Learnability and Performance: Concepts for Rapid and Effective Language Teaching and Learning

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Video

• How long have these students been learning Chinese?
  (contact hours @ 1 x 1.5 hour class per week)
Background

- Wondering ... how to get Japanese learners (in Taiwan, 1998) to enjoy my class
- Started with - Mandarin, a large language (Tsukuba Japan 2000-4, Imperial College and high schools UK, Ochanomizu University, 2009-)
- Applied to - Hokkien, a less commonly taught language (Tokyo 2002-4, SOAS 2005-7)
- Applied to - Karaim, an endangered language (Lithuania 2005, 2007)
- Now - Mandarin, MA pedagogy course
A performance approach

- Two steps of learning
  - Effective and learnable, practical materials
    - ‘Spiral of learning’
      - The classroom becomes a kind of stage
  - Drama creation and performance: to further extend learning outcomes.
Spiral of learning

- Typical teaching - ‘bank savings’
- Performance Approach - ‘spiral’
PA design

• Course design
  – hours, classes, teachers
  – learners’ motivations, learning styles, goals

• Teaching materials design
  – textbook, other materials (worksheets, songs, games etc)

• Activity design
  – listening, Q & A, conversation, find out ...
  – drama

• Evaluation and feedback design
  – evaluation / assessment; continuous and varied
  – drama (self/group/teacher feedback)
  – create resources for future learners
Textbook

- Learnable
- Sequence
  - Each lesson builds on next
- Controlled vocabulary and structures
- Topics and dialogues relevant and useful
- Predictable learning
- Give mileposts and confidence to learners
Drama in the classroom

• Group based activity – real interactions: “a genuine purpose for communication … a reason to use language” – Miccoli 2003
• Learning “through the eyes of the characters”, not as interchangeable learners – Cunico 2005
• Include culture, language functions e.g. emotion
• Groups create their own characters and story - more connection to identity and social setting; they remember the story, not the lines
• Classroom becomes a ‘theatre’ setting where interactions are more authentic
Videos : SOAS Hokkien

- Video1: SOAS (2007), during a half-year Hokkien MA course. This video was part of a funded project to document language learning using drama.
- Video2: Tsukuba University (2004)
- Video3: Karaim Summer Schools (2005,2007)
The value of drama

- Expand learning outcomes
- Resource creation for LCTL and ELs
- What learners do is valued
- Holistic learning and assessment
- Connect with culture, daily life, emotions
- Yet drama is neglected and “largely absent” from textbooks and curricula - Cunico 2005
Drama steps

• Establish parameters
• Set up story topics
• Formulate and present story
• Script writing, presentation, translation, correction
  example
• Record voices
• Prepare for performance
• Performance; video
• Distribute useful resource
Learning across cultures

- Language learning is exploring the relationship between the learners' own culture and the target culture.
- Different combinations:
  - Chinese FL2 - many learners have high affective motivations but equally high cultural distance.
  - Japanese learners – may assume closer cultural links.
  - Karaim - inside the culture, but little language.
Cultural responses to drama

• Learners may bring their own cultural assumptions and conventions to drama activities
  – Japanese use a Kabuki staging
  – Karaim - used to stage performance (e.g. dancing) and more creative/fantasy stories
  – English - concerned about privacy on video
  – Saami (Norway) - “performance” is a religious taboo!
Conclusions – PA + Drama-based learning

• Complex, valuable and effective (it is not *traditional method + skits*)
• Holistic (not separating listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, writing, translation, cultural aspects)
• Exploring other cultures – of target language, and of multicultural classroom
• Effective for rapid, predictable, measurable, accountable, usable learning of real language
• PA can brings the effective outcomes.
References


Fang, Meili."Effective and Scientific Language Teaching Methodology: A Performance Approach". Invited Speaker at Language and foreign Language Education Research Symposium, FuJen University, Taipei, 20 Dec 2010


Thank you!