

Goal-Setting to Raise Speaking Self-Confidence

Stephen A. Templin

Kakio High School, Kanagawa Prefecture

This research study hypothesized that goal-setting exercises raise self-confidence in English speaking for adult Japanese learners. In this study, 21 freshman women from a university in Tokyo rated their English speaking on a scale of 1-10. The subjects were divided into three classes, with all classes receiving the same instruction except that two classes were given 5- to 15-minutes of goal-setting exercises. After two weeks, all subjects re-rated their English speaking. Only one of the experimental groups showed a statistically significant increase in their self-confidence rating, which failed to support the hypothesis. Experimental design recommendations are discussed.

この研究は、目標設定の練習が、日本人成人英語学習者に、話すことへの自信を育てるのではないかと仮説をもって行われた。東京にある大学の1年生女子、21人が自分の英語を話す能力を1から10のスケールで評価した。被験者は3つのクラスに分けられ、2つのクラスで5分から15分間、目標設定の練習が行われた他は、3つのクラスで同じ内容の授業が行われた。2週間後に、すべての被験者が、ふたたび自分の英語を話す能力を評価した。しかし、実験群では、一人の被験者しか、自信の評価に有意な変化を見せず、仮説は立証できなかった。本論では、実験計画の変更が検討される。

In Japan, students study English for six years or more, yet, they are hesitant to speak it. When students have the opportunity to speak English, they often become mute. Aiga (1990) notes that many Japanese students lack confidence in their English speaking abilities. Because their English self-confidence is low, they do not attempt to speak.

There are many reasons why Japanese students lack speaking confidence. Japan's English classrooms have focused on written grammar, direct translation, and rote memorization rather than oral communicative competence. Another cause might be traced to the Japanese classroom, where individual expression is rarely encouraged. Viswat and Jackson (1993) suggest that "[Japanese] students come to believe that they cannot learn on their own. They lack affective strategies such as being able to praise themselves for doing something well or having confidence in themselves" (p.

17). When they gave students the opportunity to set goals, however, students were excited to be involved in the goal-making process.

Empowering students to learn for themselves is an important part of language learning. Wenden (1991) advocates helping students be confident and independent learners outside the classroom. Although empowerment is associated with learner/learning strategies (Chamot & Rubin, 1994) or learner training (Rees-Miller, 1993), the focus of this research is to raise Japanese students' self-confidence in speaking English by helping them to set goals. It was hypothesized: teaching goal-setting exercises in the ESL classroom will increase Japanese university students' ratings of self-confidence in speaking English.

The Study

Subjects: Twenty-one freshmen from a women's junior college in Tokyo attending a university in Hawaii to study English for two weeks as part of a yearly intensive ESL program were selected for this study. Subjects were divided into three classes at random: A, B, and C.

Instrument: All 21 subjects rated their English speaking fluency on a scale of 1-10, 10 being the highest, twice during the study, prior to instruction and at the end of goal-setting exercises on the last day of instruction. The self-rating of their English speaking level was used as the measure for pre- and post-instruction self-confidence. After each rating, they were asked to write why they rated themselves as they did.

Procedures: Three instructors each taught classes A, B, and C for one hour each day. Instructor 2 used the same material for teaching all classes, except that classes B and C received 5-15 minutes of goal-setting instruction for seven days. Class A, the control group, did not receive any goal-setting instruction and was given more time with other material instead.

On day one of goal-setting, the third day of instruction, Instructor 2 began the goal-setting exercises. Each student was asked to write a goal of something they would like to say to any or all of instructors—these could be greetings, questions about homework, or anything they chose. Instructor 2 helped the students translate their sentences into English, and provided assistance with any other questions or problems. Each student was challenged to say these prepared utterances to the instructors they chose before the next class. The students knew that Instructor 2 would follow up on how well they met their goals the next day.

On day two of goal-setting, Instructor 2 checked on how the students did with their goals. Most of them had not been successful. Instructor 2

then helped them to resolve their concerns about the goals. Some needed to simplify their goals—speak to one teacher rather than all three, and/or pick simpler utterances. Others needed to modify their goals to select things that they felt more comfortable in saying, for example, “I like your dress,” instead of “How old are you?” One student was extremely timid and felt that speaking to someone in English would be too difficult. Instructor 2 asked her if she could say “good-bye” to Instructor 2 at the end of class, and she said she could. Others just needed confidence in following through on their goals; they felt that their goals were appropriate, but they had not acted on them. Again, the students were told that Instructor 2 would check their progress the following day.

This process continued throughout the nine days of instruction, and by the last day every student had accomplished at least two-thirds of their goals. Students from classes B and C reported that they spoke to their instructors, other students on the campus, and others off-campus, though the goal-setting only focused on speaking to instructors. Some reported making friends with university students who spoke no Japanese.

