

Learners' Views on Skit Presentation in the Japanese Language Classroom

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In recent years, many language teachers have adopted the perspective that students need to develop the ability to use language for communicative purposes (Throne & Yule, 1989). One of the popular classroom activities that teachers include in their syllabi is skit presentation. It is a form of interactive group work that requires students to demonstrate their communicative competence (Canal & Swain, 1980; Rose & Kasper, 2001) as well as their creativity. Although many teachers believe that oral communication tasks like skit presentation foster students' learning, is this view supported by the students themselves? How do they view the effectiveness of skit presentation? In order to better understand the learners' viewpoints,

the authors conducted a survey to answer the questions mentioned above. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from 238 first and second year students of Japanese in a large university. The preliminary analyses indicated that the majority of the students believed that skit presentation was effective in improving the following areas: 1) speaking (76%); 2) listening (63%); 3) writing (60%); 4) reading (61%); 5) vocabulary (74%); and 6) grammar knowledge (78%). However, the students gave the skit presentation less credit as a useful task to increase their kanji knowledge/usage (39%) and to deepen their understanding of Japanese culture (34%). The students expressed that they had experienced some degree of anxiety during the skit presentation, but their anxiety levels were not correlated with the skit presentation effectiveness ratings. The students also expressed various reasons (total of 235) why they enjoyed the skits.

The most frequently mentioned reasons were "It was just fun/entertaining/funny," (63) and "It was fun to work with other classmates" (62), showing that the students enjoyed the collaborative aspect of the skit presentation. Ann McCarthy, co-recipient of the 2004 United States-Japan Foundation Elgin Heinz Outstanding Teacher Award, said in her essay (2005) that her high school students achieved success in Japanese because of the use of cooperative learning groups (the kumi). Cooperative learning activities like skit presentation can not only increase students' enjoyment of learning but also produce academic success. Some students in our study did not enjoy the skits

for various reasons. Some example reasons were “It is time consuming” and “there was not enough time to prepare.” The authors intend to present other findings of the study and discuss the implications of the results for foreign language classrooms. Sample clips of the skits will be shown.