

Making Shakespeare Bi-Lingual

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While skits and plays have long been useful in language learning, Shakespearean productions hold a certain stigma as too difficult for students and audiences alike. This paper follows the presentation of Shakespeare productions (*Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) using a bi-lingual approach in Akita, Japan. Students from all levels in both target languages (English and Japanese) participated in a full production of each play. Students were challenged to act not only in their first languages, but also in their second language while creating a cohesive performance. As part of the production staff, students also assisted with choices made in translation, dramaturgy, design, public relations, and all aspects of production. Techniques from those experiences presented in this paper include administrative, directorial and design choices, modern and classical acting techniques, and vocal work incorporating the use of Focal Points of Resonance. Students responded to the challenge and presented productions that were accessible to local audiences, spoken with authenticity, intention and meaning in both languages, and theatrically innovative and exciting. Many positive outcomes from these experiences include an increase in students' comfort and mastery of a foreign language, students' progress in performing in their first languages, teamwork and camaraderie between American and Japanese students, staff and faculty in presenting a major theatrical event, and increased recognition of the university's role in the local culture.