encountered through the feedback interview during breaktime in Practical English II. The researcher empowered students to utilize what they learned in class and what they knew by providing additional supplemental materials helpful to students' participation in free-talking activities. Through IPs' feedback, the KP was able to indirectly observe FTSS. At the end of FTSS, participants submitted their self-reports which were written on reflection forms.

## (2) Questionnaire and interview

Next, regarding students' FTSS participation related to activity log, the survey was done in the form of an open-ended questionnaire where a few questions were presented to students on paper in Korean. Students were instructed to write their answers as long as they felt necessary in order to fully answer each question. Also, the KP interviewed participants regarding students' responses to the questionnaires in order to identify the developmental process of FTSS. After receiving interview questions the KP translated them into English and typed the answers on a computer in order to compare the responses anonymously.

The researcher met six IPs to talk about the current free-talking program that they participated in. Consistent with the student interviews, the researcher interviewed 6 out of the 14 IPs working at the same university. They responded to 10 open-ended questions about the free-talking program and their participation in the EC (see Appendix).

## 2) Procedures

At an EC conducting FTCs, IPs waited for students who came to free-talk with IPs at the EC where a total of 14 IPs rotated in order to lead FTSS Monday through Thursday afternoons, 4 IPs every hour. The KP played a connecting role in guiding the class of 13 students by using controlled speaking practice with the aforementioned three methods in order for them to produce the speaking units and sentence-making connectives before joining the FTSS. As shown in Table 2, the KP used the TOEIC Speaking book (G. Lee, 2012) for facilitating students' speaking practice. The book includes three fundamental elements for speaking practice: chunks & chunking, shadowing, and windowing.

As Table 2 shows, in Section 1 students recorded themselves reading passages from the TOEIC speaking textbook on their smartphones. Then listening to their recordings, the IP corrected their inaccurate pronunciation, intonation and stress in FTSS. Then they were able to point out to students the differences in intonation and pronunciation between English and Korean as long as they were aware of it. Students read sentences and phrases from the "reading aloud" section and then tried to emulate her/his pronunciation (shadowing). While students practiced, the KP wrote down some meaningful notes and comments on the students' understanding of intonation and stress of spoken English and their improvement stage of reading texts over time.

In Section 2, students looked at various pictures and then described them in detail. The most challenging part of this exercise for students was knowing where to begin and how to organize their thoughts. To help students in this regard students practiced a general framework they could follow with any picture in an orderly manner.



**TABLE 2**  
Structured Speaking Practice Tasks & Contents

Task	Content	
	Focal Points	Activity
Section 1 Read a Text Aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Pronunciation</li> <li>·Intonation and stress</li> <li>·Sense (breath) group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Record the text &amp; compare with the native speaker</li> <li>·Peer correction</li> <li>·Apply to free-talking activities</li> </ul>
Section 2 Describe a Picture	All of the above, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Grammar</li> <li>·Vocabulary</li> <li>·Cohesion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Introduction → Describe objects or persons (directional position, appearance, movement, surroundings → concluding assumptions)</li> <li>·Use of prepositions &amp; directional prepositional phrases</li> </ul>
Section 3 Respond to Questions	All of the above, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Relevance of content</li> <li>·Completeness of content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Question &amp; answer session</li> <li>-Wh-questions</li> <li>-Preferences</li> <li>-Advantages &amp; disadvantages</li> <li>-Positive &amp; negative answers</li> <li>-Considering something</li> </ul>
Section 4 Respond to Questions Using the Provided Information	All of the above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Apply what they learned in class to free-talking sessions in an E-café</li> <li>·Feedback &amp; reflection: Free-talking activity log &amp; self-report</li> </ul>

In Section 3, students were asked questions and required to respond with their own opinions and information. The main method utilized to enable students to do this was merely to apply common question words by using the so-called 5W1H questions (*who, what, when, where, why, and how*) on the topic and then answer the remaining questions.

In Section 4, students discussed questions based on provided information. The information was usually provided in the form of a schedule. As in the previous section, the instructor practiced answering the most common types of potential questions. Students also practiced common phrases that often occurred when answering these types of questions.

### 3. Data Collection and Analysis

Free-talking activity logs were distributed to students at the beginning of the semester. Participants in FTSS submitted their logs along with “English Café: Free Talking Confirmation Form” after participating in each free-talking session. Open-ended questionnaires were collected from IPs and students participating in this study at the end of the semester. The KP interviewed 6 IPs to integrate similar responses on the surveys with what IPs actually said during face-to-face interviews. 10 IPs participating in FTSS filled out the survey for the advancement of the free-talking program at this university and for the

improvement of English education in Korea.

