

Assertiveness and sensitivity training through BELF discursive leadership material development

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Aim To make project based learning materials which explicitly focus on writing appropriately, understanding accents, and interacting effectively (monitoring, accommodating and adapting), while giving opportunities for creativity, collaboration and critical thinking, using experiential process based learning.

Needs Analysis

14 Asahi Kasei staff with overseas experience were asked questions by email and replies were received from 6 chemical researchers, or 43%.

1. The most difficult items for students were: catching what was said because of the speed or pronunciation; speaking clearly with a conclusion first; the difference in working/personality styles.

2. "Originally, I'm not so assertive. So I have to keep my effort to become assertive. It was not natural for me. After I went back to Japan, I felt very tired." Confidence depended on expected situations and outcomes.

3. "I think my social skills are not good. Because I need more time to reply. I have to improve response quickly."

4. "In China and Taiwan, I feel that there are more strong hierarchies in the companies. So I think it's important to find out the decision maker first (preferably in advance), and understand the connection among the participants."

5. "An (Indian) operator opened the valve to add hot water in the tank but he left there without closing because he took tea time. As a result, hot water overflowed and the floor got a big pool. I could not understand why he left. But it is his custom (to have fixed break times). So I made an automated process."

6. Listen to Yuting's voicemail about meeting at the airport, (Badger 2011).

7. What are some characteristics of Chinese English?

Chinese L1 influenced phonetic changes

Example	Wha are-e yimpotan popetees ov contag rens?
Simplified	What are the important properties of a contact lens?
Patterns?	
Your basic sentence	
Your Chinese sentence	

8. Teach repair techniques, (developed from Wong & Waring 2010).

9. Prepare for the meeting by developing the case study background and characters.

You are a Japanese pharmaceutical researcher. Your product is very good quality but expensive. You have some older products which are cheaper, but don't have as good functionality.

You are the Chinese customer. The Japanese product is good but too expensive, so you want a cheaper product. Chinese products are much cheaper.

10. Conduct the role play, keep notes and respond naturally.

11. Audience participates by asking questions to the role players to develop the characters. For example, find out their position and how long they've been with the company. What do they like to do in their free time? How do they feel about this project? How do they feel about working with the other role player?

12. Give a project update and try to persuade your partner to try a new idea.

You are the Japanese researcher. Your product is better than other products. It will cut their manufacturing time, and even though it is more expensive, they only need half the quantity, because it is more efficient.

You are the Chinese manager, but you do not trust the Japanese product or staff. Why should you change products?

13. Audience asks questions, not problem solving, but trying to understand the role players motivations and emotions. Ask questions like, 'how do/did you feel about.....?'

14. What did this persuasion activity reveal? (For example, a preference for group consensus or assertiveness and independence.)

15. Read the 3 attached discussions representing turn taking power dynamics, (based on Angouri 2010)

- The speakers are equals because there is overlap and lots of backchannels.
- The speakers have different status, but all within the same company, so there is overlap, but lack of backchannels and hesitation devices, and no monopolizing conversation.
- Equal status managers from different companies meeting for the first time. So there is roundtable discussion, but still some overlap showing natural turn taking interaction.

16. Dinner: Build a scenario - what is your status? Can you overlap; can you talk at the same time? What kind of restaurant is it? Role play the conversation with your partner.

17. Teach discourse leadership and sensitivity training:

- Talk first, because the 1st turn is more difficult.
- Paraphrase into simpler, more specific, closed questions, so that it is easier for the other person to make a matching answer.
- Make sure everyone has a turn to talk.
- Summarize so that everyone understands.
- Monitor talk, prolonged silences, inappropriate responses, lack of uptake, and minimal responses.
- Mimic others.

18. Repeat the dinner small talk task, and try to bridge topics.

19. When is discourse leadership training needed?

20. Write a post-meeting follow-up email to the Chinese customer. Summarize the meeting and confirm the action points.

21. Use student evaluation rubrics to measure progress against aims.

Literature Review



Japanese and Hong Kong construction workers, Handford & Matous (2011).
Japanese business interaction, Du Babcock & Tanaka (2013).
Thai civil engineers, Kaewpet (2009)
Taiwanese semi-conductor engineers, Spence & Liu (2013).
Malaysian chemical engineers, Kassim & Ali (2010).
Bangalore IT staff, Nickerson (2009).
Filipino call center staff, Forey & Lockwood (2007).
Hong Kong's Finance, Tourism, Trading and Professional service sectors, Warren (2014)

Structuring written and spoken language
Interaction (interruptions, turn taking)
Q&A clarification
Understanding accents
Showing understanding (backchannels)
Following changes in topics
Awareness of cultural norms
Assertiveness vs. group consensus
Directness/indirectness
Politeness & face
How to adapt language to different situations

Syllabus

1. Choose a scenario (from a selection) or students develop their own. For example: Developing overseas product distribution in China

2. Build an activity storyboard with the students

Scheduling	Meeting	Follow-up
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3. Schedule a meeting by email with for example, your Chinese customer in Beijing.

4. You have another appointment in China soon, so try to reschedule your meeting for a much earlier date.

5. Teach openings & closings, modal verbs, understanding imposition and empathy.

Material Evaluation (Chan 2009)

Teaching material pedagogy

- The main learning objectives are: 1) structured writing 2) accent training 3) dynamic and effective interaction
- Project Based Learning with explicit training of key areas provides an experiential learning process.
- Grammar and vocabulary are generative.
- Authentic audio samples and realistic transcripts.
- Collaborative scenario building to encourage task ownership.
- Effective note taking required for email writing.
- Audience participation to encourage critical thinking.

Teaching material discourse

- Transactional and relational tasks.
- Tasks encourage students to adapt language for different functions and situations.
- No explicit teaching of politeness, but sensitizes learners to different levels of formality.
- Email structuring and bridging between small talk topics is taught, but topic management could also be explicitly taught.
- Some pronunciation differences are taught, and more cross cultural variation could be brought out in the role play audience discussions, or additional tasks.

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