



Teaching the socio-cultural norms of conversation and negotiation to lower level migrants and refugees

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Teaching socio-cultural norms (pragmatics)

- ▶ Importance - 'invisible rules' (Yates, 2004)
- ▶ Errors less tolerated than errors of grammar and pronunciation –(Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei, 1998; Niezgova and Roever, 2001.)
- ▶ Explicit teaching is effective, but little classroom based research on teaching methodology (Kasper & Roever, 2004)
- ▶ Noticing important and a pre-condition for acquisition (Schmidt 1990)



Options for teachers and previous research

- ▶ Raise learners' awareness: examine authentic or semi-authentic texts of native speakers (Basturkmen, 2002; Denny, 2008; Malthus, Holmes & Major, 2005; Riddiford & Joe, 2005)
- ▶ Elicited texts contain a distillation of native speaker implicit knowledge of pragmatic norms (Golato 2003)
- ▶ Previous research with Int and above – semi-authentic sample texts effective (Denny, 2008; Sachtleben & Denny forthcoming)
- ▶ Lack of confidence in this methodology for lower levels (Denny & Basturkmen, 2009)



Aim and methodology of new action research study –1

- ▶ Can lower level learners learn conversational pragmatic norms (inviting and making appointments) from semi-authentic elicited samples?
- ▶ What conversational pragmatic norms are most easily acquired by lower level learners?
- ▶ Where is there most improvement after tuition?
- ▶ What activities help them to learn?



Aim and methodology of new study -2

- ▶ **Pre and post self assessment and simplified discourse completion task:**
 - In this situation what would you say?
 - Conversation (pre intermediate and post beginner)

- ▶ **Student Activities Survey:**
 - Did you improve?
 - Which activities helped and most helped?



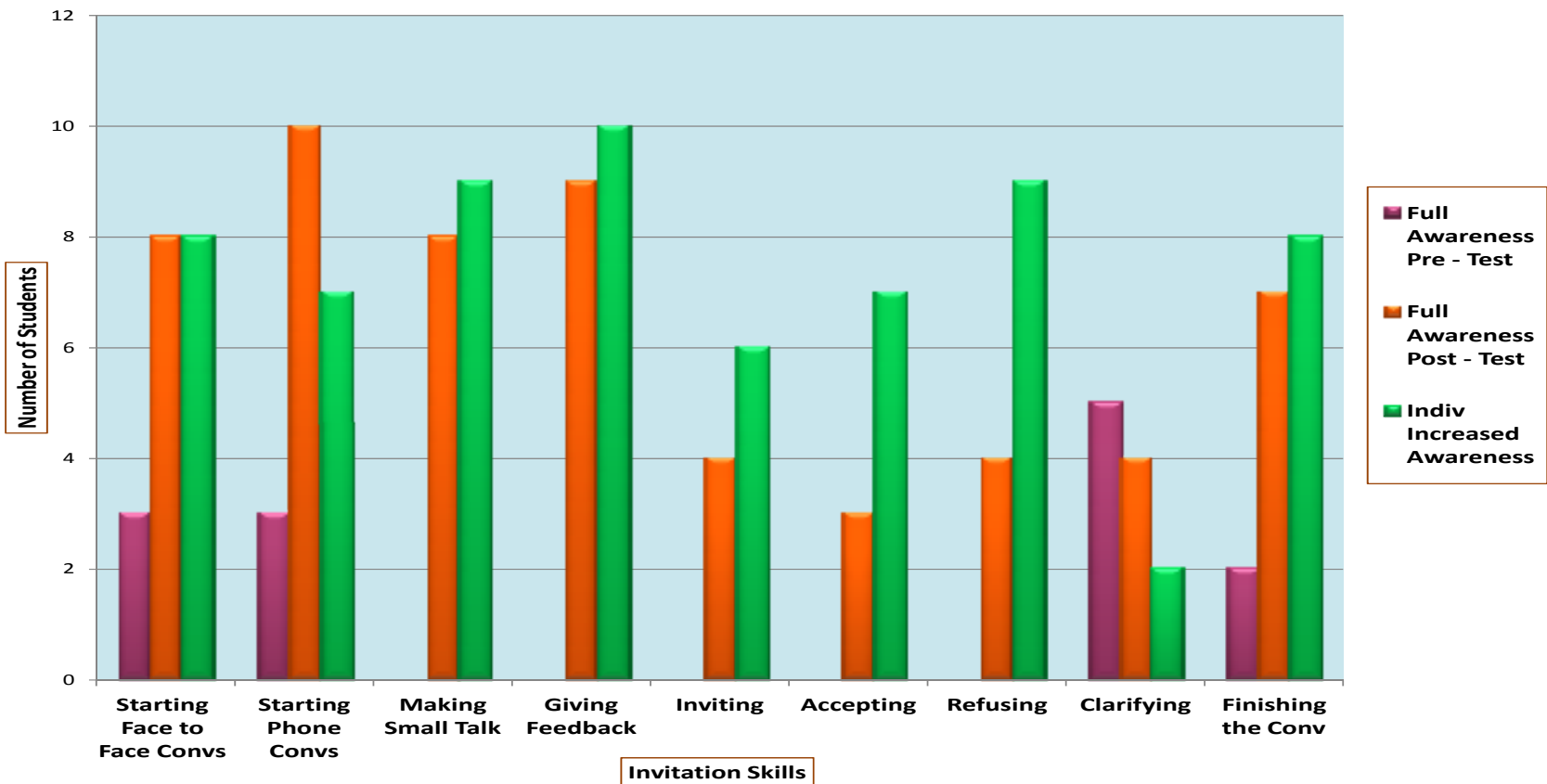
Context Post Beginner and Pre Intermediate

