Teaching Practice

Student Perceptions of the Use of PechaKucha Presentations for EFL Reading Classes

Hung Nguyen
Kanazawa Institute of Technology, Japan

A PechaKucha (“chitchat” in Japanese) is a concise style of oral presentation in which the presenter has 20 seconds to describe the main ideas for each PowerPoint slide showing images without text. In this study, Japanese EFL students, majoring in engineering, prepared two PechaKucha presentations, one teacher-made and one student-made. A follow-up questionnaire consisting of six 5-point Likert-scaled items and two open-ended questions was administered to the 210 pre-intermediate level university students to examine their perceptions of the effectiveness of this strategy. The students reported that learning to prepare and using PechaKuchas were beneficial and that these activities improved reading comprehension, speaking, and oral presentation skills. Although the majority of students enjoyed and benefited from the use of PechaKuchas, presentation pacing and personal shyness were reported as negative feedback. Results of the study and implications for further use of PechaKuchas in EFL classrooms will be discussed.

One of the major problems in improving communication skills for Japanese EFL students is their reluctance to speak in the classroom. As observed by Anderson (1993), Japanese students rarely start a discussion, ask for clarification, or volunteer to give answers, nor do they want to create new topics for conversations or challenge the instructor in class. They are generally quiet language learners who are shy about participating in class interactions compared with learners of other countries (Harumi, 2010; Nunn & Nunn, 2005). Additionally, Japanese students often use too many words and images in PowerPoint slides and read the slides when they present in English, causing the audience to lose interest in the topic (Soto-Caban, Selvi, & Avila-Medina, 2011). Therefore, a more concise and engaging presentation style, along with creating a more encouraging and motivating atmosphere (Miles, 2009), may improve students’ confidence, integrated language skills, and communication skills (Ryan, 2012). This paper will discuss PechaKucha oral presentations (hereinafter called “PechaKuchas”) as a teaching practice in a context of teaching and learning EFL reading comprehension. Specifically, in this study, how the performance of PechaKuchas impact students’ learning, and student views and attitudes towards the use of PechaKuchas in the EFL reading classroom will be investigated. Discussion will touch on the necessity of oral presentations in EFL classrooms, a description of PechaKuchas, and the practice of PechaKuchas in the EFL reading classroom. Some important implications for further use of PechaKuchas in an EFL context will be explored.

The Necessity of Oral Presentations in EFL Classrooms

Practicing oral presentations can help students build confidence in making public presentations (King, 2002), perform better in their future job-required tasks, and develop oral communication skills in the business and / or the engineering world (Anderson & Williams, 2012; Stevens, 2005). Al-Issa and Al-Qubtan (2010) reported that performing oral presentations develops students' integrated English language skills since they have written notes for slides, are reading text or notes for these slides, are speaking to an audience, and are listening for questions and feedback cues. They also reported that there are improvements in students' decision-making abilities when they choose the speaking topic. As well, there is an increase in students' confidence in talking in front of people, and in their knowledge of the field. In addition, there is an enhancement of their critical thinking skills with the opportunity to be involved in taking full responsibility for their own learning. Lastly, there is an increase in students' skills in using technology to make their presentations more meaningful and memorable to the audience. Munby (2011) further claimed that performing oral presentations can foster students' autonomy and empowerment, enable them to realize their individual differences, and improve their presentations through peer-assessment.

What is the PechaKucha Oral Presentation?

PechaKuchas are "the art of concise presentations" (PechaKucha™ 20x20, n.d.), and "an attempt to break through" the fatigue caused by traditional text-printed PowerPoint slides to "make the entire speaking experience more engaging" (Edwards, 2010, para 3). PechaKuchas have also been a rescue to the student presentation (Masters & Holland, 2012). The term *PechaKucha*, coined by Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham in 2003 (PechaKucha™ 20x20, n.d.), means the sound of "chitchat" in the Japanese language. A typical format of the PechaKuchas is "20x20" (twenty slides or images at twenty seconds each). The slides are created using the Microsoft Office PowerPoint application to make the entire presentation automatically run in only six minutes and forty seconds. The focus is on visuals, not on text-heavy slides. PechaKucha presenters are advised not to control the speed of each slide during the presentation. They should be ready to talk about each slide once it is shown automatically for twenty seconds. The presenter, therefore, needs to be focused and knowledgeable of the topic (PechaKucha™ 20x20, n.d.). An effective PechaKucha should have a well-organized presentation structure and presenters need careful planning and practice for an engaging, creative, and professional presentation (Atkins-Sayre, n.d.). Currently, PechaKuchas have been popularly used to present class work or projects in academia (Christianson, 2011; Foyle & Childress, 2015).