The KP interviewed students based on their free-talking activity logs to give them feedback and to prepare them for the next session. The interview included the participation date, time, group members, IPs, preparation, activity contents, and reflection and including the IP's feedback. At the end, all students completed reflection sheets to help the researcher gather comprehensive information on what they did in a written report of FTSS. The researcher collected and analyzed open-ended questionnaires and interviews according to qualitative research methodology.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research explored how and what KPs can do to help basic-level students free-talk with IPs in the EC for the purpose of developing their English-speaking progress. The following two questions, listed separately, were the basis of this research.

##### 1. Korean Professors' Proactive Activities for Free-talking Sessions

Basic-level EFL students think of the development of speaking progress as a self-awareness process in phases (step by step) when they find themselves communicating with IPs in a gradually developmental way. The KP needs to stimulate and empower these students to participate in the speaking venue as much as possible. To do that, a KP can provide necessary activities and methods to coach students and develop their confidence and motivation by having them recognize the importance of English language communication in the global workplace and to empower students to speak more fluently.

**TABLE 3**  
Students' 2 Most Helpful and Satisfactory Sections to Improve Speaking

Participants	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D
G1	a	√, 0	√, 0	
	b		√, 0	√, 0
G2	a		√, 0	√, 0
	b	√, 0	√, 0	
G3	a	√, 0	√, 0	
	b		√, 0	√, 0
G4	a	√	√, 0	0
	b		√, 0	0
	c	0	√, 0	√

\* √: helpful, 0: satisfactory

As Table 3 shows, regarding the question of "What section was the most helpful to

improve your speaking progress (select 2 out of 4 sections)? What section was the most satisfactory to take part in speaking activities (select 2 out of 4 sections)?" every student indicated that Section 2 was the most helpful in terms of improving their speaking progress. It was reported that Section 2 gave them many tips on how to speak as well as start a conversation. Sections 1 and 3 were chosen by four students. However just one student who proactively participated in FTSs chose Section 4. That suggests that eliciting students' responses to questions using provided information makes basic-level students feel very uncomfortable and does not provide informative structure. Students also may have responded this way because Section 4 was more difficult in class. Their satisfaction was almost unanimous in terms of the most helpful section as shown in Table 3.

With regard to Section 1, "Read a Text Aloud" in the beginning process of speaking practice, below is part of the content for practice on page 40 of the book that was used in the conversation class taught by the KP conducting this study. The given text includes intonation and accent in bold and three different types of arrows indicating rising (↗), falling (↘), and flat (→) intonation as well as chunks & chunking by slashing (/) in the middle of a sentence and double slashing (//) at the end of the sentence. Chunks and chunking activities can be a valuable technique to improve students' lexis and speaking ability (N. Kim & Dirks, 2011). Here shadowing is actually more helpful for improving speaking skills by mimicking recorded native speakers' or IPs' pronunciation, intonation, and stress as well as pauses like the example below.

**Attention** passengers. // Our **flight** will **arrive** / at **Toronto Pearson Airport** / in about **30** minutes. // For your **safety**, / we **need** you to **place** / **all** your personal **belongings** / in the right **place**, (↗) **remain seated** (→) / and **buckle** your **seat** belt. (↘) // If you need any **help**, our **flight** attendants are always **there** / to **help** you. / We **hope** / you have a wonderful **time** / in **Toronto** / and we look **forward** to **seeing** you **again**. // **Thank** you. //

