

Effects of Self-Evaluation on Oral Presentations in Reading Classes

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Reference Data:

Hisatsune, A. (2014). Effects of self-evaluation on oral presentations in reading classes. In N. Sonda & A. Krause (Eds.), *JALT2013 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

Making reading classes student-centered and interactive can be challenging. This paper shows a way to integrate regular reading classes with student presentations using a reading circle method and describes how to improve student presentations with video self-evaluations. The reading circle method was revised to include student oral presentations. After students learned how to make presentations during the first half of a semester, their presentations were recorded on video. Each group of students watched and compared the first recordings made at mid-term and the second recordings made at the end of term to see if there were any changes in their performance. Students self-evaluated their presentations using an oral presentation questionnaire. The oral presentation questionnaire is outlined and student perceptions of their presentation efforts are detailed. Student comments about this classroom innovation are included.

リーディングの授業を、学生中心で相互方向の授業にするのは難しい。本論では、リーディングサークルという教育法を使って、リーディングの授業と学生によるグループプレゼンテーションを総合させる方法を紹介する。また、学生がビデオによる自己分析によってどのように自分のプレゼンテーション能力を上げることができるのかについても触れる。リーディングサークルメソッドは、本論ではプレゼンテーションを含むものに改定された。学生が学期の前半で、どのようにプレゼンテーションの準備をし、実行するかを学んだ後、プレゼンテーションをビデオに撮る。学生はそれを観ながら、アンケートを使いながら学期中に2回プレゼンテーションの自己分析をし、プレゼンテーションのできばえに変化があったかをチェックした。本論では、プレゼンテーションをチェックするアンケートと、学生の自己分析結果も紹介する。

As ENGLISH teachers, it is our mission to develop the basic skills and attitudes all students need to become continuing language learners, so that they can function in the global society that we live in today. Reading is a skill that has been emphasized in some of the courses offered at the university where the following study was conducted.

Since the introduction of the Communicative Approach in the 1980s in Japan, there have been numerous teaching methods used when teaching reading. The Communicative Approach is more student-centered than previously used methods such as grammar translation or audio-lingual, but the teacher still does most of the talking and thinking. Unless the students do the thinking themselves, they neither improve nor become autonomous learners.

Some of the Communicative Approach methods that I have used are assigning students to read a text in advance and having them answer comprehension questions, information gap activities using pair- or groupwork, and in-class discussions. These activities succeeded only



when students read or studied the articles in advance. Most of my students did not do this. They did not check vocabulary in advance, so valuable class time was used to teach vocabulary instead of learning more about the content or having discussions on the topics. When given prereading comprehension question worksheets, students copied answers from each other. They completed in-class fill-in-the-gap activities with minimal effort and they did not appear to remember the content or vocabulary after they finished their unit quizzes.

It became apparent that these activities were not producing worthwhile outcomes. I needed to find a method that motivated my students to read before class for a different purpose than to be able to answer questions in class. The responsibility of learning had to shift from the teacher's side to that of the individual student. My students needed reasons to study the texts in depth on their own before class. Then I learned about the reading circle method.

Reading Circles

Reading circles are small groups of students who meet in the classroom to talk about assigned readings (Furr, 2009). Research suggests that reading circles help students prepare for reading classes, and they can also facilitate critical thinking when teaching content (Brown, 2009; Handjeva-Weller & Jensen, 2001). In Furr's model, each member of a small group reads a story from a different perspective and prepares for a small discussion based on the reading. Students have different reasons for reading and provide varying viewpoints on the text. With a predefined task, each student has a clear purpose for reading the story. As a group, students solve problems that they cannot deal with on their own.

I carefully examined the six roles that Furr suggested to see if they matched my students' English level and the material and

class structure we used. The nature and the details of the tasks needed to be simplified, and the amount of reading needed to be adjusted for my L2 English learners.

The biggest change I made was to replace the task of discussion leader with a student oral presentation task. Previous research has indicated the importance of oral presentation skills in various fields. Alshare and Hindi (2004) reported that student presentations in the classroom became an important element in delivering positive learning experiences. Noll and Wilkins (2002) agreed that soft skills such as presentations, managing projects, and developing interpersonal relationships should be integrated into the curriculum. The revised reading circle method presented in this paper includes all of the above-mentioned skills.

