

Enabling Students to Give Presentations that Matter

Ken Ikeda

Students desire to express their opinions; how can they do this meaningfully and towards competence? If IWE (Interactive World English) classes are aimed to help students “use English to become world citizens” by practicing to communicate about themselves, their society and culture, and world issues (Rikkyo class syllabi, 2003), then Michael Byram’s (1997, pp. 33-34) 4-factor model of intercultural communicative competence seems to be appropriately enabling. His model seeks to equip students become “sojourners” of a target language, who interact and work in it with their own language, instead of being merely language tourists. This model is centered on “critical cultural awareness”, the ability to evaluate carefully cultural practices and products in one’s own in relation to other cultures. The 4 factors consist of Knowledge about social groups and cultures, as well as of concepts and processes in interaction; Attitudes of curiosity and openness, and to analyse them from others’ viewpoints, and two distinguishable categories of Skills, a) interpreting materials and establishing relations in between, and b) discovering issues by recognizing phenomena, and interacting with different peoples and cultures).

Fig. 1 Byram’s model of intercultural communicative competence

	Skills(interpret and relate)	
Knowledge (of self and other; of interaction)	Cultural awareness	Attitudes (relativising self, valuing others)
	Skills(discover and interact)	

I have adapted this model to structure for a primarily presentation-based IWE class. The instructor needs to create an atmosphere of discovery and interpreta-

tion from the start of the class that will motivate students to go beyond the mundane. Awareness-raising exercises with open-ended questions can nurture this atmosphere. The instructor also should establish open channels of interaction with students which can be encouraged by writing on the backs of attendance cards and scheduling regular conferencing. Within this setting, the following 2 projects encourage students to acquire these appropriate attitudes, skills, and knowledge, through which they become experts of their own knowledge niche, develop analytic thinking, and challenge their listeners to consider alternatives.

Survey-based presentations (5 ~ 8 minutes)

This project not only stimulates students' interest in a topic, it also enables them to test assumptions, develop rationale of their plans, and consider possibilities of continuation than as a one-off stunt. The survey should be planned as a multi-week project for groups of 2 to 3. Students construct multiple-choice questions so that they become aware of difficulties in assumptions and question construction. Here is a possible timeline :

Week 1 : Raise awareness of survey planning thru an exercise (e. g. , carry out an impromptu survey with attendance cards by answering an open-ended question on back of the cards)

Form groups to each prepare as homework a survey planning sheet showing description of topic, population sample, rationale, and 4 or 5 multiple-choice questions

Week 2 : Instructor checks survey planning sheets and holds conferences with the groups.

Week 3 : Students collect responses (up to total of 50 or 100) and tabulate.

Week 4 : Analyze responses (patterns, limitations, and implications) . Alert issues with visual aids. Prepare presentations (students self-select the 3 most significant question results) .

Weeks 5 and 6 : Presentations and discussion (schedule an average of 12 groups per class if you video and audio record, taking in account time for in-between moving around, etc.)

Teaching Considerations : Limit 2 group presentations per topic to avoid tedium and for comparison. Evaluation Criteria : Division of work between group mem-

bers, sustaining listener interest, presentation skills (eye contact, informing vs. reading, poise, etc.) . Notes-Most effort is to get students to develop rationales and survey questions, becoming mindful of accuracy in their presentation materials.

Proposal-based presentations (4 ~ 6 minutes)

Students identify a problem or concern and present a proposal with a plan of action, benefits, and objections countered by their rebuttals. A possible timeline :

Week 1 : Evoke awareness of a problem as a basis for a proposal. One idea is to have them answer a geographic literacy test (National Geographic, online) , then provide them with a proposal that urges students to go abroad than just study geography. As homework, each student prepares a 5-step outline (describes the problem, a 1-sentence proposal, explains proposal as plan of action, lists possible benefits, gives possible objections with rebuttals)

Week 2 : Check outlines in conferences; require rewrites if necessary. Prepare for presentations (I usually show videotapes featuring previous students upon permission) .

Weeks 3 and 4 : Student presentations (plan for 10 to 12 per class so to have consultation time with students still not ready)

Teaching Considerations Evaluation Criteria : Proposal follows the 5-step pattern, feasibility of the proposal to listeners, presentation skills. Notes-Most work is on getting students prepare presentable outlines.

Conclusion

Through these challenging presentation projects, students not only approach project work with an exploratory and critical viewpoint, they also become interested in others' work to give informed comments and queries. Honing their awareness toward focused and engaging interaction is key to nurturing student competence in a second language.

References

Byram, Michael. Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence. UK : Multilingual Matters, 1997.

“IWE 2-Overview” . In Class Syllabi for the 2003 year, pp. 26-27. Rikkyo

University.

National Geographic (online) . Roper Geographic Survey 2002 : Global Geographic Literacy Survey.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geosurvey/>

ケン・イケダ

(本学ランゲージ・センター英語嘱託講師)