

Comments
from
Reflective
Essays

Quotes From Reflective Essays

At the end of every semester, I have students write a reflective, TOEFL essay about:

“What three things did you learn in this class this semester?” Below are selected quotes.

From these essays, I learned two things: First, very many, maybe most students, have never spoken English in their 10-year English education. In response to this, my class is conversation-based learning. Second, that students found improvements to many skills as a result of this conversation-focused class.

Students do the book at home and speak in class. Listening, reading, writing, vocabulary and pronunciation are preparation for speaking, and they also improve. Grammar improves because students relax and self-correct, and the better speakers provide gentle language gain. When all those skills improve, so do TOEIC scores.

The conversation test completes the system. Students get personal feedback and error correction, and teachers get accurate grading and improvement data. My claim is that conversation-based learning is a complete system. And the following quotes from students appear to support this.

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ENGLISH EDUCATION BEFORE UNIVERSITY

1. I just studied English for reading. I didn't know that I can not speak in English because I had never had a chance to speak in English.
2. Before I took this class, I had no chance to speak English. Just I learned how to read text or listen.
3. In high school English class, I learned and solved English problem just as a problem.
4. What I have only learned in schools before university is how to read English text and translate it.
5. While attending middle and high school, I always studied and memorized words relevant to the exam.
6. When I was a high school student, we only read English text and memorized them in English.
7. In the last 12 years, I only learned reading, not speaking. So, I really hate speaking for English.
8. I have studied English with no sound. Korean education concentrate in reading and listening. It was first time that I speak with other student in English.
9. First, what professor emphasized was that 'English is not reading or studying. It's a speaking ability. That was really shocking and fresh for me because I learned English by reading and writing since I was young.
10. When I was high school student, I had studied only grammar in reading skills. So, I couldn't speak well. And I didn't know how can I speak well.
11. From elementary school to high school I have learned English reading but I didn't have chance to speak English.
12. Before this class English was hard and boring. Festival of long passages. I have to decode that to solve problems.
13. Before this class, I have learned reading, writing and grammar for entering university I haven't learned speaking English. So, I have a fear of speaking English.
14. I didn't speak English IN high school student because English class concentrated grammar for entrance exam.
15. I always want to learn English speaking skill. But Korean education system focuses on reading and grammar.

CONFIDENCE

1. I attended the forum with my family. And the instructor was a foreigner. At the break of the forum, the instructor asked me about some questions. My major, my passions, my campus life. I was able to answer confidently because it was what I already dealt with in this class. I first use English in real life. I was so satisfied. And my family looked at me so proudly. That was a wonderful experience.
2. First of all, the confidence I got from this class is priceless. The most important thing is 'confidence'. After realize this truth, I try hard to just speak English not Korean. This is the first thing I learned from this class.
3. First, I learned confidence in this class. For me, speaking English was hard and shameful thing.
4. Second, I was a shy korean boy. But thanks to this class, now I communicate to new people pretty well. Now I'm not shy korean boy. I'm gutsy korean boy.
5. Second, in this class I learned confidence. Professor Gunther always emphasized "Speak loud and proud". And he recalled us that we are elite university students and can be someone's role models. When I got this email from him, I decided to be student who has proud and try harder with confidence.
6. Before this class I always focused on reducing grammatical mistakes, so my speech was not brave. So I mumbled during speaking and my confidence keep decreased. However, after this class, I realized that regardless of grammatical error, the most important think is to speak loudly and confidently and say clearly what I have to say.
7. Third, I lacked experience of talking with foreigner in English. I have few opportunities to have conversations with foreigners. However, in this class, I could have conversations with various friends twice a week. It was good experience for me to grow my speaking ability. Thanks to this experience, now, I am not embraced when I meet foreigners.
8. First, it fixed my shyness into cheerful. During the speaking lesson, we should introduce ourselves and quickly find a mutual interest. The mutual interest helps easy to get closer, and sharing the mutual interest makes the conversation delightful. At that time, I was wondering why time is in a hurry. Anyway, several conversations got rid of my shyness so now I can have a conversation with anyone friendly.
9. At first, I was afraid speaking English because I have never spoken English before (though I have learned English for 10 years). This class was my turning point. I'm turning my useless English skill into use and practical English skill. Freely talking with partners I became to have confidence and to know that I have sufficient potential.
10. So now, I am not scared of English! I can upgrade my English ability if I apply myself.
11. Last I learned most of all confidence is most important. Before time I was afraid of speak English. But these days I speak too much English in this class so naturally I get the confidence about English. One day played basketball alone in court, and American come to me said let's play together. If I was my old self I maybe afraid. But I was not because through too many experiences I get the confidence about English speaking.
12. Third, now I can say hello to strangers. In other words, my confidence about English grewed up.
13. Third, I learned confidence. To be honest, my English ability doesn't grow dramatically. But, my confidence grows a lot. I think most important skill for use foreign language is confidence. Now I can talk with foreigners in English.
14. First, I learned to speak confidently in English. To speak English in class was so difficult to me because I have to consider grammar and pronunciation. However, because the professor always encouraged us to speak confidently. We had 'Speed dating' which is spending time by conversation in English with friends. It was so fun that I can converse conveniently and confidently.

