

Teaching Mimetics through Drama Method

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Mimetics are indispensable part of Japanese language in various context that varies from spoken discourse to written text in literature. Regardless of the fact that it is pointed out to be of “vital importance that students of Japanese to learn sound symbolism as part of their ordinary Japanese vocabulary”, (Makino:1986), they have been ignored in Japanese language education (Allemand: 2004).

The way affect is encoded in languages can be language and culturally specific (Och and Scheffelin, 1989; Besnir, 1990). Japanese mimetics are one of the examples of the linguistic affects which encode the rich nuances of Japanese language. The past studies show that the use of mimetics in the Japanese discourse correlates with the emotional intensity or the level of empathy of the speaker and the context of the discourse (Baba, 2002, 2003). Using drama to teach mimetics in Japanese can be very effective since empathy is not only a basic elements of drama for both performers and audience (Via ,1976 1983; Kase-Polinsini,1988), but also it is the indispensable part of understanding foreign culture in the second language education (Smith, 1984) .

Understanding linguistic affect of the target language can enhance the empathy with the native speakers. Thus drama technique in teaching foreign language is an ideal tool to create the context in which mimetics are used, while reinforcing empathy.

Drama techniques such as creative drama techniques for teaching language arts and other subjects, Gundoku (choral reading) that is widely used in the recent Japanese education and drama method developed for teaching ESL (Via,1976, 1983; Nomura, 1985) will be introduced. Some visual aids such as photographs and comics strips are used as a medium to facilitate language games and pantomime as a part of the preparation for the role plays and skits. As for creative drama techniques and gundoku choral reading. Some of techniques will be introduced from the workshops I attended in the past.