The Use of the PechaKucha Approach in Classrooms

PechaKuchas have been investigated in various contexts. Soto-Caban, Selvi, and Avila-Medina (2011) used PechaKuchas in two engineering courses at an American university. Students who had not used PechaKuchas before (but had used PowerPoint slides) were asked to use these to present their research project results. Each PechaKucha presentation used twenty slides at twenty seconds each for a total of six minutes and forty seconds; each slide had only one image and a word or phrase. Findings showed that the use of the PechaKuchas helped students develop communication skills compared to other traditional presentations in classrooms. In another study, PechaKuchas also appeared to be more effective than traditional presentations within a time limit with engineering students, and in making engaging presentations and improving students' presentation skills (Christianson & Payne, 2011). Beyer, Gaze, and Lazicki (2012) compared the impact of PechaKuchas with traditional PowerPoint presentations used by psychology students and found that PechaKuchas were more favored because they were "more appealing" to the audience (p. 36). The performance of PechaKuchas was also found to be "a

valuable tool” for improving students’ retention of presentation content, developing their presentation skills, and giving them “better visual design literacy” such as image designing skills (p. 38). Their findings suggest additional appropriate uses of PechaKuchas for reviewing topics or materials. Another study by Anderson and Williams (2012) taught the use of PechaKuchas for three business classes. In their study, students were first introduced to video samples of PechaKuchas and then were instructed to make PechaKuchas. This approach differed from the study by Soto-Caban, Selvi, and Avila-Medina (2011) in which students had no formal introductions to PechaKuchas. The results indicated that creating PechaKuchas was challenging in terms of “time and content constraints,” but creating and performing were “more enjoyable, lively, and engaging” (p. 5). These findings further support the use of PechaKuchas with a focus on visual designs, engaging communication, and presentation skills in the classroom. Furthermore, Ryan (2012) reported that using PechaKuchas can help EFL students improve their pronunciation and intonation. Since English is a “stressed time” language and the time employed in PechaKuchas is strictly controlled, practicing PechaKuchas will help students better “achieve natural sounding connected speech” (p. 25).

These recent studies show benefits of using PechaKuchas in academic classrooms (Anderson & Williams, 2012; Beyer, Gaze, & Lazicki, 2012; Christianson & Payne, 2011; Ryan, 2012; Soto-Caban, Selvi, & Avila-Medina, 2011) in various contexts, but provide no specific findings on the use of PechaKuchas in EFL reading classes. In this study, the students’ views and attitudes towards the use of PechaKuchas in the EFL reading classroom will be examined. It is further hoped that this study will contribute to the use of the PechaKucha approach in EFL learning and teaching, especially in connection with reading comprehension.

Implementation and Methodology

The PechaKucha approach was introduced to the English IV reading course for ten different classes at a Japanese university in the spring of 2014. The pre-intermediate level students, aged 18 to 21, majored in science and engineering. The textbooks used were *Reading Explorer I* (Douglas, 2009) and *Reading Science and Technology* (Cengage Learning, 2013). Students met once a week for ninety minutes over sixteen weeks, including two ninety-minute integrated learning sessions. The PechaKuchas were implemented twice for all ten classes: once in Week 8 and again in Week 15.

PechaKucha Practice 1 (Week 8)

The teacher prepared twelve PowerPoint slides and made copies for all groups of students in class. Each group had two or three students and the same twelve slide copies. Pictures used for the slides were taken from the first six reading units (9A, 9B, 10A, 10B, and two science readings) that students had studied. There were two slides per unit, one to two pictures per slide, little or no text, and no video or audio. The slideshow time was four minutes on auto-run with twenty seconds on each slide. Each group divided the slides among themselves for their practice. All groups first practiced speaking about these slides using the instruction provided (see Appendix A). They were advised to talk about the key points of the pictures that supported the topic and to keep the twenty-second rule per slide. After a 20-minute practice, they presented this teacher-made slideshow to the class. There was no formal assessment, but students used a self-assessment checklist for their presentation (see Appendix B) which had been introduced and explained in Week 7 and included content, body language, speech and language, and the presenter’s expressed level of interest.