Results

Table 1 shows the ratings each student marked on the initial and exit questionnaires; the differences are calculated to the right. The differences between the initial and exit ratings of self-confidence for classes A, C, and B, in ascending order, are 6, 13, and 15 respectively.

These differences were analyzed in a one-way ANOVA to calculate the variation between and within the three classes (Table 2). The variables were then used in a Scheff Multiple Comparisons (Independent Values)

Table 1: Individual and Class Ratings and Differences (1-10 scale)

Class A			Class B			Class C					
Initial	Exit	Difference	Initial	Exit	Difference	Initial	Exit	Difference			
2	3	1	2	4	2	3	5	2			
2	4	2	2	5	3	1	3	2			
2	2	0	1	3	2	1	3	2			
2	4	2	1	4	3	1	3	2			
3	4	1	2	4	2	1	3	2			
1	2	1	2	5	3	1	3	2			
5	3	-2				4	5	1			
1	2	1									
<hr/>			<hr/>			<hr/>					
Total	18	24	6	Total	10	25	15	Total	12	25	13

Table 2: Analysis of Variance Between Classes

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F	P
Between Classes	11.095238	2	5.547619	7.21	.0050
Within Classes	13.857143	18	.769841		
Total	24.952381	20	1.247619		

Significance at the <.01 level

Mean = 1.6190

Table 3: Comparison of Classes and Report of Significance

	N	Mean	Classes Compared	ANOVA	Significance at <.01 level
Class B	6	2.5000	B and A	6.820	Significant
Class C	7	1.8571	B and C	.867	Not Significant
Class A	8	.7500	C and A	2.972	Not Significant

Total 21

F value for <.01 level of significance = 6.013

test to see if the differences were statistically significant (Table 3). Since the required F value for <.01 level of significance is 6.013, this comparison shows that the difference between Classes A and B is significant at the <.01 level, but the difference between Classes A and C is not.

In the space provided for comments on the survey, those in classes B and C frequently reported that they had actively seized opportunities to speak English, whereas many students in Class A reported missed opportunities to speak English. Students in classes B and C exhibited a greater decrease in their fears and shyness towards speaking English.

Discussion

The hypothesis that goal-setting instruction in the ESL classroom would lead to a rise in Japanese students' self-confidence in speaking English was not supported statistically. Although statistical significance was not achieved, students comments appeared to support the hypothesis. One student in Class A reported: "I've had the opportunity to speak, but I don't know what to say. Even when I know what to say, I don't know how to say it, so I feel lost." Other comments from students in Class A reflected this lack of confidence.

In contrast, students in the goal-setting classes exhibited more confidence, often only after the first week. One student said, "More than

before, I greet my teachers and initiate conversation with them. I have begun to greet people I meet on the street and at the university. In spite of being nervous in the beginning, after about one week I surprised myself with how much confidence I have." Goal-setting appeared to have helped Classes B and C's confidence while the lack of it seemed to inhibit Class A.

Limitations and Recommendations

There are several limitations in this study. One weakness is the number of subjects and length of time devoted to the research—although it is remarkable that Class B showed statistically significant improvement in spite of this. Follow-up studies should both determine if more time for goal-setting instruction, including more time between pre- and post-ratings, helps improve self-confidence, and whether increased self-confidence actually leads to improvement in specific areas.

Stephen A. Templin, B.A. TESOL, Brigham Young University Hawaii, is currently teaching at Kakio High School while working for the Kanagawa Prefectural Board of Education.

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Perspectives

Introductory Lessons: Setting the Stage for Communicative Language Teaching in Japanese College English Classes

Roger Davies

Ehime University

This article first discusses the styles of communication common to Japanese and English speakers and some of the difficulties the differing styles may cause. It then suggests ways to provide a safe and protected environment for Japanese learners that allows them to participate fully and naturally in a second language. Activities for establishing a three-part conversation framework comfortable to Japanese college students are given.

この記事は、まず、日本語話者と英語話者に共通したコミュニケーションのスタイルと、異なったスタイルが引き起こすかもしれない困難について論ずる。そして、日本人学習者に、第二言語を使って、十分に、また自然に参加できる、安全で保護された環境を提供する方法を提案する。日本人大学生が抵抗なく参加できる三人の会話の枠組みを作る学習活動が紹介される。

Conversation styles are far from universal—they vary in important ways from culture to culture. Unconscious cultural values condition and shape the communication patterns employed by different peoples. In Japan, for example, “the prevailing social virtues [of] restraint, patience, and modesty [are] in clear contrast to the Western values of self-confidence, decisiveness, and individuality” (Kennedy & Yaginuma, 1991, p. 30). These opposing values give rise to significant contrasts in conversation style.

The conversation pattern typical to English is often compared to a game of ping-pong. The ball is hit back and forth across a table from person to person. If one partner doesn't return the ball (i.e., doesn't fully participate or ask enough questions), the conversation stops. Conversely, if the other partner repeatedly “smashes” the ball (i.e., doesn't give the other person the chance to adequately respond), he or she is