

Effective Instruction of Public Speaking グループ活動を生かしたパブリック・スピーキング指導の研究

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This paper explores the instruction of public speaking in a large-size class. The author has been in charge of the speech classes, SPEECH III and SPEECH IV mainly for the second year students at Miyazaki Municipal University for several years. At the preparation stage of SPEECH III, and IV, he intended that the class size was about 30 students as one group in the lecture style. But, in reality, more than 50 students took the course. Then he had to rethink the way of teaching. To solve the problem of large-size class in speaking instruction, introduction of group activities was considered.

First of all, the aims and outline of SPEECH courses that consist of six courses are described. The students who take SPEECH learn pronunciations, speech making and performances, and debate step by step continuously in the span of 3 years. Secondly, group activities in SPEECH III and IV are explained. Especially, effectiveness of the group activities is argued.

Key Words : public speaking, group activities, cooperative learning

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1. Introduction

This paper explores the instruction of public speaking. The author has been in charge of the speech classes, SPEECH III and SPEECH IV mainly for the second year students at Miyazaki Municipal University for several years. At the preparation of SPEECH III, and IV, he intended that the class size was about 30 students as one group in the lecture style. But, in reality, more than 50 students took the course. Then he had to rethink the way of teaching. Ten groups were made with five to six students in one group. Though the style of the class was different from the teaching way the author thought beforehand, unexpectedly it made a success. Students enjoyed the group work and their evaluation of the class was good. Students had to express their opinion in public in the whole class and they were of course nervous beyond necessity. However, in a group session, they seemed to enjoy talking in English with them, because the group size, with five to six students in each group, was rather small and the students were less tense in front of the group members. The speech class using group sessions was unexpectedly successful. The author tried to analyze the sessions in detail and proposed one of the effective instructions in a large-size speech class.

2. The Aims of the SPEECH courses: SPEECH I, II, III, IV, V, and VI

2.1. SPEECH Classes

"Speech classes I to IV" are the required courses for English teacher-training program at Miyazaki Municipal University. "Speech classes I and II" are the courses of English pronunciation training mainly for the students aiming at becoming English teachers. About 90 students take the classes and they are divided into three classes, consisting of 30 students each. English pronunciation is comprehensively trained from the alphabets to the performances of famous speeches such as the last speech of the Charlie Chaplin's film "The Great Dictator," and M. L. King's "I have a dream" at Washington D.C. in 1963. Through the courses, the students aim at establishing their own pronunciation or oral expressions, especially emphasizing the consonants through the "exaggerated" method, which are recognized as proper English, not as so-called *Katakana* English or Japanese English. About 80 students finally finish these two courses every year.

50 to 60 students having finished "Speech courses I and II" take "Speech courses III and IV" every year. These courses are also set up as the required ones for the students aiming at becoming junior high school teachers. The aims of the second step of "speech courses" are to

establish English speech performances applying the pronunciation trained in "Speech courses I and II," and to learn speech writings and creative thinking. The details of "Speech courses III and IV" are mentioned in later section.

The third step of "Speech courses," "V and VI" is open mainly to the third year students. The students who are able to take "Speech courses V and VI" have to finish "Speech courses I to IV". The author hoped, at designing these courses, that about 30 students would take the courses to learn discussions, debates and critical thinking in English. However, in reality, the number of students taking these courses is unfortunately around 10 every year. Because of the limited number of the courses which the author takes charge of, he is not able to be in charge of "Speech classes V and VI" and entrusts a native speaker to teach them. Students must have advantage of being taught debates and critical thinking by the native speaker of English, because debates and critical thinking are basically or originally brought by the western culture. Most of the Japanese students tend to get out of the way of critical thinking and debates. They seem to feel uncomfortable to argue with others and they seem to be afraid of it. One of the reasons for this is that students may be unfamiliar with arguing or debating, because they have had little experience of learning discussion or debates even in Japanese, their native language, but it is not clearly proved. That is why, the author imagines, the number of the students taking "Speech courses V and VI" is small. Some of the students, of course, like and want to learn debates and arguments in English, but most of them need to have the support of the Japanese teachers who are able to argue and debate in English with the knowledge and experience of the cultural gaps between Japanese and English. There may be many arguments in "Speech courses V and VI," but they are not the main theme of this paper, and these arguments will be given over to another paper in the future.

