

FILMING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR USE IN TEACHER TRAINING

JAMES ALLISON, DON FRANK, AND WATANABE MAKITO

ビデオ使用による授業研究

ジェームズ アリソン、ドナルド フランク、渡辺牧人

要 約

授業の評価のため、そして新しい教師の訓練のために、英語で行なわれる聖書の授業担当の先生3人は、その1人の1学年の毎週の授業ビデオを見て、話し合いました。この過程はそれぞれの先生の考え方を受け止めて、自分の授業の反省をするための叩き台になりました。各ビデオのさまざまな多角的な面を中心にして話し合いました。第1の内容は教

師自身でした。身体的、語学的、さらに精神的な立場をも含めました。第2は学生の役割(声を出す事によって表わすもの、ジェスチュア等によって現わすものもその役割に入る)でした。第3は授業の環境でした。第4はクラス自体の内容でした。各3人の教師の場合にこの研究のアプローチは授業の評価、教師教育、そして毎週の授業準備のために役立ちました。

ABSTRACT

To better evaluate classes and assist new teachers in preparing for an English Bible course, three teachers viewed and discussed video tapes of a weekly class which one of them taught over the period of a school year. This provided a format for reflection and feedback on the various aspects of the class. These included (a) the teacher, involving physical, linguistic, and emotional aspects of his role in the class. The study also concerned (b) the students' part in the learning process, both verbal and non-verbal, as well as (c) the surroundings of the class members, especially the immediate physical environment. Finally, the videos revealed much about (d) the content of the course itself. These teachers found this approach a useful one for peer evaluation, teacher education, and lesson preparation.

INTRODUCTION

The research for this project covered a period of four terms, from the first semester of 1992 through the second semester of 1993. Three teachers participated in the study, each of whom teaches his own content-based English Bible course (ninety minutes once per week) to

first-year English department students at Hokusei Women's Junior College. In the first school year, one teacher video taped his class each week. The two other teachers viewed these tapes in preparing their own lessons. The following year, having received feedback from the other two, the teacher who taped his classes viewed the tapes again in preparing for teaching the lessons again.

PURPOSES

This project served two main purposes in teacher training. The first was to give new teachers ideas which would assist them in structuring their courses. As one teacher was teaching this type of class for the first time and another had only one year's experience, both expressed a desire to use this project as a means of self-instruction. The second purpose was to help the teacher who filmed his classes. The intention was for the feedback from other teachers and the experiences of viewing his own classes to serve as a tool for self-evaluation and continuing the process of creating classes that better meet the needs of students. Particularly since these courses were activity-oriented to a large extent, these teachers chose video as a tool for analyzing classroom experiences.

METHODS

Filming involved setting a camera and tripod at the side of the classroom and letting it run from the beginning of class until all the students had left the room after class. In order for the camera to pick up the teacher's voice, it was necessary to position it about half way to the back of the class of fifty-six students. (The number dropped to forty-three in the second term as some studied abroad. These class sizes were almost the same as those of the other two teachers.) Placing the camera here did limit somewhat the ability to observe the class since at least half the students were out of view. Also, in order to see the television screens, chalk board, and teacher, the camera needed to face the front. This prevented a direct look at students during much of the class. If available, cameras with microphones capable of picking up from across the entire classroom would be useful for studies such as this. Also, placing a second camera at the front of the room in order to monitor students might prove helpful.

Other logistical problems included that of setting the camera out of the way of the flow of students into and out of the classroom. After one student leaving room bumped and broke the camera, the teacher chose to place it opposite the exit, where the least traffic was. As with perhaps any project such as this, there were the inevitable mechanical complications such as the camera's cutting off occasionally. Also, one student bumped the camera and officiously reset it at an angle which prevented the camera from seeing the remainder of that

class.

Despite these logistical difficulties, the camera did not appear to play a distractive role in the class. There were the expected questions in the beginning about what it was for. However, after the teacher explained that, as the students needed to learn, he also needed to learn by watching the classes, the class appeared to lose the sense of uneasiness and even forget the camera was there. Occasionally a student would turn and face the lens and, remembering she was on camera, look startled or smile and wave but immediately return to her study. A few students slept, held chit-chat conversations, and talked during tests-- things they would be unlikely to do if they were preoccupied with the camera's being on them.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This investigation revealed a variety of influences on the classroom process. These included the teacher, the students, the surroundings, and the course itself.

The Teacher

Physical aspects of the classroom process were perhaps the ones the camera clarified the most. For example, the teacher's voice showed a tendency to become so soft at times that the microphone could not pick it up with much clarity. The teacher on occasion used Japanese to explain especially difficult vocabulary, and it was particularly at these times that volume became a problem.

Also, the tapes showed the teacher standing quite close to the television screens working while the students watched. This appeared as more of a distraction than he had noticed and suggested a need for him to stand at the back of the room until the video finished. Doing this, in turn, kept more students (who had been talking or resting in the back rather than watching) awake and facing the screen.