- ▶ EAL refugee students: post beginner (15)
pre intermediate (12)
- ▶ Foundation Focussed Training Opportunities Programme
- ▶ Profile:
 - **Nationalities:** (from 13 countries, mainly in eastern Africa & the Middle East, with some from Asia, S. America & the Pacific Islands)
 - **Age:** (from 21 to mid 50s)
 - **Educational background:** (ranged from no schooling to 13 yrs of education)
 - **English study pre NZ:** (1/3 had none, 1/3 had 5 yrs or less & remaining 1/3 had over 5 yrs)
 - **English study in NZ:** (96%: 3yrs or less)



Post Beginner Findings: Awareness and Individual Increased Awareness

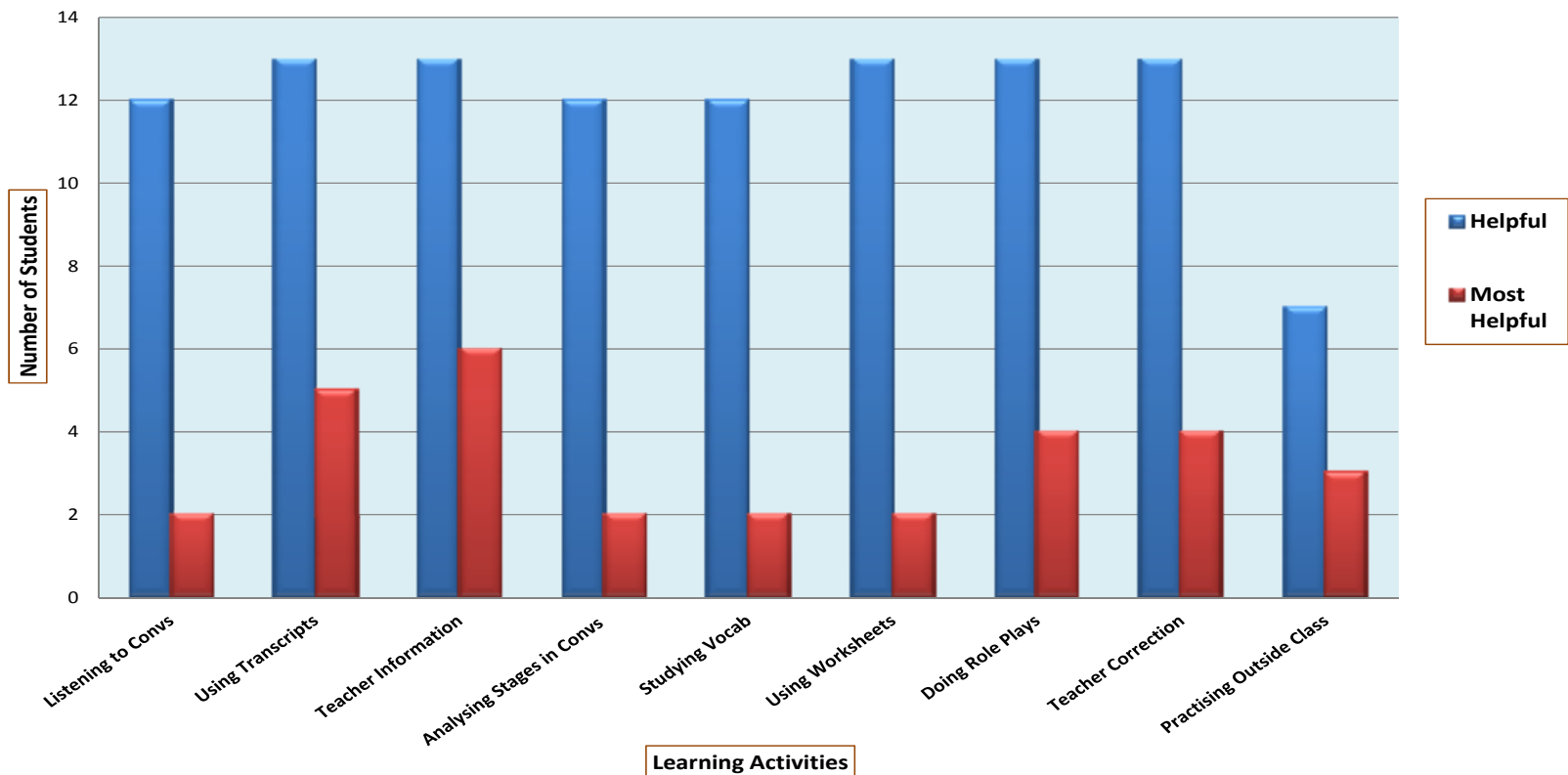
**Student awareness of conversation (invitation) skills pre-teaching & post-teaching and individual increased awareness
FFTO Level 2, Sem 1, 2011 (N = 15)**





Post Beginner Findings: Activities Survey

Polite Invitation Conversations
Activities - Number of Learners helped & most helped
FFTO Level 2, Sem 1, 2011 (N = 15)