PechaKucha Practice 2 (Week 15)

Instructions for creating PechaKuchas were explained to students in Week 14 (see Appendix C). Students worked in groups of two or three to make their presentations of twelve PowerPoint slides on the last six reading units (11A, 11B, 12A, 12B, and two science readings; the topics were Caribbean pirates, women pirates, Everest mysteries, missing pilots, the information superhighway, and bridge making). The rules for making PechaKucha Practice 2 slides were similar to PechaKucha Practice 1. If using the Internet, students were advised to cite the source of the image on each slide. Groups practiced their slideshows for fifteen minutes before they presented the work to the whole class. Each student talked about three or four slides for the same or different units. A rubric (see Appendix D), which had been explained in Week 14, was provided for students' peer-assessment. The rubric consisted of six categories scoring from one to five on the following criteria: a) content and visual appeal (the connection between the picture selection and the reading texts); b) slide design (little or no text on each slide, one to two pictures per slide, timed to auto-run for every twenty seconds); c) organization (ease in following the speech); d) body language (the use of gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions); e) speech and language (the use of voice volume, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar); and f) interest (the speaker's expressed level of interest).

At the end of the course (Week 16), a questionnaire (Appendix E) was given to the 210 PechaKucha student presenters to measure their perceptions of the PechaKucha approach in their reading classes. The questionnaire had six items using a five-point Likert-scaled format asking students to circle 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) and two open-ended questions; students were asked to write their answers in English. The questionnaire was distributed and collected in the same day during Week 16 for each class. Two hundred complete sheets were collected for analysis.

Results and Discussion

Student Ratings of the Impact of PechaKucha Practice on Skills

Items 1 to 6 asked students what impact they believed learning to perform the PechaKuchas had in the EFL reading class (see Table 1). The majority of the respondents of Item 1 agreed that PechaKuchas improved their text understanding (30% Strongly Agree and 63% Agree). Students rehearsed the PechaKucha several times, talking about the main ideas of the text before in-class presentations, which might have helped improve their understanding of the text or retention of presentation content. The result of the study by Beyer, Gaze, and Lazicki (2012) also showed students' improvement of understanding of the material used in their PechaKucha presentations. Similarly, in Item 3, most respondents agreed PechaKuchas were an effective tool that helped them review the reading texts they had learned previously (33.5% Strongly Agree and 48% Agree). Reviewing the text for PechaKuchas can deepen students' text retention, which contributes to their improved understanding of text and also makes their presentations more informative and focused.

Table 1
Results of the Questionnaire

PechaKuchas ...	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
1. improved my understanding of the texts.	30	63	5.5	1.5	0
2. encouraged me to read more.	20.5	47	27.5	4.5	0.5
3. were an effective tool to review the text I have studied.	33.5	48	16.5	2	0
4. encouraged cooperative learning.	29.5	48	20	2	0.5
5. improved my English speaking and presentation skills.	47	44	5	4	0
6. provided a fun learning environment.	29	42.5	25.5	3	0

For Item 2, the majority of the respondents thought that having to prepare for PechaKuchas encouraged their reading (20.5% Strongly Agree and 47% Agree), while 4.5% disagreed and 27.5% responded “Undecided,” which contradicted the researcher’s expectation that PechaKuchas would motivate their reading in order to create PechaKuchas. This could be due to the limited exposure (two times per semester) to PechaKuchas. This possibility may also explain why 27.5% chose “Undecided” for this item.

Responses to Item 4 show that the use of PechaKuchas encouraged cooperative learning (29.5% Strongly Agree and 48% Agree). Students together made and practiced their PechaKuchas, which may have contributed to their enhanced learning cooperation. However, 2% disagreed, which may be from students who were shy and / or reluctant to join the group work. In the researcher’s experience, shy students preferred to practice the task by themselves and only joined the group when presenting the task to the class.

