

A Study of Training Listeners to Facilitate Mutual Understanding In Class Discussion

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Abstract: The objective of this research is to identify the benefits of using a "scenario guide with setting character" as a learning tool. This guide provides a discussion model like a play scenario to facilitate mutual understanding. Each character has a role to facilitate discussion for mutual understanding. The research method is qualitative analysis, by recording students' discussion and transcribing from three Japanese lessons. Students were fourth-grade at a public elementary school in Ishikawa, Japan. After Japanese lessons, the students completed a questionnaire. The result showed that two benefits were identified by using a "scenario guide with setting character." 1) Students improved their ability of processing information. 2) Students increased their sense of value for listening and understanding.

Keywords: Class discussion, Mutual understanding, Scenario guide, Information processing, Value consciousness

INTRODUCTION

The Course of Study is revised every 10 years in Japan. The new Course of Study was announced in 2017, emphasizing importance of class discussion by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Akita (2010) also insisted that listening was important for deeper understanding. On the other hand, Wakaki (2016) said that they do not understand each other well although students often discussed in class. Therefore, it is important for students to listen and understand when they discuss each other. The issue is how to train students to reach mutual understanding through discussion.

The authors employed "scenario guide with setting character" as a teaching method. Wakaki (2013) said that the guide is effective for constructing discussion images and actualizing information processing as the role of characters. It shows a discussion model like a play scenario. Each character has a role in the model. In this research, the authors selected the following five roles from "Definition of category to capture utterance function" (Yamamoto, 1996). The roles were: (1) accept; (2) ask a question; (3) relate; (4) refine; and (5) express awareness. The goal of the guide is to train students to facilitate mutual understanding in class discussions. The purpose of this research is to identify the benefits of using a "scenario guide with setting character."

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

The research method is to record discussion in Japanese lessons and to transcribe for analyzing data both quantitatively and qualitatively. The thirty-one fourth-grade students took Japanese lessons at a public elementary school in Ishikawa, Japan. Students completed a questionnaire after the Japanese lessons ended.

Firstly, students participated in classes without using the scenario guide. Secondly, students learned how to play roles of listeners to facilitate mutual understanding using the scenario guide. Thirdly, the students deepened their understanding through discussions. Fourthly, the students conducted self-evaluation of listeners role. Finally, the students responded to the questionnaire about the role of listeners to deepen understanding.

The author transcribed the audio recording and extracted the discussion sections that led to deepening of understanding. In addition, using the questionnaire, the author extracted the sense of value for the role of listeners to deepen understanding.

RESULTS

After analyzing students' dialog transcripts, two outcomes were identified. First, after students learned how to discuss in the scenario guide, the students utterances which followed the five roles of information processing have increased. Second, students were aware of different opinions among students.

[Case 1]

7C: My idea is close to the idea of 1C. I think that Gon regretted himself because he played a nuisance related to death.
(Omission)
12C: But please look at the first line of p8. There is written that "I did various things", did not it? Gon might have played a nuisance related to death before, did not he?
13 C: In this story, Gon is growing. He is a good person. If he had such experiences, he should have grown up at that time. That's why I believe that he had experience in death here.

12C asked 7C and told his idea. Subsequently, 13 C said his own idea different from 12C ideas. In this way, the students deepened their understanding

[Case 2]

31C: I think that there was no one to sell the sardines.
(Omission)
34C: There is a different opinion from 31C. Hyozuyu was regarded as a sardine thief and beaten. This is the reason Gon brought chestnuts.
36C: See p 18p 19. Gon already had chestnuts when he noticed that Hyozuyu was beaten.

31C, 34C, 36C said different opinions. In addition, 36 C showed a statement of evidence of his opinion.

Students in the class got new recognition by 36C's remarks.

In this way, by expressing different opinions and questions, we could extract class scenes that deepen their understanding from the voice record.

After completing the unit, students responded to an "awareness survey on the five roles of information processing" (Table 1). As a result, five roles were evaluated as "very important" and "important. As for "(1) accept (listening and understanding)", 30 students answered "very important". The students described their reasons as "the importance to deepen the discussion" and "the importance for the relationship of participants".

CONCLUSION

The result showed that two benefits were identified by using a "scenario guide with setting character."

1) Students improved their ability of processing information.

2) Students increased their sense of value for listening and understanding.

This learning tool has the characteristic that listeners learn skills with specific remarks in the context of discussion. We considered that this

characteristic worked effectively. However, we think that more elaborate consideration is necessary.

This research studied one class of students. Future research can increase the number of classes and students to other grades or subjects to provide more reliable results.

Table1 Student awareness survey on the five roles of information

	Very Important	Important	Not so Important	Total Students
1) Accept	30	1	0	31
2) Ask a question	24	7	0	31
3) Relate	24	7	0	31
4) Refine	24	7	0	31
5) Express awareness	18	13	0	31

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