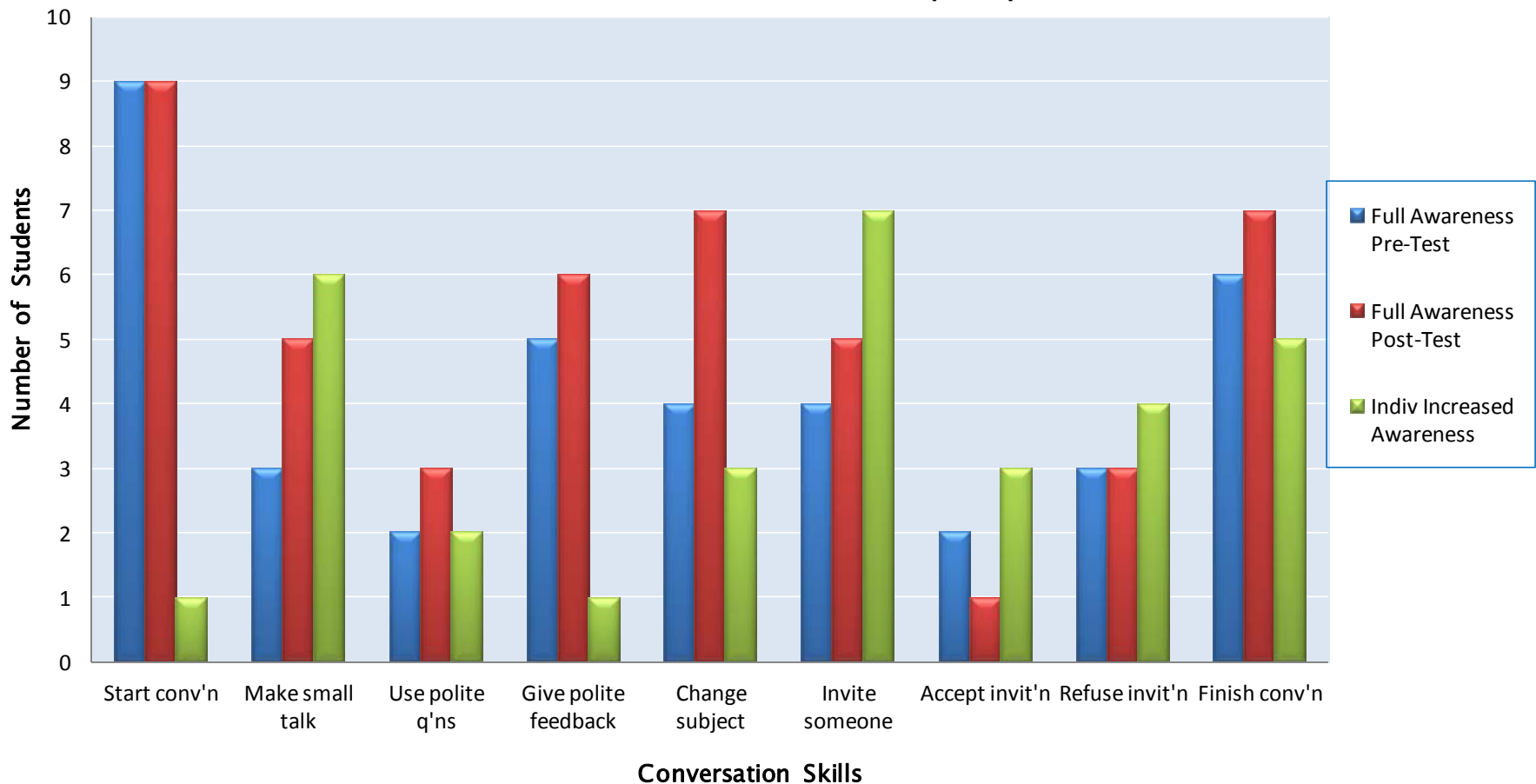
Discussion and implications for teaching – Post Beginner

- ▶ Benefits of using semi-authentic texts
- ▶ Importance of teacher input
- ▶ Transcript needed to support learning
- ▶ Practical activities preferred