When asked if PechaKuchas improved their English speaking and presentation skills (Item 5), a majority of the students responded positively (47% Strongly Agree and 44% Agree) while 4% disagreed. This finding supports findings from previous studies on improved communication skills (Soto-Caban, Selvi, & Avila-Medina, 2011) and improved presentation skills (Beyer, Gaze, & Lazicki, 2012; Christianson & Payne, 2012). In the current study, students had one week (PechaKucha Practice 2) and in-class time (PechaKucha Practices 1 and 2) for their group rehearsal, which enabled possible corrections of their English oral speeches in the areas of delivery, pronunciation, word use, and body language. For the 4% who disagreed, the reason may be because of low proficiency speaking skills and / or shyness. Some students, in addition, only memorized a set speech (rather than practicing various ways to discuss the image or concept), which may have resulted in their assumption that the use of PechaKuchas did not improve their speaking and presentation skills.

Data for Item 6 shows that most students (29% Strongly Agree and 42.5% Agree) felt using PechaKuchas was a fun learning activity. Interestingly, when students were rehearsing PechaKuchas in class, they were very noisy and spoke in both English and Japanese (Japanese was accepted for minimal use). PechaKuchas also appeared to be fun and enjoyable as noted by Anderson and Williams (2012). When someone was thinking too long or trying to produce a word about the image, others were cheering. Only 3% disagreed with this statement, which may be from those who were shy or reluctant to join the teamwork. This is similar to their responses to Item 4 above.

Student Attitudes Toward PechaKuchas

Two open-ended questions asked students what they liked and disliked about PechaKuchas in their reading classroom. Please see Appendix F for their comments.

Most of the respondents showed positive views and attitudes towards the use of PechaKuchas in their reading classroom, which are quite consistent with the answers to Items 1 to 6 above. These responses fell into the following groups. PechaKuchas are believed to have: a) improved their reading comprehension and retention of text contents by re-studying, reviewing or summarizing the texts (similar to the responses of Items 1 and 3); b) improved their English speaking, communication, and presentation skills (similar to Item 5); c) developed their cooperative learning, friendships, and speaking confidence and fluency (similar to Item 4); and d) provided a fun learning opportunity (even for shy students) and enjoyable way to make PowerPoint slideshows (similar to the response of Item 6).

Regarding what students reported disliking, some respondents such as R4 and R45 felt that a twenty-second limit was too short for talking about a topic. Christianson and Payne (2011, p. 10) acknowledged that there are “some trade-offs between the benefits of a fixed format and the drawbacks” of PechaKuchas. Students in the Anderson and Williams (2012) study also found the PechaKucha time too short and “terrifying” (p. 4). When using PechaKuchas, students must be fast-thinking and fast-talking to convey the main ideas of the text. The time constraint may result in content delivery constraints, which can be frustrating to some who are shy and / or prefer a slower-paced speaking style. One possible solution could be allowing more time for students to practice, especially in pair or group practice so that they can feel more confident before they present their work to the class. Other respondents (R155 and R180) also felt that using pictures without text was not sufficient for explaining the concept. As stated in the instructions for making PechaKuchas, since pictures were used to enhance the understanding and mastery of the course objectives, they must be carefully selected and strongly support the reading topic and advance the story in the text. Therefore, if the pictures or images chosen are highly detailed and strongly support the text topic, they could provide a clear view of the text. These “dislike” responses have important implications for future uses of the PechaKuchas in terms of practice time and image selection.

Conclusion

Student perceptions of the use of PechaKuchas in EFL reading classes were examined. PechaKucha student presenters' responses suggest that the use of PechaKuchas can positively contribute to the improvement of EFL student presentation skills in connection with reading comprehension and may want to be considered by teachers or learners as an activity to improve skills through oral presentations. Although beneficial, it is also important for teachers to consider some drawbacks of the use of PechaKuchas that can be challenging to students such as time constraints, the necessary speaking speed, and image selection. It is also advisable to choose high proficiency students to lead the teamwork and practice.

It is necessary to note some limitations of this study. First, the study was implemented with students in one semester and from one university. Therefore, the findings of the study may limit its external validity to larger populations. Second, asking students to respond in English to the open-ended part of the survey questionnaire may be a disadvantage to some low proficiency students, which may cause some limitations in eliciting their opinions about the use of PechaKuchas.