PASSION

1. I did not have any passion in English before attending this class. Moreover, I hate English before. However, after this class, I learned lots of passion from students and also from professor.
2. I realized what we do when we have passion. Whenever professor showed us some English music videos and movies, I watched them with interest. I remembered them and searched for the stuffs I like. Before I hardly searched for English movie, drama, and songs, but now I do.

WRITING

1. First, the most important thing, I learned how to write English essay. Actually, I have never learned about English essay before took this class.
2. Third, just as this class's purpose was, I could learn practical English in this class. Writing an essay about real life, I could learn many words which is especially useful in conversation. And the more essay I write, my English composition got better and it also helped my to speak English faster.
3. First thing that I learned in this class is writing skills. This is what I improved mostly through this class.
4. Third, my writing ability have improved remarkably. Only a few years ago, I even couldn't write my introduction. Now I am not afraid of writing something in English. Expressing my thought and opinion in English is very interesting!
5. I knew how to write essays for the first time in this semester. I didn't write English essays before. I didn't like writing for English, but my first essay was not difficult. And as I wrote several essays, I now the way to write essays and now I don't worry about writing that much.
6. The importance of format. In the first class, Professor Gunther said that Bill Gates won't check our essays if we don't use organized format. So every class, we should have an essay with the organized format.
7. I learn how I write essay well in good form. Because of essay, there are so many homework. But I can learn essay skill. In essay skill, I learn two. How I can express what I want to say. And how I match the formation of the essay. I think that matching the form is as important as expressing my thought.
8. In the class there is unique theme writing homework. And it demands TOEFL writings. Writings have to be logical and well organized. All these things make my English writing skills grow.

PRONUNCIATION

1. First, I learned that good pronunciation is important. Once I had a conversation with someone who uses very splendid words and vocabulary, but has bad pronunciation. I used "Pardon"? the most ever the rest of my life during that conversation.
2. Third, pronouncing was the most hard to learn in Korea. Through this class, however, my pronunciation got so much better than before.
3. Not only speaking ability but also listening ability improved. Actually, I am not sure now I can guess right the words after listening to certain word and choose among the similar pronunciation, words such as seat, sat, set, sit. But I am sure that now I notice the different pronunciation.
4. Pronunciation is very important part of his lecture. We were trained primarily to pronounce pronunciation at the beginning of the semester. When the professor pronounced English words, we pronounced them along. And we often took tests that matched words similar to those of pronunciation. I didn't chose correct things well at first, but later I could choose the word correctly. The professor's lecture was a great help to my pronunciation.
5. Especially in pronunciation, I am not doing good. The letter L and R is too hard for me to distinguish in listening rapidly. But in class, we practice pronunciation a lot with professor. It makes me change. Because I can find the different point with letter L and R.
6. My pronunciation needs a lot of practice. In this class I should record my essay reading or conversation test. At first I couldn't understand and that was bothering. When I have a conversation test with my partners I thought my pronunciation was not bad. But every time I listened my recordings, knew my pronunciation didn't sound smoothly. I recorded my essays a lot of time and I know that as I practice my English, my pronunciation gets more smooth little by little.
7. I learned how to practice pronunciations. I could practice pronunciation through homework or many activities. Sometimes, I think it is difficult to pronounce between 'L' and 'R' and 'A' and 'AE' sounds. So I especially pronounce them carefully during class or conversation time.
8. Professor sent e-mails which include pronunciation files. So, I could listen the audio file wherever. I usually played these on the way to school and practiced.