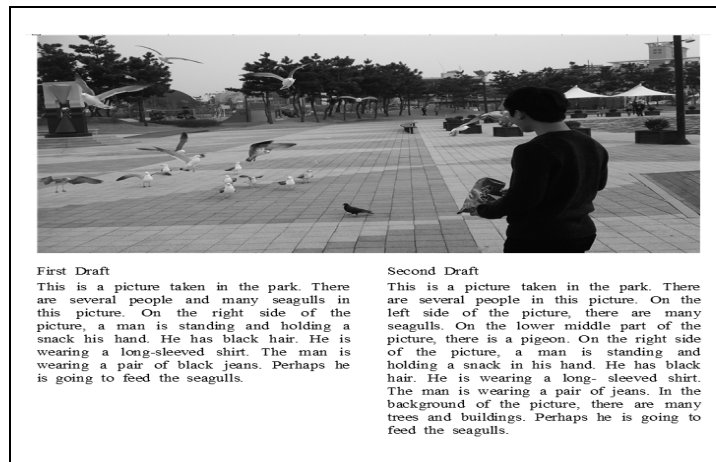
In the process of speaking practice, students recorded themselves reading a text, paying more attention to the use of emphasis, pauses, and rising and falling intonation. They practiced with each other, facing each other and role-playing the same situation as in an EC. After that, they participated in the FTSs with the recorded text on their smartphones. IPs listened and corrected their pronunciation, intonation and vocabulary. Practicing students took turns listening to other students' recorded text for peer correction. Students responded in interviews saying:

The IP helped me speak with accurate pronunciation, correcting my mistakes while I mimicked the way he was reading. Therefore, I felt confident in speaking English

through this process. (Student G1-b)

Soon I realized that a preposition and noun changes the meaning of words by being put together with nouns or verbs called chunks & chunking. I thought it was comfortable to use the chunks & chunking technique because I could easily interpret the sentence by dividing each word into a meaningful unit. (Student G1-a)

Section 2 is the picture description that students indicated was the most satisfactory part of this study. All students indicated that they liked this section the most and Section 2 built their confidence in speaking by providing some essential features of speaking methods through a variety of common prepositions such as “in, on, at, around, inside, outside, under, in front of...”, lexical chunks like fixed or semi-fixed expressions such as “on the (upper, lower) left (right) side of the picture, in the middle (foreground, background) of the picture....” With this basic organization of describing objects or persons through a model sample, students gained confidence and developed motivation in speaking by making a sentence. Thus, such lexical knowledge empowered EFL learners to speak more fluently and produce more native-like utterances (Fan, 2009; Y. Kim, 2010; Nation, 2001).



**FIGURE 1** Example of Picture Description (G3-a)

After practicing picture-description techniques students showed an increase in their confidence related to describing pictures. Students tried to “spread their wings,” so to speak, by describing pictures they took themselves. Figure 1, which is the written form of a speaking activity, suggests that students can benefit from a picture description activity by learning how to apply chunks/ chunking and windowing techniques that they practiced in class to general daily conversation as well as FTSS in an EC. One student commented on

picture descriptions, saying:

Gradually I could talk more about the detailed parts of the picture by organizing the picture based on the KP's class activity. I could do this successfully after I learned the way and order of explaining the photos in KP's class. (Student G2-b)

In Section 3, based on speaking practice in Sections 1 and 2, students were able to start a conversation with questions and answers in FTSS. By becoming familiar with "wh"-type questions, students were able to increase their fluency in answering questions because of this section. This question and answer session showed that it would be better to achieve the purpose of speaking by incorporating speaking with listening. This suggests that windowing is actually more helpful for improving speaking skills by applying chunks & chunking with relevant words and expressions, and then expanding by giving reasons for their answers. The comprehensive self-report at the end can be used to make remarks on each student's progress over time. The KP was able to gather some helpful comments and information on the degree of students' improvement.

I really experienced great results in the speaking part as a result of applying what I learned in the KP's class. Actually, I was hesitant to go into English Café for free-talking with IPs, but I felt confident later on. (Student G3-b)

To consolidate speaking sequences, in addition to the basic questions, students were also challenged to extend their answers with questions such as, "What is the last thing you bought? Why did you buy it?" This helped students to think about answering questions that required more details, which was later developed in Section 4 when students struggled to explain the information provided. Thus, free-talking that appropriates methods comparable to Section 4 needs to be directed towards intermediate students like the one participant in this study (G4-b) who marked "helpful" regarding this section.

Four groups participated in FTSS. G1 free-talked with one or two IPs and G2 and G4 free-talked with three or four IPs while G3 free-talked with more than four IPs moving to a different instructor almost every week. Students expressed advantages and disadvantages to these methods shown below in Table 4. The biggest advantage of free-talking with one or two IPs was that they interacted comfortably with fellow students as a result of developing close relationships with each other. Also, a variety of expressions and lexical chunks gave students confidence and eliminated their fear of speaking English. In addition, students were able to focus more because the content was different each time. The biggest disadvantage was that students weren't exposed to different accents, dialect and pronunciation. Also, it was difficult to adapt to the next IP's style or approach.