Revised Tasks for Student Oral Presentations

Originally known as literature circles in the L1 context in the United States (Daniels, 2002), reading circles have appeared in L2 instruction in the last 10 to 15 years. Furr (2004) adapted the standard model of literature circles for Japanese EFL students. Furr's model and the revised reading circle tasks and definitions are shown in Table 1. I significantly revised tasks 1, 3, and 6 for my students. The length of the reading material varied between one to four paragraphs for each group of students in this study because each text was divided according to the number of groups per class.

Table 1. Original and Revised Reading Circle Tasks and Definitions

Tasks	Furr's Model (2009)	Revised Tasks (2010~)
1	Group Discussion Leader To act as a facilitator in the group and to keep the discussion flowing.	Presenter To collect all the information from the group members and make a presentation using a slideshow.
2	Summarizer To make a summary of <i>the plot</i> .	Summary To make a summary of <i>a few paragraphs</i> .
3	Connector To find connections between the text and the real world.	Visual Aid To find a picture on the Internet relevant to the paragraphs.
4	Word Master To find 5 important words and explain.	Vocabulary To find 5 difficult words in the paragraphs and explain them.
5	Passage Person To find <i>key passages</i> in a <i>story</i> .	Key Sentence To find <i>a key sentence</i> in the <i>paragraphs</i> .
6	Cultural Collector To help others understand the cultural underpinnings and historical backgrounds.	Mini-Quiz To make 5 simple true or false questions about the paragraphs.

The revised roles or tasks therefore included explaining the vocabulary, finding the key sentence, making a visual aid, creating a mini-quiz, making a summary, and then giving a presentation. Each

student first worked on his or her own task until all were ready to work in their respective groups to discuss the meanings of words and sentences and possible ways to explain their section of the reading to the rest of the class. The presenter gathered information from all other group members and put it all into a slideshow to facilitate audience understanding (Baker & Thompson, 2004). The slideshow also became an aid for the presenters to systematically structure the presentation. A sample slideshow made by a group of students is in Appendix A and an excerpt of the paragraphs the students worked from is in Appendix B.

Research Question

The aim of this study was to investigate the use of video as a tool to develop and improve student presentation delivery skills. Video data provide important audio and visual information for students to reflect on and to improve their presentation and communication skills (Guo, 2013). Therefore, the research question for this study was: Can video reviewing of a presentation be used to improve student performance in oral presentations?

Methodology

The participants in this study were 234 Japanese students majoring in engineering at a university in northwestern Japan, who had an average TOEIC score of 250. Each class had from 6 to 19 students. The data were collected from the spring of 2012 to the summer of 2013. Convenience sampling (Dörnyei, 2003) procedures were used.

Background information on the students gathered on the first day of the semester revealed that the students were from 18 to 21 years old, 87% were male, and 98% had studied English for 3 years in high school. Although 81% had never been to an English-speaking country and 23% said they studied English because it

is a compulsory subject for graduation, 49% said they wanted to study English for their future careers and 92% believed it was important or very important to become fluent in English.

A survey (group-administered questionnaire) was chosen as the tool for gathering information. Brown (2001) suggested that the best way to determine opinions regarding any aspect of a language program is to ask students directly in an interview or through a questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted in 2008, the data from which are not included here, employing a questionnaire developed from a *Rubric for Oral Presentation* used by Morales and Rosa (2008). The content of the questionnaire has changed somewhat since the pilot study, and the questionnaire used in this study was developed in 2011. It uses a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from *poor* to *excellent*). This scale is commonly used to investigate how respondents feel about a series of statements (Brown, 2001).

The questionnaire (see Appendix C) consisted of 15 items related to the students' own observations of their performance in three areas: nonverbal communication, verbal communication, and the content of their research. Also included was a comments section to collect student opinions about their own efforts and the efforts of their group in the presentations. Students made 12 presentations throughout the semester. Of these, two presentations were recorded with a digital video camera, one at midterm and one at the end of term. The questionnaire was given to the class before the video recording took place as suggested by Lusher (2004), so that students gained a better understanding of what was expected of them. Pettinger, Miller, and Mott (2004) also recommended clarifying expectations for student presentations to enhance student performance.