VOCABULARY

1. I learned a lot of vocabulary [sp]. I have telephone English class and talk with teacher who are American. When I used 'couch potato' she was surprised and told me it's really good vocabulary. I was very proud and used more word I learned in this class!
2. I learned many useful words and expressions which I can use in real life. While attending middle and high school, I always studied and memorized words relevant to the exam. But in this class, we learn many words from each topic, and also learn how to pronounce it.
3. Second is useful word in real life. Until high school, I always memorized strange words for CSAT. These are very useless. But, in this class I could learn useful word that can use ordinarily.
4. Second, vocabulary is necessary thing that make sentences enriched. I learned that the more vocabulary I can use, the longer sentences I can make.
5. The new words from the word buffet attributed to my rich expressions. Before this class, I just speak English with little words. For this reason, I only expressed my opinions in small range. During this class, I add up my new words in the three conversation tests. When I knew the feeling of using many words, I can enjoy speaking with English.
6. Second is importance of vocabulary. I felt the vocabulary ability is index of English skill. The vocabulary makes us sophisticated because competent English skills make polished sentences.
7. First, I learned vocabulary. We check vocabulary every test and homework. I almost remember vocabulary in gold because of repeating many time.
8. In each topic of the gold book. there are a lot of new vocabularies in the first page. The students in this class should use them in their essays and conversation.

SPEAKING

1. At first, I was afraid speaking English because I have never spoken in English before (though I have learned English for 10 years). This class is my turning point. I'm turning my useless English skill into useful and practical English skill.
2. During lots of conversations with many partners, I learned natural conversation patters, and how to keep conversation. For example, I learned that listening and sympathizing is important. Thanks to English class, my conversation skill was developed not only in English but also in Korean.
3. The advanced speaking is also the element that I am mad [crazy about?] at this class. I can express my opinions or thinking in Korea, but it is difficult to do it in English. After this class, I can gradually speak my thinkings with English.
4. I did learn how to speak academic conversation that speak my opinion persuasively by using A, B, C or First, Second, Third.
5. I improved my ability to speak English fluently. Before I took this class, I used to stutter when I spoke in English. Because when I was in middle school and high school, there was no chance to speak in English. I just learned grammar and listening skills. But I could speak English freely in this class. For this reason, I could improved my ability to speak English fluently.
6. I learned to converse naturally with strangers. Originally I couldn't talk to anyone I didn't know. But now I can talk to stranger very well. I can assure that it's due to this class which guarantee free conversation.
7. The best thing with professor was I can see my speaking ability improving.
8. First, my speaking ability is improved. I can see that objectively because I expressed the ability visually.
9. First, my speaking has improved. Previously, sentences that I spoke were too short. For example, "Oh really?" or "Aha" was the all that I spoke. However, I tried to practice speaking various words and sentences for my exam. As a result, when I took the final exam, I was able to make whole sentences and speak a lot with other students.

GRAMMAR

1. First, my grammar has improved. I used to make several mistakes such as tense, third person singular and so on. It is difficult to say that it has 100% improved and fixed but I am sure the mistakes are decreased.
2. After listening this class, I realized grammar is not important than sending my words properly to another person. As a result, I get rid of my obsession about grammar made me speak English better than before.
3. I can modify my grammatical error very much. For example, I always forget to use past tense, but now I use past tens half and half. "You know", this such word is my big grammatical problem with I talk with someone, but now I try hard not to use this.
4. I know I'm not perfect in English. So I hesitate to talk in English until I make perfect sentence in my brain. But in this class, I didn't have to talk in English perfectly. The most important thing is just to talk. It's our practice time. We need to enjoy our English class. While talking with friends, I enjoyed conversation and I gain confidence.
5. Before I attend this class I didn't like English. Because I knew I have a bad habit which I can never overcome. The bad habit is that I never open my mouth until I make a complete sentence with correct grammar in my head. But now I can open my mouth without hesitation.
6. Third, our class's purpose for students is not enhancing the grammer. But I think I can more excellent grammartical expressions. Because I am very shy person. So I very hate about that I use the incorrect expression. So I bother about my grammar when I talk my partner, so I can enhance my grammartical ability.