2.2. Outline of "Speech courses III and IV"

The class size and the aims of "Speech courses III and IV" are mentioned in the earlier section. Here the outline of the courses is stated. "Speech III" is set in the first semester, and "Speech IV," in the second semester. They have 12 lessons each. Six speech drafts including the term-end exam and several speech performances in front of the whole classmates are imposed in each semester.

The aims of the second step of "Speech" are both to train students to perform public speaking and to train them to teach speech writing and performances, because as is mentioned above, these two courses are configured for the students aiming at being English

teachers. Only 24 lessons a year are not enough to satisfy both the aims described above. To be teachers and then to teach speeches, it is necessary for students to have more lessons for speech performances and for learning speech structures, writings, and critical ways of thinking. It is more important to get accustomed to the way of thinking and to get the ideas for speaking in the head than to learn structures of writing. It is enhanced through more experiences of training public speaking performances. That is why students need to have more lessons.

In reality, however, the number of lessons is limited in the university education scene. It is necessary to make the most of the limited opportunities. Giving the minimum essential skills is fundamental for students to notice the clues of performing their own speeches in public and to get the hints of teaching speeches through their performances. Japanese students, especially, need these experiences. They have almost never experienced the trainings of the logical way of thinking and public speeches based on it even in their native language. If they had experienced a little of it, they would be easier to make English speeches in public and teachers would more easily teach English. Such Japanese people may have more difficulties in learning English than the people who have experienced logical speaking activities at schools and in daily life from childhood. In the actual condition of the school education in Japan, schools do not provide such language education both in Japanese and in English. Unfortunately even the ideas of the necessity of such language education are lacking.

"Speech courses" at Miyazaki Municipal University are thought as a means of supplementing the lack of the language education in Japan. Using the game, "twenty questions," students learn how to get information through asking the simple Yes/No questions based on the logical way of thinking and learn how to construct the concept of something or someone through guessing by the information acquired by the questions. Students know that enough information necessary for guessing can be acquired by simple questions, notice that it is difficult to complete the guessing without cooperation with other students that have different ways of thinking, and that asking questions is a very important tool to make communication. They learn to be keen to have information. This is the power of living in the different culture from one's own.

Students have to make speeches on the following topics in the courses.

Table 1: Topics of the speeches the students are required to give. (Speech III)

1. Word speech
2. Paper dictionaries vs. small electronic dictionary devices

3. Incidents on Holidays
4. My Treasure (Show & Tell)
5. News Report
6. Final Speech: What I want to be (My Future Career)

Table 2: Topics of the speeches the students are required to give. (Speech IV)

1. A Person I Met on Vacation
2. On Marriage
3. Sales Talk
4. Visualization Speech
5. The Film I recommend
6. Final Speech: Free Speech (Anything relating to a speaker)

Students practice all the speeches in the group activities. The other group members ask questions after listening to the speech. The aims of asking questions after the speech performances are (1) to confirm the correctness of the contents they received by Yes/No questions, and (2) to deepen the contents or to get more information by WH-questions. Asking questions is one of the important activities in the courses. It is put into practice only by group work. Lectures on speeches by the teacher may be effective to provide the knowledge of speech writing or speech theory, but only one teacher cannot give effective speech practice to students in the limited period.

3. Effectiveness of Group Activities

3.1. Group Activities in the Sessions of SPEECH III and IV classes

Group activities enable all the students to have several times of the opportunities to give speeches and to ask questions within 90 minutes of a university lesson. Moreover, students feel rather comfortable and less tense to perform speeches and ask questions in a friendly atmosphere with the members of the group. After practicing speech in a group, one of the group members speaks in front of the whole classmates. Practicing in a group enables the students to get accustomed to speaking with less tension and with self-confidence. Self-confidence makes their speeches better and better even if they have a little tension. A successful experience gives them more motivation to convey messages through speeches. This brings a virtuous circle in learning. Furthermore, giving comments on other group members' speech enables students to have a commenting skill, and to notice some clues of speech writing

and performing.