At times after giving an oral quiz, while students were passing the quiz cards forward, the teacher was writing on the chalk board. While the presence of the video perhaps served as something of a deterrent to cheating on tests, in this case it pointed out that the teacher was creating an opportunity for students to talk about correct answers and re-mark their cards while his back was to them.

Linguistic aspects of the classroom process also became easier to evaluate while viewing the tapes. This provided an opportunity to check the Japanese the teacher used occasionally and ensure its correctness (or remember silly jokes which come from it to lighten the class atmosphere at another time, such as about the words "*rinjin o aishinasai*" ["love your neighbor"], which one student mistook as "*ninjin o aishinasai*" ["love your carrot"]). It also made an opportunity to update notes after class when the teacher decided spontaneously

to insert something into the lesson.

Some problems in the speed of the English the teacher was using at times came to light, as well. Without noticing, he was at times speaking unnaturally slowly and using overly simple vocabulary in an effort to help the students understand. The tapes pointed this out clearly, as well as his repeating words more times than perhaps necessary or helpful. They also pointed out the confusion that came when the teacher switched suddenly from English to Japanese or back, suggesting a need to tell the students in some way before switching.

Emotional aspects of the teacher's part in the learning process also came to light. In one class, the teacher was walking about the room noticeably more than normal without any apparent need to do so. Viewing the tape led him to recall that he was feeling annoyed, uncertain, and insecure about the students' lack of attention and participation in that class. In similar situations, he sometimes became quiet, speaking very deliberately and slowly. It was perhaps instructive for him to become aware of these reactions to stress, which could have even contributed further to problems in those particular classes.

Particularly in the first few classes, the teacher came across as trying very, very hard to be friendly--more so than he was aware. This appeared not only in smiles and kindly tones of voice but *in at times ignoring or only very mildly warning students who chose conversation rather than participating in class.* Also, when students talked with each other during a test, the teacher told them of their punishment ("When you do that, your grade goes down") but did so while smiling and in a very non-threatening voice. The problem occurred again soon after. This brought to light a need for more firmness and clearer warning about how much and how certain the punishment would be, the teachers concluded in their analysis.

The Students

Review of the classes by video put the teachers somewhat closer to the students than during the actual class, as the camera microphone was closer to the students than the teacher was. Thus, it picked up comments which the teacher could not normally hear during the class or could not concentrate enough to understand, being preoccupied with speaking. These were comments such as "I'm tired" or "I don't understand" or sighs which went up when a student gave a correct answer for the first time at the beginning of the year. As this teacher often walked around the room during the course of a class, there were many students out of his view at a given time, which the camera picked up.

Although far from providing enough information for objective evaluation of the entire class, this feedback did give some hints as to in which parts of the class the students had more interest, greater energy, and more of a positive attitude toward study than in other parts. This class's students generally chose not to sit at the front of the room. There were often students who slept, rested, or chatted with classmates from time to time instead of particip-

ating in class activities. While not positive, these responses gave useful indication of problem areas in the class. Thus this study often raised more questions (how to improve participation, especially) than it answered. Other responses such as repeating English words or sounds the teacher said, smiles, and giggles gave some idea as to what held their attention and in what activities they were willing to engage.

The Surroundings

The camera and its microphone detected a number of things which revealed the role the study environment played in the classroom process. Airplanes flying overhead, videos from adjacent rooms, sounds of many students just outside the door (whose teacher had let them out of class early), and voices of other teachers lecturing, all drowned out the voices in the classroom at times. Students drumming pencils on desks, sliding desks, and moving chairs were also distractions. The video allowed the teacher to hear them more at the same volume (relative to the teacher's voice and other parts of the lesson itself) as the students did, the microphone being closer to the students. It also showed more student reactions to the distractions than the teacher could see alone or concentrate on during the class. Last but not least, it pointed out noise problems to one of this study's teachers, who was the source of some of them!

Turning lights off in the classroom for watching videos became a problem, the tapes helped make clear. In one class, for example, students were doing exercises and hearing a lecture which required repeated viewings of sections of the video. For about fifty percent of the class--including thirty-five at the end, when fatigue often appears to be worst--the students were studying in the dark. As the video made clear just how long this was happening, the sleepy faces and drooping heads of class members became easier to understand, and leaving the lights on after the first viewing of the video presented itself as a possible solution.

