Skype-Assisted Conversation Activity to Foster Japanese Language Teacher

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1. Background

- Students in Japan who want to be Japanese Language Teachers (JS)
- Students in China who want to improve their Japanese (especially conversation skills) (CS)

Few opportunities to teach in Japan
Few opportunities to speak in China

This activity provides...
- Authentic chance to teach / learn Japanese language communicatively
- Self-efficacy (Bandura 1977)
- Conceptual skills and human skills (Soyoda & Ohagishita 2004) for JS
- Reflection on the identity of “teacher” for JS

2. Practice

2.1 Participants
12 students from Jissen Women’s University in Tokyo, Japan
15 students from Hunan University in Zhgangsha, China

2.2 Period
April – July 2012 (Extended by a request from CS)

2.3 Activity
One-on-one conversations
1 session per week (max. 90 min.)
JS were not instructed to TEACH just to “Enjoy.”
The themes were predetermined. A discussion of Japanese grammar was included in the latter sessions.

2.4 Themes
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|

2.5 Feedback
Comments on the Facebook group page

Q. What is the problem with this activity?
- Poor quality of call or video (8)
- It is hard to explain culture (2)

Q. What problems did you encounter?
- Explanation of synonyms
- Timing of correction

3. Effects & Evaluation

Q. What was your reason for participating in this activity?
To gain experience teaching Japanese (3)
To improve my Japanese teaching skills (3)
To talk to people in other countries (3)
To learn about other countries’ cultures (3)

Q. Did you enjoy this activity?
Yes, very much (6), Yes (4), No (1)

Q. When did you feel so?
When I could explain things successfully (6)
When my partner said my explanation was useful after the session (2)
When I noticed the gap between the two cultures (2)
When my partner did not appear without notification (3)

Q. Was Facebook helpful for reflection?
Yes, very well (5), Yes (3)

Q. Why?
Because I could reflect on my session (7)
Because I could follow other students’ activities (4)

120 comments on Facebook.
Some JS uploaded their original worksheets or materials spontaneously.
CS sent JS an index of grammatical items for which they wanted to hear an explanation.

→ This activity facilitated spontaneous learning.

Q. How have the LEARNERS changed?
They have become more enthusiastic and ask more questions. (4)
They have become able to understand fast speech. (2)

Q. How have YOU changed?
I reflected on my Japanese to make myself understood. (3)
I tried to speak clearly. (3)
I tried more to create rapport with my partner than to speak well. I thought we could teach only after we built a good relationship. I enjoyed being TAUGHT. (3)

Q. What is the problem you talk with foreigners?
Listen his/her words well (3)
Know and respect each other’s culture (3)
Enjoy the conversation (2)
Not think my common sense is the same as others’ (2)

Q. What is important to do when you talk with foreigners?
I want to become Japanese language teacher even more than before!
Listen his/her words well (3)

Q. What did you do to Foster human skills?
Listen his/her words well (3)
Know and respect each other’s culture (3)
Enjoy the conversation (2)
Not think my common sense is the same as others’ (2)

Q. What is the most impressive theme?
Campus life (2), Honorifics (2), Pop culture (3), Festivals and traditions (1), Hometown (1), Foods (2)

Q. Was it helpful to have the themes decided previously?
Yes, very much (7), Yes (3), No (1)

Q. What is the most impressive theme?
Campus life (2), Honorifics (2), Pop culture (3), Festivals and traditions (1), Hometown (1), Foods (2)

Q. Was Facebook helpful for reflection?
Yes, very well (5), Yes (3)

Q. Why?
Because I could reflect on my session (7)
Because I could follow other students’ activities (4)

4. Final Remarks

The Skype-Assisted Conversation Activity helped develop conceptual & human skills of the JS.
A future task is to conduct the same activity for students who want to be Japanese teachers for Japanese students or elementary school teachers. Also, a corpus based on this activity is being built.