Pre Intermediate Findings: Awareness and Individual Increased Awareness

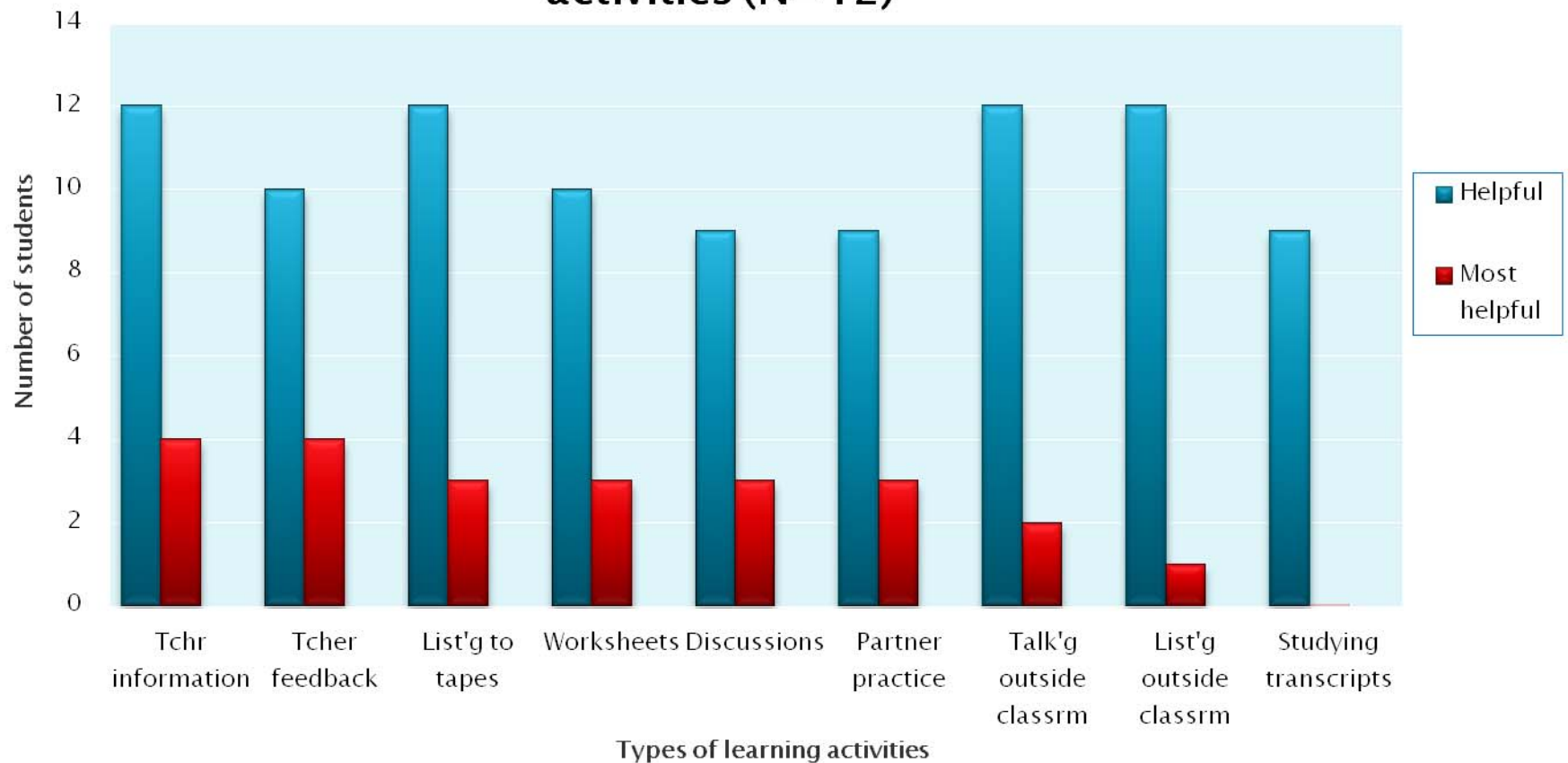
Student awareness of conversation skills pre-teaching and post-teaching and individual increased awareness in conversation skills (N=12)





Pre intermediate Findings: Activities Survey

Student perceptions of helpful and most helpful learning activities (N= 12)





Discussion and implications for teaching – Pre Intermediate

- ▶ Importance of teaching multi word units - achievement of skills and/or improvement greatest where easily mastered by learning formulaic language
- ▶ Skills requiring more complex language – more difficult to increase awareness
- ▶ Significance of teacher involvement in learning activities
- ▶ Pre-intermediate level learners not ready for metalanguage analysis



Conclusion and limitations

- ▶ A noticeable number of students at each level could learn from semi-authentic elicited recordings of native speaker role-play.
- ▶ Awareness of norms in which formulaic language was most prominent showed the most improvement.
- ▶ Teacher directed and practical rather than theoretical activities were more effective at this level.
- ▶ All learners believed they had improved and a significant majority believed listening to the samples had helped in this improvement.
- ▶ Though findings not generalisable, gives us confidence to continue using the materials with these kinds of students.



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