LISTENING

1. Third, I could learn good listening skill. When I listen to other people they like me.
2. Third, also my listening is upgrade. Professor is foreigner so I had to listen content he said. Honestly I didn't understand perfectly that he said. Even though I don't fully understand now, I'm much better off than before. A movie watched on last week is my first movie without Korean subtitles. I proud of myself to watch movie without subtitles.
3. Third, now I can watch the movie without subtitles. I learn English 10 years, but I was afraid that if there is no subtitle, I can't understand the meaning. But last class I understand them well!! It was really fun! After that class I try to watch movie without subtitles. Even there are some words that I can't understand but I believe that I can make it.
4. Second, my listening skill is high too. In this class we speak with many people. After practice many time, So I learned speaking skill and I can listen smoothly. Last time we watch an English movie, I feel my that my listening skill is better.
5. Now I can watch the movie without the subtitles. I learn English for 10 years, but I was afraid if there was no subtitle, I can't understand the meaning. But last class I understand them well!!
6. First, listening skill is the most prominent improvement I made this semester. Our professor let us listen many conversations from native speakers. It helped me get a sense of english. I can inference what one is going to say. By learning some phrases and words spoken in real life, I have been getting more like a native speaker.
7. Third, it helps listening and pronunciation ability, at first time my listening ability was bad as I could not distinguish V and B. As you see, it was awful and I was hard to understand the sentences while I speak with foreigner. Now I can easily understand the speaks of foreigner so I am not afraid to chat with foreigner. Rather now I want to speak with foreigner friends.
8. Second, my listening ability improved too. It's very natural phenomenon. In conversation, we both speak and listen. So I can improve my listening ability.
9. I learned how to listen. We had a 3 speaking tests by this class. At the first time, I was hurried about speaking my speaking. I didn't consider other's saying. But next time, I found that listening is more important than speaking. Listening is vital thing in conversation. We have to listen to other's saying to participate the conversation. So, at the final test, I tried to listen to other's saying and react to others.

SPEED DATING

1. First, the power of repetition. I've always heard the great effect and power of repetition but I've never experienced it before because I'm kind of a lazy person. I talked with every student in this class with same subjects like "What was your best vacation?" or "What did you do last weekend?" and I became more fluent at that subjects or at one sentence.
2. First I can learn smother speaking. Before every class we must prepare we use conversation material at speaking partner. And we change partner each ten minute so speak same sentence about five time. It can make me smoother speaker.

CONVERSATION TEST

3. Writing a transcript was helpful to correct my conversation. I usually made some mistakes like grammar, pronunciation mistakes. If I didn't transcript my conversation, I wouldn't have known my mistakes. I think that doing well at conversation test well is important to, but correcting one's mistakes is more important for future.
4. Last, I can feel 'Happiness of Growth.' In my first conversation test, I had normal grade. And second conversation test I gut minus point. So, I prepared my last test harder. In last conversation test, I get 178% increase point. When I write transcript, I surprised. And I feel happy. I knew that what is 'happiness of growth' that time. After that, I have more interesting to study.
5. After 3 times of conversations tests, I improved more than 100%. In 1st test, I heard other friends speaking and I couldn't speak well. But my final test, I spoke so much so I felt proud of myself. My English speaking skills improved 175% !!

FEEDBACK

1. After each conversation test, I listened to the record what I said during the test and write down it as a transcript. So I could know my overall speaking style, mistakes and weakness in speaking English. Therefore, I could improve that for the next test. For example, after the last conversation test, the professor showed us video of the test. I could check my overall gesture and the fact that I laugh quite much when speaking.
2. I've thought that my voice is deep but never thought that my voice is small. However, after recording my voice for the conversation test, I was surprised that I sound like a timid boy.
3. Second, I learned that my speaking is fast. I did not know my speaking is fast. But when I tried to write transcript, I realized my speaking is fast. It was difficult to write down my words. So now, I try to speak more slowly. And I try to speak more exactly.

FRIENDS

1. Third, I can know about my classmates. I had total 3 tests with all different partners. So every time I met new friends and talked about us. I can know the deep part about them. Although we met almost first time, during the test all people can talk about ourselves freely like a friends. It is a special experience for me.
2. Finally, I made new friends while talking! I came to this class to talk with other people not to hear only what the professor says. And from this way, while talking about different topics, we exchanged our opinions and ideas. Our ability has increased together. And what's more, we told our private things we made friends naturally.

READING Third, I learned writing about ABC. At first time I am curious about why have to use ABC format. But in this time, I realize ABC format is really good at writing essay. Also, it helps me to read an another English essay. Like professor said, many essay got their own ABC. So, if I find it, it is more easy to read. In this term of exam, i was surprised one more time by this method. This is nice tip of reading. Really glad to know this tip.

PHONES Third, I learned how to come up with myself. Because using cellphone is not possible during class, I have to send out my phone. So I have to come up with myself without using the dictionary when talking with others. At first, speak without dictionary was very hard to me, but after several classes, I learned how to come up with myself.