

# **A Report on Pedagogy for Japanese Discourse Skills:**

## **Using Conversation Analysis Activities and Drama Project**

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Kato[Nakai] (1999), Nakai (2002, 2003a) examined how native and non-native participants used linguistic devices in topic openings and closings in Japanese conversations, and insisted the needs to practice using these linguistic devices in class activities in order to promote learner discourse ability. Drama project is one way to practice these discourse skills because students can repeat the same lines to practice them and easily correct errors.

Jorden and Walton (1987), Jorden (1987) proposed a concept of “fact-act dichotomy” in foreign language classes. In FACT classes, students handle “thorough, detailed, objective linguistic and cultural analysis” (Jorden and Walton 1987:121). On the other hand, in ACT classes, students “drill and practice in sufficient amounts” in order to internalize what they learned in FACT classes (Jorden and Walton 1987:121).

In this study, I examine the effectiveness of the application of “fact-act dichotomy” in an intensive Japanese program for the students in advanced level. The classes consisted of three parts: 1) conversation analysis activities (FACT), 2) drama project (ACT), and 3) reflection. The goal of this course was to promote the students’ discourse abilities.

First, in the conversation analysis activities, the students watched videotaped conversations between Japanese native speakers and observed how the participants showed their involvement in conversation verbally and nonverbally by using *aizuchi* ‘back-channel utterances’, nodding, laughter, repetition, assessments, questions, emphasis, eye contact, and postures. Then, the students chose their research themes (e.g., *aizuchi* and non-verbal behaviors) and read the Japanese articles related to their themes in class. After transcribing Japanese conversations in talk show programs on TV, the students analyzed how *aizuchi* and nonverbal behavior were used in conversation and wrote a report on it.

Next, in the drama project, the students wrote a scenario of the drama and practiced acting. They discussed how effectively they could show their involvement in conversation using the verbal and nonverbal devices they analyzed in the previous conversation analysis activities. The teacher also gave the students repetitive feedbacks

on their acting according to the following syllabus.

A) Verbal devices

1. vocabulary, grammar and expressions
2. *aizuchi* 'back-channel utterances' and assessments
3. co-construction
4. interruption

B) Nonverbal devices

1. gestures: iconic, metaphoric, deictic, beat (McNeill 1992, Szatrowski 2002b)
2. eye contact
3. nodding
4. facial expression
5. posture

C) Prosodic devices

1. pronunciation and intonation
2. pause
3. rhythm and speed

D) Other discourse-expressive devices

1. word emphasis
2. visual aids
3. repetition
4. frame shift
5. drama tactics
6. defining abstract concepts

Finally, students acted out the drama in front of the audience and had discussions with them after the show. The audience also wrote comments on the drama in the sheet. In the final class, the students read the comments from the audience and watched a videotape of their acting. Then, they analyzed their acting and progress in Japanese discourse skills and reported on them in writing.

As I mentioned above, in the drama project, the students can repeatedly practice the verbal and nonverbal devices that they have learned in the conversation analysis activities. This process could enable the students to promote their discourse abilities to show their involvement in conversation more effectively and to make their explanation clearer. Students also could have higher motivation to promote their discourse skills because they have a clear goal to show their fluent and natural performance to the audience.

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