Using Nameplates as a Multifunctional Classroom Management Tool

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Time management and increasing personal rapport with students may seem at odds with each other in Japanese university classrooms where time is limited and the number of students great. However, research shows that student motivation, productivity and learning are greatly enhanced when teachers know students' names and personal information about the students to include in lesson planning and discussion. When classes meet only once a week, how can busy teachers learn about their students, keep track of attendance, receive feedback, manage paperwork and assignments, and increase each student's accountability most effectively? In this paper we discuss and explain how detailed and task-specific nameplates enhance student motivation and accountability. In addition, we demonstrate ways to make the nameplates easier to integrate into class and to use for keeping class records. While this paper is primarily aimed at university instructors, most of the concepts and ideas can be incorporated in other contexts.

日本の大学では時間が短く、学生数が多いため、時間を効率的に使うことと学生とのコンタクトを高めることは一見両立しないかのようである。しかし、研究によれば、教員が学生の名前を知っており個人的な情報を持っており、それらを授業の準備と討論に組み入れれば、学生のやる気、生産性そして学習は飛躍的に高まるとされている。週1回の授業の場合、忙しい教員はどのようにして学生のことを知り、出席を管理し、必要な時にフィードバックを得、ペーパーや課題をこなし、個々の学生の責任を向上させることができるであろうか。我々は、詳細な、特定の課題用のネームプレートが学生のやる気と責任感を高めることができるかについて発表し、議論をしたい。また、ネームプレートを授業と授業の記録に組み入れるコツや発想も提示したい。この論文は基本的に大学の教員を対象としているが、概念や発想は他の状況にも応用可能である。

Introduction

Effective time management and increased personal rapport with students may seem to be at odds with each other in Japanese university classrooms where time is limited and the number of students great. However, time and again research shows that student motivation, productivity, and learning are greatly enhanced when teachers know the students' names and personal information about the students to include in lesson planning and discussion (for example, Guskey and Easton 1982). When classes meet only once a week, how can busy teachers learn about their students, keep track of attendance, receive timely feedback, manage paperwork and assignments, and increase student accountability most effectively? Through the use of multifunctional nameplates, you can enhance student motivation and accountability, while taking care of all record keeping at the same time and in the same place.

What do the nameplates look like? While each teacher tailors the nameplate to his or her own teaching context and style, the basic nameplate is a double-sided A-4 piece of paper (see Appendices 1 and 5), folded in such a way as to form a freestanding nameplate (see Appendix 2). The front should show the student's picture and name, written clearly and in big letters, so that the teacher and classmates can see the student's name from across the room. The other side or inside of the card contains class and student information, for example, course name, class day/time, name in *kanji* and *romaji*, address, e-mail, ID number, etc., in addition to space for homework assignments, comments, and grades (see Appendix 3). With this basic layout, there are many things that the nameplates can do for you.

Assisting the teacher in learning students' names and becoming familiar with their personalities.

With classes that meet only once or twice a week, having a picture of each student is critical to learning their names. Next to the picture, the students should clearly write their names. Depending on whether they write their first or last names, or nicknames, already tells you a lot about each student. From the first class, you can start associating faces with names. Students can also decorate and personalize their nameplates, giving you further insight into their personalities (see Appendix 4). Allowing students to choose what name they would like to be called in class immediately sets a friendly and caring tone. In addition, you and your students will all know each student by the same name. Constant reinforcement leads to knowing the students' names within two or three weeks, even with large classes. Knowing the students by name leads to a more personal and friendly environment for both you and the students, which research shows to be beneficial for language learning (Krashen 1985). Plus, you can impress students and other teachers on campus when you greet students by name!

You can also leave spaces in the area for attendance for private communication between you and the student. These small feedback sections give the student a safe place to tell you something without taking a lot of time after class or not bothering to tell you because they are shy or insecure. Informal feedback about class will range from telling you to please speak more slowly, to letting you know that the class was fun or interesting or difficult, or perhaps that they learned something new or especially useful. You will be told about upcoming holiday plans, birthdays or an occasional broken heart. Some students draw pictures about their mood that day or their hobbies or

interests, so the small feedback space is an additional way to tap into individual personalities and personalize interaction (see Appendix 6). Thus, the nameplate is giving you a lot of timely and important information in a small amount of space and time.

Simplifying attendance and grading/personalizing attendance and classroom interaction

With the nameplate system, you will no longer spend time matching a student's nickname, or given name with the name on the roll-sheet. You will have all the information in both *kanji* and *romaji*, complete with student ID numbers. By distributing the nameplates while greeting students as they come in, or after you arrive, you will better utilize class time by starting class off with one-on-one, authentic interaction, instead of calling out each name from a list, as is done in traditional roll taking.

