

The Power of Process: An Analysis of One Class and Six Skits Over Three Years

ある日本語クラスの3年間の歩みから見るスキットプロジェクトの力

Skits are a common assignment in language classes because they give learners a chance to utilize their language skills in creative situations of their own making. The assumption is that learners will be motivated by creating skits that are fun for them to perform while incorporating the vocabulary and grammar that they have learned up to that point. A secondary benefit is that learners will learn from each other and strengthen ties by collaborating on such projects. While these are worthwhile goals, they are difficult to reach or maintain by assigning a single skit in isolation. I argue that greater benefits can be achieved by focusing on not just the skits themselves, but the entire process surrounding them.

Over the past three years I have assigned and followed one class of Japanese language learners and the skits that they created over six semesters. As their first-year and third-year Japanese language teacher I assigned, watched, and evaluated their skits. I also interviewed learners (following the end of their third-year Japanese language class) about the process of creating the skits, their individual roles, and their thoughts about what they learned from participating in them. From these observations and interviews I came up with three themes: community, sharing, and realization.

By studying one particular group over an extended period of time and focusing on the skit not as an isolated teaching tool but a process I was able to identify the critical role that it plays in developing community, facilitating sharing, and revealing the learner's place in the Japanese language learning community. This research is significant because looking at the skit process on a macro level over six semesters reveals a dynamic community built by learners recognizing each other and reveling in what they have created. This is a community not built from the outside (with assistance from the teacher) but one built by the learners *from within*. This is the strength and the potential of the skit process.