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JFL and EFL Videoing Student Conversations

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This research suggests that teachers teach too much, inhibiting students' participation in learning. The procedures outline one way students can participate more in learning.

本稿は、教師の教え過ぎが学生の学習参加を妨げていることを指摘する。さらに、学生が学習に積極的に参加する一つの方法を提案する。

Multiple Extended Discourse Opportunities

Colleagues and I have developed videoing procedures (Murphey, 2001; Murphey & Kenny, 1998; Murphey & Woo, 1998) that allow students to see themselves performing and to have multiple extended discourse opportunities (MEDOs). In each class, students have six to ten conversations with different partners on the same topic, taking turns being videoed for one of these conversations. Each student brings their own VHS cassette and is randomly matched with a partner to be videoed with a camera that is attached to two VHS recorders. Immediately after their turn being recorded, students get their cassettes back and view them for homework, doing a variety of tasks. Conversations are semi-spontaneous in that students can prepare for the topics beforehand but do not know how their partner will react or the questions they will ask. The MEDOs push students to learn through many repetitions in comprehensible interactions with near-peer role models (Murphey & Arao, 2001) and to construct themselves as competent speakers of English as a second language (Cook, 1999).

For two years at a Taiwanese university, I videoed my students with the above procedure. Students compiled 10 to 12 five-minute conversations on their own videotapes each semester and wrote reflective papers comparing first and later conversations. Because the students were double majors in English and Japanese, one week after mid-term each fall semester in 2001 and 2002, I invited them to have Japanese conversations rather than English, and to experiment with the potential crossover of communication strategies that they were learning in their English courses (shadowing, summarizing, buying time, rejoinders). These strategies were not being taught in their Japanese courses.

Findings

The rest of this paper highlights the findings of these one-time recordings in Japanese with similar realizations emerging each year. The student feedback showed that most students: 1) had been equally deprived of personal performance opportunities in previous English and Japanese courses, 2) were amazed that they could actually speak so much Japanese, 3) had their self confidence boosted, 4) found they could use English as a resource for their Japanese learning and enjoy multi-competence (Cook, 1999). Below, the mostly third-year student quotes seek to show these ideas more clearly.

Lack of performance opportunities

Students often commented in their action logs (Murphey, 1993) that they had not had classes before in which they were allowed to talk so much. The same realization dawned on them after the Japanese recordings. Similar comments as the ones below were written by about 75% of the students:

In Japanese class we just answer teachers' questions in Japanese, yet in private we speak Chinese. Even if there is a short conversation, it doesn't last more than two minutes. So the experience today is really fresh to me.

It's the first time that I talked to my classmates in Japanese for almost an hour. We have not had the opportunity to practice even in Japanese class. I think we really need to be pushed to speak a lot!

Increasing self confidence and awareness

Many students expressed their amazement at actually being able to do something that they had thought was beyond them—carry on a five-minute conversation in Japanese. They became excited about learning and their confidence grew.

Well this is fascinating! I can speak Japanese more than I think I can. After two hours of speaking Japanese, I think Japanese is more friendly to me. We never have the chance to do 'free conversation' in Japanese. This is a treasurable experience. I can't remember the excitement of first speaking English. But I will always remember my excitement of Japanese because we videoed it!

Though we may think that we are not good at Japanese, after this class we found that actually we can do a good job!

Watching the video was crucial for several of them, for although they had interacted for over an hour in Japanese, their self-appraisal did not change immediately.

To my surprise, after I watched the video I realized that I've talked so much in Japanese (I thought I just talked a little)! It's so interesting to see myself speaking Japanese. Kind of funny. It makes me laugh while watching it. For me, it's very amazing that I can really use Japanese to talk with people. It's really interesting and I'm glad I can have such an opportunity.

Many students began speaking differently about Japanese and expressed an ownership of their ability, explicitly stated in the quote below:

I've never used Japanese to talk for such a long time. . . This time I felt that I turned the language into mine, which means that I really used it, not only learned it!

Multicompetence and the L2 User

Cook (1999) argues that the L1 one should not be banned from the classroom, and that we need to see L2 users as “successful multicompetent speakers, not failed native speakers” (p.204). Students in these classes were told they could use their other languages when they wanted or needed to.

Today, I had a bilingual class, Japanese and English. I never thought I would have this kind of class before! It is so interesting. I love it!

There are three languages running in my head at the same time!

I found that most of us are poor in Japanese. But I can mix the languages together and still represent what I mean.

Since we all know making mistakes is OK and could really help a lot in learning language, I found it became a great relief to use English [when conversing in Japanese]. That has never happened before and it also made me think my English is not that bad in a way. It really intoxicated me a lot. I also believe after some struggles of speaking Japanese, I could find my own way and enjoy it.

Conclusion

Much of my belief in the videoing procedures lies in Hatch's suggestion, via Long, that “rather than grammatical knowledge developing in order to be put to use in conversations at some later date, ‘language learning evolves out of learning how to carry on conversations’ (Hatch, 1978, p. 404),” (cited in Long, 1996, p. 445). The videoing procedure above has students “learning to carry on conversations.” In Bateson's (1994) words, “participation precedes learning” (p. 41). In other words, we need to begin participating in the activity that we want to learn to do in order to learn to do it efficiently. Much of education may be seen as inefficient in that it only talks *about* language, science, and mathematics, without having students actively become speakers, scientists, and mathematicians in at least small ways. This research suggests that students are often held on the peripheral of learning too long by teachers teaching too much and not allowing students to participate in learning more fully (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Multiple extended discourse opportunities invite students to participate more fully in their language learning, with their performances as central to the course. Creating suitable environments conducive to intense, multiple, and safe participation in foreign language interaction would seem to be one of the main jobs of language teachers.

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