In addition, students keep their own attendance record by marking the nameplates themselves, relieving you of this duty, and are constantly reminded by the blank spots next to homework assignments about what has not been done, and what needs to be done. Late and absent students will have small notations on the nameplates written in by you. The students then know that you have noticed their tardiness or absence. The responsibility instantly switches to the student to explain (in their nameplate, on an excuse slip, etc.) the situation, or at least make sure that they don't fail the class by missing or being late for too many classes. You do not have to remind them that they are in jeopardy of failing or having their grade reduced due to poor attendance. The information stares them in the face every week. In addition, if there is a need to write a warning note to a student, by writing it in their nameplate, you have a permanent record of the warning. The nameplates also aid in grading and record keeping. While you

are correcting homework, you are looking at the student's picture, attendance record, record of his or her homework assignments, and other important information that helps you evaluate the student better. Also, having a detailed and personalized permanent record makes it easy to remember past students and easy to justify grades that may be protested later. Finally, the nameplates, with notes and feedback from you, make it difficult for students to be confused or surprised by their final grades.

In addition, nameplates aid in keeping track of class assignments for the teacher if you make a mock one for each class where you, too, write what was covered in class and assigned for homework. Again, record keeping is kept simple and accessible via the nameplate. If students have questions, there is a place and time to communicate with you directly every week through the feedback space. Students can also see what they have studied all year at a glance. The nameplate also shows their progress and achievement on assignments completed and graded. Students sometimes show each other the inside of their nameplates. If they find the other student is doing better, it often motivates them to work harder. Grades are never a mystery to a student with a nameplate. Both you and your students know the situation every week.

Enhancing and promoting motivation

Knowing the students' names and being able to greet them every week in class with a personal comment like "How was your ski trip?" (because he or she wrote about this the previous class in the feedback area) motivates students to speak with you in English during this authentic moment (Finocchiaro 1981). Students also feel that they have built up a more personal relationship with you through the small notes in the feedback space. Also, some

students spell out words or draw puzzle-like designs in their attendance blocks. Thus, if they were to be absent, the word or design could not be completed. In wanting to complete these creations, motivation for attendance is increased. The nameplates also make use of negative motivation. Late students cannot slink into class, as they must get their nameplate directly from you to register their attendance.

Helpful hints

Some things that we have found helpful in implementing and using this system are as follows. Differentiating the cards for each class at a glance is useful. This can be achieved by using color-coded paper, rubber bands, or Velcro belts (available at 100-yen shops) for grouping nameplates together. For durability, it is helpful to use slightly thicker paper (yet still thin enough to go through the copy machine). For writing names on the cards, provide pens for the students that don't seep through the paper. One brand that works well is "Prockey."

Drawbacks/conclusion

There are a few negative aspects to using the nameplate system. The cards are heavier and bulkier than a traditional roll book and take a little extra time to deal with. Also, you must keep up with updating them every week. However, the positive results of increased rapport with students, timely and personal feedback between student and teacher, promotion of student responsibility, and the maximization of available class time make this nameplate system a useful multifunctional classroom management tool.
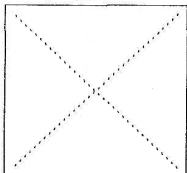
References

Finocchiaro, M. (1981). Motivation: its crucial role in language learning. In R. Ellis (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Guskey, T. & Easton, J. (1982). *The characteristics of very effective teachers in urban community colleges*. (Paper presented at the annual Meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association, West Palm Beach, Fl, 1982).

Krashen, S. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis*. New York: Longman

Appendix 1. Blank nameplate I (actual size: A-4 / fold lines: - - -)
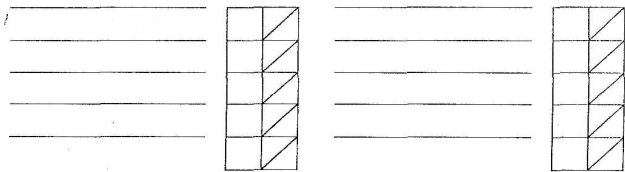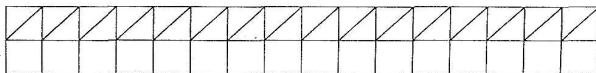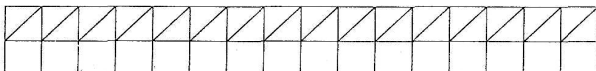

Write your family name on this line in BLOCK LETTERS.

your photo here

	given name		family name	
your name in ローマ字				
your name in 漢字	family name		given name	
student number			class day	
class name			class time	

☐ freshman   ☐ junior
☐ sophomore   ☐ senior

Print classroom English, more homework slots, comment sections, etc, on reverse side.

Appendix 2. Photos of nameplate I (permission to reproduce obtained)

Appendix 3. Attendance/homework record section of nameplate I

Appendix 4. Examples of decorated/personalized nameplates

Appendix 5. Blank nameplate II

Spaces can be used for lesson topics, teacher/student comments, messages, etc.

Appendix 6. Photos of examples of attendance/ comment sections of nameplate II