A week after student presentations were recorded at midterm, each group was given a copy of the video recording of their presentation. The students were asked to self-evaluate their performance in oral presentation 1 (OP1), using the

questionnaire while watching their video. At the end of term, student presentations were recorded again. Students were instructed to rewatch the video recordings of OP1 right before they watched the video recordings of oral presentation 2 (OP2). The students were again asked to watch the video and evaluate their own performance in OP2 using the questionnaire. Then the results of the two questionnaires were compared.

Results

Figure 1 shows the results of the nonverbal communication section of the oral presentation questionnaire. It indicates the difference in student perceptions between the midterm OP1, and the end-of-term OP2. Overall, students evaluated themselves higher for the final presentations. The average improvement increment for nonverbal communication was 0.92 on a 5-point Likert scale. The most notable changes in student performance were in eye contact (Q5) followed by body language (Q3).

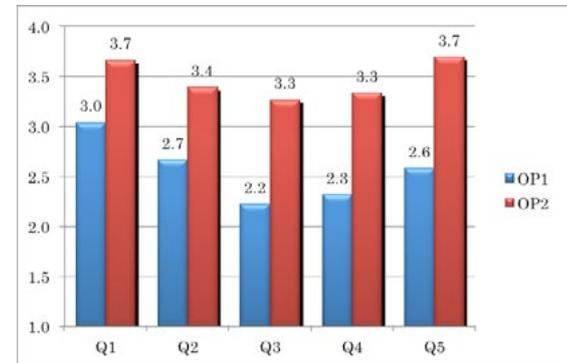


Figure 1. Student self-assessments of nonverbal communication. $N = 234$. Oral presentation 1 at midterm is blue; oral presentation 2 at end of term is red. Q1 = appearance; Q2 = facial expression; Q3 = body language; Q4 = gestures; Q5 = eye contact.

Questions 6 to 10 (see Figure 2) asked students to evaluate their verbal communication skills. The average improvement increment in the verbal communication section was 0.89 on a 5-point Likert scale. The greatest improvement found in the student self-assessments was enthusiasm (Q10). The higher rating for expression of enthusiasm during the presentation might be related to the improvements in volume (Q6), speed (Q7), intonation (Q8), and pronunciation (Q9).

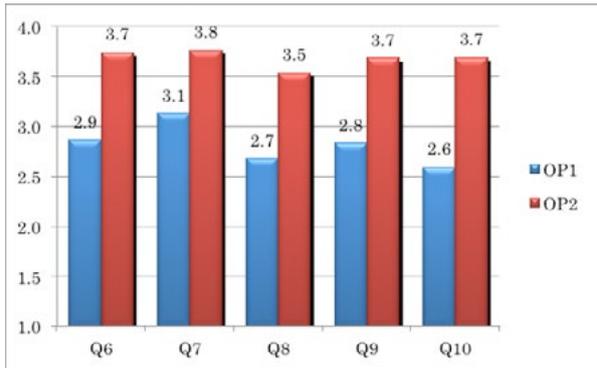


Figure 2. Student self-assessments of verbal communication. $N = 234$. Oral presentation 1 at midterm is blue; oral presentation 2 at end of term is red. Q6 = volume; Q7 = speed; Q8 = intonation; Q9 = pronunciation; Q10 = enthusiasm.

Questions 11 to 15 (see Figure 3) asked students to evaluate the content of their presentation on the basis of vocabulary (Q11), key sentence (Q12), mini-quiz (Q13), visual aids (Q14), and presentation (Q15). In general, students seemed to be more satisfied with the content of their final presentations compared to the midterm presentations. The average improvement increment for content was 0.8 on a 5-point Likert scale. The skills that the students perceived as most improved were the quality of the mini-quiz (Q13) and the overall quality of presentations (Q15).

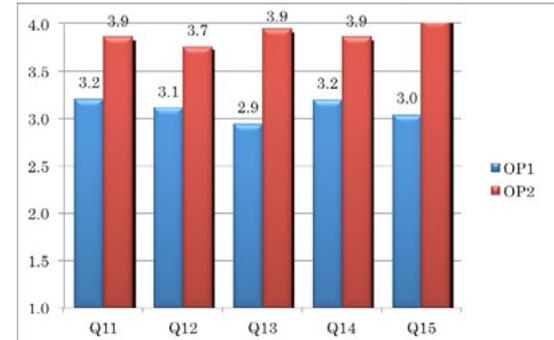


Figure 3. Student self-assessments of content. $N = 234$. Oral presentation 1 at midterm is blue; oral presentation 2 at end of term is red. Q11 = vocabulary; Q12 = key sentence; Q13 = mini-quiz; Q14 = visual aids; Q15 = presentation.