**TABLE 4**  
Students' Responses on Advantages and Disadvantages of Rotational Free-Talking

	Advantages	Disadvantages
What are the advantages and disadvantages of talking with one or two international professors in the E-cafe during one semester?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Mutual strong familiarity</li> <li>·Close relationships</li> <li>·Low anxiety</li> <li>·More confidence</li> <li>·Relaxed atmosphere/ many topics</li> <li>·Extended conversation</li> <li>·More comfortable /Less burden</li> <li>·Gradually progressive participation over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Time management</li> <li>·Low attention sometimes</li> <li>·Informal conversation over time</li> <li>·Unstable interaction</li> <li>·Informal feedback</li> <li>·Lack of expressions learned</li> <li>·Extremely low tension/</li> <li>·Communicate formally</li> <li>·Monotonous voice</li> </ul>
What are the advantages and disadvantages of talking with four or more international professors in the E-cafe during one semester?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Less familiarity</li> <li>·Minimal personal relationship</li> <li>·Formal conversation</li> <li>·Less nervous</li> <li>·More confidence</li> <li>·Experience various Pronunciation</li> <li>·Natural interaction</li> <li>·Could be inconvenient</li> <li>·Diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Overlapping topics</li> <li>·Weak mutual understanding</li> <li>·Low anxiety</li> <li>·Distant relationship</li> <li>·Insufficient time</li> <li>·Various topics</li> <li>·Difficulty to adjust</li> <li>·Language resource</li> <li>·Unnatural connection</li> <li>·Changeability</li> </ul>

Concerning the KP's role, students reported that practicing with a KP and classmates in class reduced their anxiety and increased their confidence in the FTSs outside the classroom. The KP was able to gather some helpful information on the degree of students' improvement according to students' self-reports and the KP's feedback.

In Korea, by speaking in English with IPs, one can overcome the anxiety by training oneself to make a dialogue in advance before planning to go to a foreign country. (Student, G4-c)

Last time, I met the same IP again that I free-talked with previously and talked about how different it was. The only words I could say at first were "I don't know", but now my ability of trying to express myself by connecting each word has improved a lot. She told me that my score has increased from 1 to 6. (Student, G3-b)

Participants' development of self-assessed progress in speaking at the end of FTSs was the most fruitful result. Some might contend theoretically that free-talking is the most natural way of practicing English outside of class. While that may be true, such an assumption may indicate interactional cooperation between the KP and IPs in English education in a different role and setting, respectively. Through this circular approach between the KP and IPs, increased confidence and a positive and reflective attitude toward free-talking activities played an essential role in speaking. Students managed to be

confident in front of their partners to create a self-awareness identity.

## 2. Effective Free-talking Approach to Empower Students to Speak Out

N. Kim and Dirks (2011)' study revealed the vast majority (83%) of students had expectations of native speakers helping them improve their conversational English skills. However, they wanted to have more structured activities with the IP guiding students to free-talk with them as a language resource. IPs' responses in interviews reflected their communicative approach to FTSs as (A), (B), and (C)'s comments demonstrate.

(A) English learners are given more speaking time than in a traditional classroom setting, and the progression of the time spent talking is more student-oriented. Students benefit greatly from such interactions. (IP interview 3)

(B) Most English classes are very structured and a lot of the language the students learn they will not really use in a real life situation or conversation. Students' confidence often improves dramatically when given the opportunity to speak while not being graded or judged. (IP interview 1)

However, in a real situation, basic-level students need to connect the present class activity to future FTS. Thus the KP adopted N. Kim and Dirks' method (2011) that gives students a task like talking to their partners about the contents in the textbook and then having students share the contents of their conversation with the class. While students practiced English with their partners, the KP served as a "bridge" of preparation by engaging with students, especially those students who were hesitant to have conversations with another person in English.

(C) Some students lack motivation, do not actively engage with the IP, and do not come prepared with any idea of what they want to talk about, and do not take any notes during their time at E-café. (IP interview 2)

Above all, students' achievement depends in part on how much a KP leads students to elicit and retrieve what the students have learned so far. To do that, informed KPs who know EFL students' difficulties and expectations in English education are indispensibly necessary to have EFL students involved in a free-talking program with more self-motivation and self-confidence.

Going to the E-café every week the IP could correct my pronunciation and intonation.