On the other hand, it is difficult for teachers to give detailed responses to each student in a short period. As for the group sessions, some teachers wonder what they exist in the class for. Others sometimes lose the way of managing class without thinking detailed procedures beforehand. They have to think thoroughly of the contents of the class and have to prepare some of the activities or procedures for the capabilities of changing them depending on the situations and the students' responses. It is a necessary step for successful speech classes.

The roles of a teacher are to give appropriate directions to students, to encourage them to perform speeches, to give some definite advice, and to motivate them to make another speech performance. Students learn a lot of things through their speech performances. But for the teacher's appropriate advice, students cannot apply their experiences to the next performance. The appropriate advice or comments have to be positive ones to the students' performances, not only their weaknesses to be pointed out. Positive comments enhance their motivation. Negative comments dampen their motivation and don't produce a good result. Detailed comments are not necessary. It is good to give only a couple of essential comments.

In order to foster students' commenting skill in the group sessions, it is important for the teacher to tell students to give as positive comments to other students as possible, not to whither others. Before students give comments, teachers have to give several models of positive and helpful comments. They have to be a role model for students. Students learn ways of giving positive advice from the model comments of the teacher. Moreover, they feel that a relaxed atmosphere is produced by giving a positive comment to another student and they feel that the atmosphere makes their performance easier. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that they feel more or less nervous in performing speeches.

Stage fright is inevitable for speech performance. Practicing and experiencing speech performances many times, students gradually overcome their stage fright or at least they come to know how to weaken their tension. Group work gives such opportunities. Needless to say, only one or two performances in front of all the classmates in a semester is not so many, but group sessions or practice sessions in a small group cover the lack of opportunities to perform speeches in public. In Speech III and IV classes, you can observe that the students enjoy practicing and performing their speeches with some amount of tension.

3.2. Ideas of Activities in the Group Session

Cooperative activities make students have natural opportunities to think critically, to create positive thinking and to compare their own thinking with others' thinking in the group

sessions. Introducing group-to-group sessions such as debates encourages students to cooperate each other actively and positively and to enjoy discussions.

It is good for students to correct their speech drafts in peer review in grammatical issues and organizing ideas. Peer reviews let them have the ability of self-editing. To foster self-editing ability is one of the important aims of English writing. This ability makes students independent of the teacher's correction of writing and makes them speak fluent English without hesitating making mistakes. Students can instantly correct their speech by self-editing ability if they notice their mistakes during speaking.

3.3. Evaluation of the Speech Performances

According to Baba (1997), it is difficult to evaluate speaking ability, because the voice vanishes in a moment and it is difficult to make mental notes on everything that students perform in speech. Moreover, there are a wide variety of evaluation items of speech to judge correctly in a second. It is a challenging task for non-native teachers of English. One of the solutions is to introduce a public qualifying examination such as TOEIC, TOEIC Speaking and Writing test, TOEFL and IELTS.

In fact, TOEIC-SW (Speaking and Writing) test is introduced in SPEECH III and IV classes. Students have to take TOEIC Speaking and Writing Test once during each course of SPEECH III and IV classes. At the first test, students don't get accustomed to quick responses to the computer-based tests. However, once they experience the test format, they know what abilities they have to acquire and they can set the aim of SPEECH class. Teachers can get one of the subjective data of students' speaking and writing abilities. This gives teachers one of the instruction policy and the policy in evaluating students. This also reduces the teacher's burden of evaluation.

4. Conclusion

Group activities in speech classes are effective. Cooperative activities make students have natural opportunities to think critically, to create positive thinking and to compare their own thinking with others' thinking in the group sessions. Practicing in a group enables the students to get accustomed to speaking with less tension and with self-confidence. The roles of a teacher are to give appropriate directions to students, to encourage them to perform speeches, to give some definite advice, and to motivate them to make another speech performance.

This paper discusses that group activities foster students' self-editing ability in correcting grammar mistakes with less stress than by teacher's editing. But further researches are necessary to make clear the effectiveness in detail. Introducing

TOEIC-SW test in evaluation is also referred to. To follow up the effectiveness of the test for instructing speech class, it is necessary to have more data and time.

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