Teaching oral presentation using visual models:

Effects of comparing good examples and bad examples

Ikumi OZAWA

International Christian University (ICU) offers Japanese language courses to not only foreign students but also returnee students who have studied overseas before entering ICU. The Japanese language course for returnee students is called Special Japanese (SJ), which aims to develop proficiency in Japanese so that the students can study at university without any language problems. Recently ICU has accepted about 80 returnee students a year, and about 90% of them are placed into one of three SJ courses according to the result of a placement test, which students are required to take upon entering ICU.

SJ's class reports and SJ students' needs analyses show that returnee students who do not seem to have any problems in listening and speaking in Japanese are eager to improve their speaking ability oral presentation skills. During the past 5 years, the teachers of SJ have found that a systematic curriculum and teaching materials are needed for their students. In addition, they have found out that presenting visual models is highly effective when introduced by comparing good examples and bad examples.

This paper reports the effects of these visual models of presentation in one of the SJ courses, namely SJ program A. SJA is the course for those who have the lowest scores in the placement test. SJA consists of 3 class hours (of 70 minute) per a week, and lasts 1 year (approximately 30 weeks). Most students of SJA are educated overseas or in International schools in Japan, from the elementary school until the graduation of high school. They can speak Japanese fluently as native speakers of Japanese in daily conversation, however, they are weak especially in kanji -- for example most of them need to review from Kyoiku kanji, kanji of elementary school level. They are from various places in the world, such as the United States, Europe, and Asia.

In SJA, oral presentation skills are taught in the following way:

1) Instructor gives a lecture about good presentation and resume, and shows several examples of resumes by OHP.

2) Students read the material, discuses on the contents, and are given a writing

assignment, which is to write a resume of the material read during the class.

3) Students compare their assignments and think which resume is better than the other point by point, watch a video which shows good and bad examples of presentation performed by their instructors, and discuss how those performances can be improved.

4) Students give oral presentations on other reading materials.

To practice oral presentations in the way described above brought a critical difference in students' understanding of "good oral presentation and good resume" as well as their performances. Before that, students' performances were not bad but their understanding of good presentation and resumes were quite vague. For example, they made comments on the other students' presentation and resumes as "good", "interesting", or "good job" but there were not any detailed comments. However, after seeing visual models in class, students' comments have changed: they became much more concrete, and referred to the exact points of improvements. For example: "There are too many letters, which makes this resume hard to read", "Simple headings give this resume modulation effectively", "Writing points in the table is effective", "Indentation and numbers make this resume easy to understand even at a glance", "Coloring the graphs by different colors helps us to understand the idea immediately", "good eye contact", "I wish the presenter could tell us when to take a look at the resume", etc.

In short, this paper reports that visual models help students grasp the concrete images of good presentations and resumes in contexts, and that comparisons of good examples and bad examples help the students understand the points more clearly, and gives them the basis to criticize other performances and to learn from them. Finally, this paper points out that showing visual models is also effective to teach oral presentation to foreign students.

(International Christian University)