It was entirely helpful that the KP promoted a variety of strategies during the regular class to help foster conversation with IPs and helped by communicating with me during English speaking practice in the regular classes. (Student, G2-a)

In developing a free-talking activity program, the KP designated the first step in the process to be students choosing a time and a partner for free-talking which would begin in the second class. Students were limited to two or three people in each free-talking group in order to offer each group as many opportunities as possible to speak.

IPs' methods utilized during most FTSs were based on the question and answer approach, with the IP asking each student a question. Some IPs prepared subject cards which included every subject discussed throughout FTSs and students chose the subject randomly. However, just like students, some IPs did not prepare for FTSs. N. Kim and Dirks (2011) reported that almost two thirds of IPs did not prepare for free-talking with students in advance.

N. Kim and Dirks (2011) revealed that 67% of students wanted IPs to prepare for free-talking beforehand, and IPs indicated in theory that prepared free-talking did not necessitate less "free"-talking, while more IPs stated that in practice they did not prepare in advance for free-talking. Additionally, IPs' responses indicated that KPs and students need to prepare for FTSs system in a changing environment. Some students actually did not prepare for free-talking because of their lack of confidence and motivation. However, most students responded that they participated in free-talking to communicate with IPs by making the most of what they learned.

There is no limit to the number of students who attend, but we do have a bunch of regular students. Those who attend more regularly have shown an improvement and they are more confident to speak. (IP Interview 5)

If there are 5 students or fewer in a group, the professor can give more specialized feedback to help the students improve their English. Alleviating the problem of too many students is to limit the required time to 30 minutes or so. (IP interview 4)

Responses from the interviews from both students and IPs indicate that FTSs still need to have some very structured activities, but that students and professors want to experience English in real time. This corresponds with N. Kim and Dirks' prior study (2011) which investigated college students' expectations of native-speaking instructors. Also, students wanted IPs to take a more proactive role in leading the class to help them overcome their fear or resistance of speaking in English (N. Kim & Dirks, 2011).

Participants reported in self-reports that they highly valued opportunities for interaction



with a KP and IPs, from controlled practice to freer practice. FTSs could be the one integrated activity in English education based on roles between the KP and the IP like in Table 5. FTSs may help provide students with such an opportunity. In addition, IPs' and the KP's complementarily productive and developmental feedback comprised of a feedback chain which had a positive effect on students' overall communicative activities.

**TABLE 5****Effective Free-talking Approach: Positive Feedback Loop**

Step	Rehearsal ⇨	KP Feedback ⇨	Engagement ⇨	IP Feedback
Phase	A Controlled Practice Phase		A Freer Practice Phase	
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Basic vocabulary</li> <li>·Initiating speaking</li> <li>·Role-playing</li> <li>·Tasks &amp; activities</li> <li>·Chunks &amp; chunking, shadowing, windowing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Peer correction</li> <li>·Feedback control</li> <li>·Facilitator</li> <li>·Personalized feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Introduction</li> <li>·Play games</li> <li>·Relationship-building</li> <li>·Question &amp; answer</li> <li>·Tasks &amp; activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·Guide</li> <li>·Resource provider</li> <li>·Elicitor</li> <li>·Content feedback</li> </ul>
Role Agent	KP		IP	

Now it is imperative to discuss how one might be able to promote FTSs with a plausible solution. The lexical approach implemented in this study seems attractive in terms of showing that we could be more effective in English education by teaching students how to use lexical chunks rather than individual words. In line with that, Folse (2006) stressed that teachers need to foster a paradigm shift that correctly views productive skills as fundamental in any language learning process. In addition, the important thing is that IPs overestimated how many single words students fully understand, and as a result, the so-called "comprehensible input" is neither "comprehensible" nor "input".

The idea behind the lexical-based free-talking practice is to give students a chance to practice communicating outside the class with a native speaker collocationally what they are learning inside of class. This facilitates students' speaking attitude for activating a willingness to communicate and reduces their speaking anxiety without regular performance evaluation. Through IPs' feedback, KPs have an indirect observation of FTSs. To synergize the cooperative effects, as N. Kim and Dirks (2011) suggest, it is necessary that the perspective to integrate chunks & chunking, shadowing and windowing into one comprehensive language tool rather than three different individual methods be the recommended approach for students to utilize both in and out of class.

