

積極的コミュニケーション能力向上を目的とした英語ディベートによる指導 - Facilitating assertive communication skills development through English debating -

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1 Introduction

The voice of recruiters regarding Kosen graduates

Recently, company recruiters have expressed a concern that many of today's engineering job candidates, particularly in the context of teamwork, show:

- little self-confidence and low self-esteem in one's own communicative abilities
- an inability to be a spontaneous (dynamic) communicator, only being able to produce prepared talks on topics they are familiar with
- a lack of self-assertiveness
- a lack of a strong sense of curiosity in others

As Japan's engineers continue to face mounting global competition, overcoming these ill traits is essential.

Although strong English language skills are desirable, it is not enough. *What students need is communicative confidence, developed systematically and practically.*

The Key Problem

How to teach our electrical engineering department students to develop communicative confidence (self-assertiveness) at Kurume Kosen?

R. Kosen, *Malaysian Education* 2013-14, 2015
 Robert W. Cole, *World Journal of Language Education*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012
 M.J. Reiser, *Global Journal of Engineering Education*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2002
 M.J. Reiser, *Global Journal of Engineering Education*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2007

2 The Challenges

- How to teach communicative confidence, particularly to generally shy engineering students?
- How to measure it?
- What is the most effective way to teach it given: 1) large class sizes 2) scheduling problems 3) curriculum conflicts
- Who should we teach communicative confidence to? Who needs it most?
- How to get school administrators to accept and support our initiative to improve communicative confidence?
- Even if learners can gain communicative confidence, how can they sustain or improve

3 Our Objectives

Our main objective is to produce engineers who recruiters can perceive as global-ready communicators with these personality traits:

- A dynamic communicator who listens carefully and can respond appropriately without canned responses.
- Self-confident not only in expressing one's, but also in defending them
- Capable of communicating logically, as well as own ideas evaluating the opinions of others
- Able to express a strong sense of curiosity in people as well as in ideas
- Respectful of the opinion of others, but keen to seek the clearest answers, even if that means admitting one's opinion is inferior
- A capable team communicator who is strongly aware of their missions and knows how to lead as well as when to follow.

Another goal of our training program was to design it so that students would find greater motivation to study their regular English courses more diligently.

4 Why a DEBATE-focused curriculum?

- The kumite 組手 of communicative activities! Clear winners & losers. Easy to learn where mistakes are made. Instant feedback. No one likes losing.
- Practical skills, particularly for team-problem solving engineers.
- Self-assertiveness skills gained can transfer to all aspects of life.
- Cross-cultural insight for understanding logic-based cultural mindsets.

The Merit of Debating IN ENGLISH

- Forces students to think carefully!
- Forces students to SPEAK IN ENGLISH ... QUICKLY!
- Forces students to practice ACTIVE LISTENING!
- Forces students to analyze issues and opinions logically!



A 1st year student confidently challenges the opposing team's premise IN ENGLISH while everyone listens intently!

5 Teaching Methods (Prototyping stage)

Curriculum Evolution



Selected list of activities

Activity	Year	Notes
...

6 Program evolves based on student feedback

Selected students survey comments

Year	Comments
2014	...
2015	...
2016	...
2017	...

Selected students survey results



7 Teaching Methods (Current stage)

Our Top 10 Teaching Ideals

- Create an English-only environment in which learners feel comfortable to take risks using English!
- Provide motivating lessons which are enjoyable and fun to be more diligent in their study English classes!
- Fill the lecture outside of the classroom. Use classroom time mostly for active learning with relevant activities and meaningful feedback!
- Try to keep the activities moving at a fast-paced, but allow time for meaningful feedback. Share reasons and just-work on much as possible!
- Repeat some final message. After the students in chance to struggle and/or feel help themselves!
- Encourage responsive with groups and nomination with groups!
- Provide lots of real-life case studies to relate their performance in the activities to!
- Leverage the non-Japanese facilitator presence to provide diverse cross-cultural understanding!
- Stay away from "teaching English", the realm of the non-English teachers - that realm is ill-fit: to produce better communicating self-aware self-assertive engineers!



Students warming up with left-brain/right-brain exercises to loosen inhibitions and get into a creative mindset.

Communicative Advice Nuggets

- What are the key points to remember in English...
- ...



2nd year students enjoying 1-on-1 debates with each other. Topic - Living in the city is better than living in the country FIVE years after graduating from Kosen.



2nd year students ALL smiling in a debate-focused class. It is possible.

Year 2 material content

Topic	Content
Communications	...
...	...



1st year students yelling to the facilitator to call on them so that they can ask a creative question about a very strange picture... just so that they may sit down!

Year 1 material content

Topic	Content
Communications	...
...	...

8 Claim, Data, Warrant



Team 2, the judging team, selects Team 3, the wind power generation team as the winner over Team 1, the solar power generation team AND gives reasons why!

9 Results

- Even beginners found debate engaging—Most programs teach debate only to advanced learners. But by focusing on just essential activities, we found debate possible and fun for all!
- Debate training is effective—Our objective is not to create competition-level debaters, but rather to install the self-assertive communicative abilities which competition-level debaters possess. We found that among our various approaches, a long-term target of learning how to debate has brought the best results.
- Small groups work—It allowed us to focus on individual problems and quickly resolve them. It also kept the students focused and alert.
- Students need to know WHY—It is essential to explain WHY we have high expectations of our learners and to express the reasons behind the activities we choose.
- Less lecture, more practice—Minimizing lecture time while providing a lot of practical activities along with concise feedback has been important in realizing our objectives. We strive for a 5/85/10 ratio (rationale/practical/feedback).
- Learning from a non-Japanese facilitator motivated many learners—Regardless of the curriculum-focus, a large majority of students each year commented that having a non-native instructor as part of the facilitating tandem motivated them to learn.

10 Discussion

PRACTICAL

- How to encourage students to take the initiative in communications, to be proactive, not reactive communicators?
- How can we measure improvements in communicative assertiveness?
- How can we measure the efficacy of our training methods?
- How to help hyper-shy students? With clinical ASD?
- How to help students master CDW (claim, data, warrant), the logical reasoning block?
- How to get learners to be quicker when giving responses?

IDEALISTIC

- How can we have better inter-departmental cooperation to address the true communicative needs of our students?
- How can learners continue to improve after our training?
- How can we expand this program to more Kosen students?

11 Summary

- In four years' time, we've created a communications program for engineering students which aims to help them build communicative confidence through teaching them the basics of debating and giving them practice to build these skills.
- Overall we are pleased with the results: 2nd year students are able to reason and argue in English with self-awareness of their confidence levels.
- The key to success, we have found, are: 1) small class sizes; 2) having a teaching ideology; 3) student & video feedback <- continuous improvement cycle; 4) solid teamwork and planning; 5) creating a learning environment in which failure is fun; 6) giving instant and constructive feedback; 7) focusing on language they know already and more on "substance than form".
- The biggest challenges are: 1) measuring our objectives; 2) helping ASD learners; 3) scaling the program school-wide; 4) others.

12 Future plans

- Expansion of program school-wide
- Improving the curriculum to adapt communicative skills to engineering-related situations and problems.
- Devising means to evaluate self-assertiveness and communicativeness.

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Social learning in progress. Students not being dependent on the instructors for answers, but rather seeking help from and supporting each other.