

Study on the Self-Development of Teachers through Course Evaluations

Japanese Conversation Courses for Foreign Students
Composed of Classes at Different Levels

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Key words: Teachers' self-development, PAC analysis, peer evaluation, mutual mentoring, course evaluation

In this paper, we present a report on the self-analyses done by teachers who collaboratively took charge of one Japanese conversation course, and conducted student evaluations through questionnaires regarding their classes, as well as conducted peer evaluations by fellow teachers of the course. Although it had already been the custom for us to design the upcoming classes based on an analysis, or self-examination, of such student evaluations, and the learners' achievement, we were able to obtain new recognition and a deeper self-observation by adding the evaluations from co-workers. By adding the viewpoints of these other teachers, it brought to light areas that might have naturally been disregarded or gone unnoticed, and, as a result, provided new targets for us to work on accordingly. Such peer evaluations can be identified as a major factor to encourage the self-development of teachers. As a prerequisite for the peer evaluation of the questionnaires, the teachers mutually carried out two PAC analyses (Personal Attitude Construct Analysis) by using two kinds of stimulus sentences: *"What do you think is important for teaching communicative oral expression?"* and *"What did you learn from the classes on finishing the term?"* As a result, we found that not only did each teacher recognize her own beliefs, but also that the teachers could share their beliefs and thoughts on the classes. In this way, an assessor of the peer evaluations was able to carry out so-called *meta*-evaluations by

contrasting the opinions of learners as described in the questionnaires, and the underlying intentions of the teachers. Therefore, a receiver of the evaluation could readily accept the outcome as advice since it took her ideas of education into consideration, while the assessor learned a lot from the attitudes of the other teachers toward the classes.

These results are similar to those reported in Kaneda (2006), which discussed the various aspects of teacher fossilization in terms of methodology, and pointed out that collaboration with the others was one of the ways to overcome this problem. As Kaneda (2006) indicated, the partner's manner of evaluation is the key to bringing out the best in the collaboration. Moreover, this peer evaluation reciprocally covers the rolls of what are called in Yokomizo (2006) "mentor" and "mentee," and it can be regarded as one approach to what is known as "mutual mentoring." Such collaborative evaluation based on partner beliefs has already been shown as valuable in Takamiya *et al.* (2006), where it is identified as "collaborative action research (in groups)." However, while this previous research examines the class itself in terms of teaching methods and class management as the focus of the evaluation, this paper should be distinguished from that research as the object of the evaluation focused on the features of the teaching with attention paid to the whole term and to the whole curriculum which made up these classes. In addition, the previous research has been conducted through the long-term participation in the class, while the latter has been undertaken retrospectively after the term ended so that it avoided affecting the actual teaching. In terms of practicality, this research method also proved to be meaningful for the part-time teachers who were under time restrictions in which to engage in the peer evaluations. Furthermore, since the course syllabus contained distinct learning targets in terms of the Japanese language skills to be taught, it served the teachers as an index for adjusting their teaching. In other words, it constantly enabled the teachers to recognize the notion of "verification of the course objectives" and to exercise the "course evaluation" as a result.

The insights of the teachers has been the focus of this paper, but the “course evaluation” by the learner as an essential stakeholder in the course should also be investigated in detail, and a fresh approach that includes the entire program in the evaluation remains a future subject to be investigated.

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