The average ratings of OP1 improved over the average ratings of OP2. The overall average rating of OP1 was 2.8 while that of the OP2 was 3.7 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Average Student Self-Assessments of Presentation Performances, $N = 234$

	Oral presentation 1	Oral presentation 2	Increase
Nonverbal	2.6	3.5	+0.9
Verbal	2.8	3.7	+0.9
Content	3.1	3.9	+0.8

Student Comments

Students had the choice of writing comments either in English or Japanese, and most of them wrote in Japanese. According to these comments, after watching OP1 on video, students

appeared able to identify problem areas such as volume of voice, body language, preparedness, and eye contact.

Excerpts of Student Comments After OP1

Of the 234 participants in this study, 169 (73%) provided written comments after OP1. Most of the comments could be categorized into the five statements below (in decreasing order from most frequent comment to least frequent). Twenty-five students (15%) wrote a variety of comments that did not fit into any of these statements.

- Watching the video, I thought I should speak more loudly, and not look down to see my notes. (22%; 38 students)
- I should use body language more and not feel nervous about it. (21%; 36 students)
- I should keep eye contact so that people will understand the content and use my tone of voice better so that the audience feels my enthusiasm. (18%; 31 students)
- I should be more prepared so that I can answer questions well. (13%; 22 students)
- I should have taken off my hat/mask/scarf. (10%, 17 students)

Excerpts of Student Comments After OP2

Of the 234 participants in this study, 128 (55%) provided written comments after OP2. Most of the comments could be categorized into the five statements below (in decreasing order from most frequent comment to least frequent). Twenty-five students (19%) wrote a variety of comments that did not fit into any of these statements.

- This presentation was easier for the audience to understand compared to the last one. (20%; 26 students)

- I spoke more loudly and I looked at the audience more compared to the last presentation. (19%; 24 students)
- The speed of my speech was better (last time was too fast) and I had better eye contact with the audience. Adequate usage of tone of voice emphasized my enthusiasm. (16%; 21 students)
- I could answer questions better because my understanding of the reading was better. (14%; 18 students)
- My motivation to prepare was higher compared to the last time. (11%; 14 students)

Students seemed to focus on their own performance when evaluating themselves at mid-semester. However, when they self-evaluated their performance at the end of the semester, some of the focus seemed to have changed to see if the *audience* understood the content. Regarding some of the problems both in verbal and nonverbal communication addressed in student feedback at mid-semester, students also seemed to perceive these to have been resolved. Furthermore, students at the end of the semester seemed to make an effort to read the texts in depth in order to answer questions after their presentations. This suggested that some students felt a greater need to prepare for class by the end of semester.

Discussion and Conclusion

The participants in this study were from the university where I work and were not selected according to any other criteria. Respondents were not randomly selected. This means the data collected cannot be generalized beyond this group of participants and are not representative of any other population.

The purpose of this research was to examine the use of video as a tool to develop and improve student presentation skills

(as suggested by Guo, 2013). Both the questionnaire data and student comments indicate that the results were comparable with the Guo study. The video data seem to provide important audio and visual information for students to reflect on and to improve their presentation and communication skills.

From observations of student behavior, it became evident that students knew some of the content of a reading before they came to class. It took some time for students to become accustomed to preparing presentations for each reading class and adjusting to this student-centered learning style. However, even in the early stages it was clear that every student in my class had read at least the part of the text on which they had to make a presentation. In short, the students appeared to be more involved in the reading class because of the demands of preparing for oral presentations.

According to all sections of the questionnaire, students saw improvements in their efforts. In the area of nonverbal communication, they were particularly able to improve eye contact and body language. In verbal communication, the students believed they were able to better express enthusiasm. This possibly resulted through better use of the other components such as volume and intonation. With regards to content, the students believed they were able to produce better quizzes and they were more satisfied with their presentation efforts. The desire for self-improvement was reflected in numerous comments made by students. They also made comments that related to their level of preparedness, such as in their ability to answer questions about the content. These results and comments suggest an increased level of preparation outside of class. In brief, by reviewing their own efforts through videos the students' oral presentation skills improved along with their levels of self-satisfaction.