In attempting to determine factors contributing to students' active participation in class, or lack of it, the video assisted by letting the teachers reflect later on such influences as temperature. On one twenty-four degree (Celsius), summer day with little wind, the pace of the class was relatively slow; student responses to the teacher's questions were few and slow in coming; and posture of several students suggested lethargy. However, at some points in the class, the teacher changed the surroundings in some way, for example opening the blinds after finishing with the video or using music to teach part of the lesson. Stimulating the senses with light, wind, and music brought visible reactions from the students. They stirred in their seats, sat up straighter, and showed more active participation such as answering questions and facing the speaker or screen. Of course, a number of other factors may have figured into this, as well; however, the opportunity for later reflection allowed perhaps a clearer understanding of what difficulties the class were actually trying to overcome.

The Course Itself

Review of classroom activities aided the teachers in structuring the course. If one lesson appeared too difficult on the video, other teachers could opt to substitute another one. Also, the videos pointed out the difficulty students had understanding what the teacher required on a report assignment. Although none asked questions when the teacher offered to clarify further, the tape showed considerable talk among students continuing after the teacher moved to the next part of class, their actions thus suggesting they had not understood clearly. This raised a question about a need for a more streamlined report assignment, which the teachers discussed later. Similarly, some confusion and wasted time in introducing the class on the first day led to the teachers' agreeing on a unified set of class guidelines, as well as more efficient ways to designate people responsible for closing curtains. They also observed the need for more effective systems for remembering students' names.

Viewing the videos also brought to light matters of time usage. The video deck's counter enabled the viewers to see, for example, how much time the teacher was allowing students to find answers to his questions. The long gaps of silence were slowing down the pace of the class and detracting from the learning process more than he realized until watching the video. Also, the videos pointed to the difference in length of time the teacher expected a given activity to take and how much it actually took. A penchant for trying to sneak in a few "by the way" comments became apparent, showing that it actually took much longer than the teacher had thought. Whereas he had planned to read orally with the class and introduce a story in about seven minutes, for instance, the video showed it taking a full fourteen minutes. Other tapes indicated activities which received not too much but, conversely, not as much time as they required. This assisted in lesson planning for the following year.

In addition to how much time a particular activity occupied, the videos pointed out the bogging down effect which some teaching techniques had on the class. Writing on the board, for example, seemed quicker while actually doing it yet watching on video suggested it may have had a deadening effect on the class, pointing perhaps to a need for a handout or some livelier approach. In another example, the teacher was stopping the video often during the first showing to identify characters, give background, etc. Viewing this from the camera's perspective made this come across as distracting, pulling the students away from the video, on which their interest was focused. Letting the video roll from start to finish as much as possible, then, presented itself as another option in introducing the video stories.

Many ideas for improving the mechanics of particular teaching techniques also came from reflecting on the videos. The points at which real learning occurred, as well as at which the learning process broke down and possible ways to remedy these problems, all became more apparent with further viewing. For example, one class appeared to go generally smoothly

until the teacher began an illustration story about which students were to answer certain questions. After several repetitions of a section of the story, no answers were forthcoming, and frustration mounted as he resisted simply giving the correct answers and decided to repeat the story and questions until the students answered correctly. This, however, produced no visible results for several minutes until one student finally weakly uttered the desired response. Evaluating this episode later, the teacher discovered several alternative approaches to the problem which were not apparent during the class. As opposed to simply assigning blame to the students' motivation, several other possibilities emerged as ways to respond to the situation, such as simplifying the vocabulary further or letting the students read rather than just hear parts of the story.

In other instances, the instructions or vocabulary of drills appeared too simple rather than too difficult. Some situations seemed to call for more affirmation, repetition, hinting, or checking students' comprehension before proceeding in the lesson. At other times, switching the sequence in which the class did its various activities appeared as a means of letting the students do the most central parts of the lesson at the time their energy level was likely the highest.

Finally, the tapes provided opportunities for upgrading not only the teaching techniques but the content of the lessons. One illustration, for example, seemed to the teacher to have no particular problems when giving it, but hearing it on video, he termed it simplistic and naive, giving a trite formula to what was really a profoundly complex moral dilemma.

CONCLUSION

Reflection on the classes as listeners rather than speakers, as well as observing non-verbal feedback from the class, enabled teachers to make more informed choices about future teaching in general and these classes in particular. This included the lesson preparation work of selecting stories, songs, and explanations which students could grasp conceptually, about which they could communicate in English, and which they could find relevant to their lives. Filming, reviewing, and discussing the classroom learning process in this manner provided a vehicle useful for reflection and communication of ideas in peer evaluation, self-evaluation, and teacher training.

In addition to the subjective nature of evaluation and determining desirable approaches to a given teaching task, there were particular difficulties with this project. As it depended on viewing the classes through video, there were the limitations of the camera's being able to see only from one angle, thus not picking up on all the student responses which could have provided clues to help inform the teaching process.

Despite these limitations, however, this means of examining what transpires in a classroom proved effective to the extent that it allowed the teachers to multiply their perspectives on

the learning process. They were able to, at least in a limited fashion, examine this process from the viewpoints of students, other instructors, and their own perhaps more detached and objective selves.