**V. CONCLUSION**

This research is part of a second comprehensive study on the free-talking program that

was first conducted in 2011, both at the same university. The main objective of this study was to explore the effects of FTSs in EC on Korean university students' speaking progress and affective domain toward English speaking through these two research questions: 1) What types of activities can Korean professors utilize to help basic-level EFL students participate proactively in free-talking sessions in an E-cafe?; 2) What can a more effective free-talking approach do to enable students to speak out in a more communicative manner?

Based on the findings of questionnaires, interviews, and free-talking activity logs & self-reports, in response to Q1, the three main speaking initiators, chunks and chunking, shadowing, and windowing are essential to empower students to participate in FTSs more proactively in a non-threatening manner. These three lexical activities are essential for speaking tasks (Joe, Nation, & Newton, 1996; Lewis, 1997; Moon, 1997; Nation, 2001). Section 2, "Describing a Picture," was satisfactory to all participants and was the most helpful activity to improve their speaking skills because it helped them organize their speaking structured process. As for Q2, a more effective free-talking approach is the circular approach shown in Table 5 that enables students to rehearse how to initiate free-talking with native speakers through the three main speaking methods mentioned in Q1. This approach helps to build students' confidence and motivation as well as to reduce their anxiety and concerns about their errors and mistakes that they can make while free-talking.

Academic institutions have hired a number of native-speaking instructors to help foster students' speaking enhancement. However, the biggest downside of such a policy is to seek proceed without considering students' perspectives on English speaking. The gradually cooperative approach between the KP conducting this study and IPs reduced students' anxiety and created a proactive attitude toward English speaking by better meeting students' needs and activating speaking modes. Above all, as shown in Table 5, through such a 4-step circular approach of Positive Feedback Loop the researcher suggests giving a small number of students many opportunities to practice English speaking with several different IPs.

Until now, many immersion programs such as English villages and camps throughout Korea in schools have been established and developed. Research on the effects of various programs has been reported with a focus on the program types or the benefits and learning outcomes of the participants. In the same vein, the most important knowledge gained from this research is how to guide basic-level students' improvement not only for their listening but also for speaking. Another thing is that students who participated in this experiment acquired more confidence and were more self-assured in speaking with a native speaker to create an optimal environment for EFL English speaking.

Further studies are needed to deal with different ways of bridging the gap between beginners or intermediate and advanced students in academic speaking, not only in the use

of lexical bundles, but in the use of a wide variety of linguistic features in order to improve speaking fluency as well as speaking accuracy. Free-talking in EC offered students self-motivation and through reflective speaking it fostered a willingness to communicate in English. Thus, this program can serve as a plausible alternative to studying abroad, which has a very high cost.

The limitations of this paper are that this project was carried out at just one university in Korea with only 6 IPs and nine students. One KP carried out the FTSs that were the subject of this research using 4 section formats. So, it is limited in terms of generalizing the results of this paper. Some factors that limit the ability to make generalizations include a relatively small sample size and the focus on only one program.

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## APPENDIX

### I. Free-Talking Activity Log

Week	Date & Time	Partners' name & IP's name	Department: What activity did you do in the free-talking?	No.: What did you prepare for the free-talking? What did you learn?	Name: Feedback
1					
2					
...					

### II. International Professors Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore and increase the value of “free-talking” outside of class at University’s “English Cafe (E-Cafe)” with international professors. Your responses to the questions below will be used as a reference for more effective English practice and will play a critical role in enhancing future English education at this university and throughout South Korea.

Instructions: Please answer the following with some concrete reasons in more detail.

1. What are positive aspects of the E-Cafe?

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2. What are aspects of the E-Cafe that leaves something to be desired?

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3. How do you think the E-Cafe is more/less/equally adequate compared to traditional free-talking?

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4. Do you think international professors are given an active role in the management of the E-Cafe?

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5. What are your expectations of students during free-talking sessions at the E-Cafe in correlation with the students' English-communication ability?

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6. Is the current turn-taking free-talking principle on a “first-come first-served basis” more effective than the continuous instruction of the same group of students in the E-Cafe?

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7. Do you usually hold a reflective seminar about free-talking in the E-Cafe with other international professors to improve the operation of the current free-talking program?

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8. How do you deal with the different level of students in a group in an effective way?

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9. What do you think is your role (professor's role) in order to successfully free-talk in the E-Cafe?

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10. What would you like to tell the 00U administration about the E-Cafe?

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**Examples in: English**

**Applicable Languages: English**

**Applicable Levels: Secondary and Tertiary**

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