Future research is needed to compare the PechaKuchas with other traditional PowerPoint presentations to examine if there are any differences in students' performance on discussing the EFL reading text. The method of the study will include both pre- and post-surveys / interviews (in both English and Japanese) and skills tests to have a more comprehensive assessment of this presentation style.

Author Note

Hung Nguyen, Assistant Professor of EFL, Essential English Center, Kanazawa Institute of Technology, Japan.

The author wishes to thank Professor Doreen Gaylord for her encouragement, and André Franque and Andrew Gergely for their meticulous proofreading and useful suggestions.

This paper was based on "Utilizing the PechaKucha Presentations in Teaching EFL Reading Comprehension," presented at the 11th Annual CamTESOL Conference in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, March 1, 2015; conference funding was provided by the Kanazawa Institute of Technology.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Hung Nguyen, Essential English Center, Kanazawa Institute of Technology (KIT), 7-1 Ohgigaoka, Nonoichi City, Ishikawa, 921-8501, Japan. E-mail: hnguyen2@neptune.kanazawa-it.ac.jp

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Appendix A
Instructions for PechaKucha Practice 1, Week 8

1. Preparation:
 - In a group, each person chooses four to six slide copies. There are two slides for each reading text.
 - It is good to think and write down some sentences about each picture / slide.
 - You can look at reading texts to find more information for the talk.
2. Questions to think:
 - What do you see in the picture?
 - Who / what is in the picture? What are they doing?
 - What do you think the picture is about? How is the picture related to the text you have learned?
 - Do you like the picture? Why or why not?
3. Practice:
 - In your group, each of you practices speaking (*not reading*) as much as you can about the slide using the twenty-second rule per slide and the following useful phrases for your talk: *Greetings (Hello everyone, I'm going to talk about . . .); I think the picture describes . . . ; I like . . . because . . . ; The picture is about . . .*
4. Presentation:
 - Each group will present their PowerPoint slides (*prepared by the teacher*) to the class.
 - Each of you will take turn to talk about the picture / slide within twenty seconds.
 - *Think fast and speak fast!!!*
5. Each presenter will be awarded one point.

Appendix B
Self-Assessment Checklist (PechaKucha Practice 1, Week 8)

Presenter's name: _____

Date: _____

Category	Questions	Yes	No	A little
1. Content	Did I talk about the pictures in connection with the reading texts?			
2. Body language	Did I use gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions appropriately?			
3. Speech and language	Were my voice volume and pronunciation used appropriately? Did I cover a good use of vocabulary and grammar?			
4. Interest	Did I feel happy about presenting the topic? Did I present the topic with a high level of interest?			

Appendix C
Instructions for PechaKucha Practice 2, Week 15

1. Form groups of two or three to make one PowerPoint slideshow of four minutes; twenty seconds per slide.
2. Choose pictures from each unit you have studied: *Unit 11A, 11B, 12A, 12B, science reading 3-4.*
3. You can search for more pictures on the Internet (save the link). The pictures chosen must be appropriate, legally downloadable, and of high resolution and they must strongly support the topic of the text.
4. Use pictures to make a twelve-slide PowerPoint presentation: Slides 1-2 (Unit 11A), slides 3-4 (Unit 11B), slides 5-6 (Unit 12A), slide 7-8 (Unit 12B), slides 9-10 (science reading 3), slides 11-12 (science reading 4). There may be no texts on each slide, except for the unit title and the links of the images chosen. Each slide must have one or two pictures and must be set to auto-run for every twenty seconds. The total time for the slideshow is four minutes exactly.
5. Please send the PowerPoint slideshow to me before the class.
6. Please print a copy of the slideshow and bring it to the class for group practice.
7. Practice with your group members as much as you can. Look at the text again to find more information for your talk.
8. Use the following phrases: *Hello everyone, I'm going to talk about . . . ; I think the picture describes . . . ; I like . . . because . . . ; This picture is about . . .*
9. Groups will present the PowerPoint slideshow in class.
10. Each presenter will get one point.

*** How to set the time for the slides (For PCs):**

Start with slide 1. From PowerPoint window page, click "Animations"; you will see "Advance Slide" on the right side. Click on "Automatically after" and click the upper arrow for twenty seconds for each slide. Repeat the same procedure for other slides. Check all slides again to make sure they are all set with the same time (twenty seconds each).