Even though these students had low levels of English proficiency, they were able to give presentations with the help of slideshows. All students practiced all four skills of reading,

writing, speaking, and listening by making oral presentations and participating in other presentations as the audience. By doing the required tasks, they also learned the important skills of vocabulary building, paraphrasing, summarizing, and researching for extra information.

Sometimes teachers worry about whether or not students are able to study and prepare slideshows well enough to present to their peers, especially when the students are non-English majors with very low-level English skills. Teachers may also be uncertain about the effectiveness of student self-evaluation. However, as this study indicated, when students are given the opportunity to take the initiative in their own learning and accept the responsibility of sharing what they learn with their peers, they make more effort in learning the content of the reading outside class.

Communication skills, including working in teams, giving oral presentations in front of peers, writing, and managing projects can be transferred from the EFL classroom to other courses taught in school. While it is difficult for students to become fluent English speakers in the limited class time in school, it is possible for language teachers to try to equip students with techniques to approach a new reading and to introduce tools for evaluating their own performance. Hopefully such student-centered reading classes with oral presentations can help students transfer skills they gain in the classroom to their future careers.

Bio Data

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Appendix A

A Sample Slideshow Made by a Group of Students



- * garbage → trash
- * obedient → easily taught
- * talent → ability
- * acquire → get
- * partnership → cooperation

* Vocabulary

* Nowadays, the government of the United States has a use for these powerful noses that is beneficial to all who fly in airplanes.



* The dog has an excellent sense of smell. So, the government of the United States guards everyone who fly in airplane by use it.

* Key sentence



* Visual aid

1. Some dogs can learn to follow orders. → T

2. A program in Texas trains dogs to smell bombs on planes and in passengers' luggage. → T

* Mini quiz

3. Dogs were probably first attracted to humans by the smell of our ~~food~~ . → F

garbage

4. Most dogs can be trained to be completely obedient in just about ~~three~~ weeks. → F

two

6

5. Talent is not required to become an obedient guard dog. → T

* Thanks for listening!!

7

Appendix B

An Excerpt From the Paragraphs the Group Studied

The partnership between humans and dogs began perhaps 14,000 years ago. Our first interactions may have occurred when wild dogs were attracted to human garbage, or humans may have acquired the puppies of wild dogs and trained them to be obedient pets. By means of the careful selection of dog parents, humans have been able to create a wonderful variety of dogs with plenty of talents and many different looks. Here are three examples of “a dog’s life” in the human world.

Jacques is one of many beagles that work at airports for the U.S. government in a program known as Beagle Brigade. Beagles were chosen for this work because of their powerful noses. Their job is to smell and alert officers to illegal fruits, vegetables, and other foods in luggage or in mail. They do the job far better than humans could alone.

Some of the beagles who work in the program are donated by private owners, but many are ownerless beagles rescued from animal shelters. Many beagles who were scheduled to be euthanized are now working to keep their country safe from disease.

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Oral Presentations

Rubric for Oral Presentations

Name:

Presentation title:

Regarding your group presentation, please circle your response according to the following scale. 自分のグループのプレゼンテーションについて、次の1 - 5を使って答えてください。

問題番号はaを塗りつぶしてください。

- a. Poor (不十分な) b. Fair (まあまあの) c. Acceptable (妥当な)
 d. Good (良い) e. Excellent (優秀な)

Delivery (話し方)	Rating
Nonverbal Communication	
1. Appearance(外見)	a b c d e
2. Facial expression(表情)	a b c d e
3. Body language(体を動かし感情や思考を伝えようとする)	a b c d e
4. Gestures(手や頭や顔などを使って特定の意味を持たせる動き)	a b c d e
5. Eye contact	a b c d e
Verbal Communication	
6. Volume(声の大きさ)	a b c d e
7. Speed	a b c d e
8. Intonation(声の抑揚)	a b c d e

9. Pronunciation(発音)	a b c d e
10. Enthusiasm(熱意があるか)	a b c d e
Content(内容)	
11. Vocabulary(語彙を伝えられた)	a b c d e
12. Key Sentence(キーセンテンスを伝えられた)	a b c d e
13. Mini-Quiz(ミニクイズのでき)	a b c d e
14. Visual Aid & slideshow(視覚資料とスライドのでき)	a b c d e
15. Presentation(発表のでき)	a b c d e

Comments:(自分自身、または自分のグループのプレゼンテーションについてコメントがあれば書いてください)