Appendix D
Scoring Rubric (PechaKucha Practice 2, Week 15)

Presenter's name: _____

Date: _____

Category	Scoring Criteria	Scoring Points				
		5	4	3	2	1
Content / visual appeal	The pictures or images chosen were appropriate, highly detailed, of high resolution, and strongly related to the topic of the reading text.					
Slide design	Each slide had one or two pictures / images. Each unit had two slides, timed to auto-run for every twenty seconds. The slideshow ran smoothly. There was little or no text on each slide, except for citing the sources of the images or unit titles. One basic design pattern was used per slide.					
Organization	Pictures or slides were organized in a way that was easy to follow and understand.					
Body language	Presenter used gestures, posture, and eye contact confidently and appropriately. Used facial expressions appropriately and communicatively.					
Speech & Language	Presenter demonstrated a clear and audible voice, a good use of topic-related words, grammar, and clear pronunciation. Rarely used the notes.					
Interest	Presenter showed a high level of interest / happiness using body language expressions or rising intonation where necessary in presenting the topic.					

Total points: _____

Appendix E

Survey Questionnaire on the Use of PechaKuchas in EFL Reading Classes

Please read the following items about PechaKucha Oral Presentations (PechaKuchas) and put a check (✓) in the appropriate box.

- Strongly agree (SA)
- Agree (AG)
- Undecided (UD)
- Disagree (DA)
- Strongly disagree (SD)

Items	PechaKuchas . . .	SA	AG	UD	DA	SD
1	improved my understanding of the texts.					
2	encouraged me to read more.					
3	were an effective tool to review the text I have studied.					
4	encouraged cooperative learning.					
5	improved my English speaking and presentation skills.					
6	provided a fun learning environment.					

Please answer the following questions in English.

* What do you like about PechaKucha oral presentations in the reading classes?

.....

.....

.....

* What do you dislike about PechaKucha oral presentations in the reading classes?

.....

.....

.....

Thank you!

Appendix F
Responses to Two Open-Ended Questions

Only respondents' (R) representative comments are presented below to save space.

Question 1: What do you like about the PechaKuchas?

- R6 I improve my comprehension of text. I can remember the text content longer.
- R10 It was very interesting and I knew the pleasure to give a speech.
- R13 It can inspire our English speaking ability. We can communicate with other friends.
- R19 I like to speak about important points in 20 seconds.
- R28 We can develop speaking and presentation skills. So I think PechaKuchas are important.
- R36 We can make friends and help each other to make PechaKuchas.
- R42 PechaKuchas enable us to re-study the texts. It is good.
- R49 I learned that speaking and presentations of English are good for my future jobs.
- R51 I want to use PechaKucha slides to make animation.
- R61 I like that PechaKuchas provide a fun environment to learn English. No stress.
- R66 I like PechaKuchas because I do not need difficult words to talk.
- R78 I don't like English speaking long, but PechaKucha is short, so I like it!
- R84 I develop my skills to make short talks.
- R87 PechaKuchas help me revise the text and improve my reading comprehension.
- R95 I like cooperative learning. I think I develop speaking skills through PechaKuchas.
- R101 I can understand each unit again. I can freely talk about the texts.
- R116 Good for me because I like to make PechaKucha PowerPoint slides.
- R135 I improve my listening skills through PechaKuchas of other friends. So it is good.
- R147 Speaking fast improves my speaking fluency.
- R158 I like to talk free about textbook.
- R169 I was able to know my communication skills so I want to learn about English.
- R172 PechaKuchas improve my confidence in class and in front of people!
- R175 I like to talk about pictures because if I forget the text I can see the pictures and talk.
- R181 I am shy to speak so I need PechaKuchas to practice my English.
- R189 I read the unit again for vocabulary words. I think this is very important to study English.
- R197 I improve teamwork skill and more effort to study.
- R200 I learned how to fast talk and summarize the text.
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Question 2: What do you dislike about the PechaKuchas?

- R4 20 seconds is too short for me. I want to have more time to talk.
- R15 Speaking fast is hard.
- R45 I was nervous and shy, so it is difficult to speak within 20 seconds.
- R120 I forgot words and when I stood in front of people.
- R155 I think only pictures are not easy to talk about text.
- R177 I am very shy. I cannot even talk to my team mates.
- R180 Reading no text is difficult.
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