

Comparative analyses of Japanese learners' self-evaluation and judges' evaluation of English public speaking: Identifying primary targets for practical teaching of multimodal speaking skills

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Comparative analyses of Japanese learners' self-evaluation and judges' evaluation of English public speaking: Identifying primary targets for practical teaching of multimodal speaking skills

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1. Introduction

This study compares and discusses Japanese learners' self-evaluation and judges' evaluation scores for English public speaking performances, and considers these in relation to the teaching needs of public speaking skills for Japanese English as foreign language (EFL) learners. Since the implementation of the communicative approach in the official English education in Japan, the need for practical communication skills in English, especially speaking and listening skills, have been increasing rapidly (cf. Kurahachi, 1993). Although the communicative approach has been adopted, education in secondary school English classrooms still focuses on grammar and vocabulary. This can be attributed to various factors such as washback effects from Japan's standardized university entrance examination (Fuyuno, 2014). Nonetheless, as the social and economic situations shift towards globalization, English speaking skills are strongly needed from the society (Fuyuno, 2013a).

The changing social circumstances are reflected in the Japanese university students' increasing motivation to improve their English speaking skills (cf. Fuyuno, 2013b). Therefore, to clarify the learning and teaching needs of speaking skills education in Japan, this study analyses Japanese learners' self-evaluation and judges' evaluation scores of English public speaking performances. Data for the study were collected at an official English recitation contest, which was held at a Japanese university in 2013. The data included self-evaluation of the recitation performance by 22 Japanese EFL learners, as well as official contest judges' evaluation of the performances. By comparing and analysing the data, insights for improving English education in Japan, especially for teaching practical public speaking skills, are expected to be obtained.

The subsequent parts of this paper are structured as follows. In section 2, previous studies related to the topic are reviewed. Next, the data and methodology used in the present study are explained in section 3 followed by discussion of the results in section 4. Finally, a concluding summary of the study as well as future

research prospects are provided in section 5.

2. Literature Review

Before discussing the present study, this section reviews previous research on the positive effects of English public recitation on Japanese EFL learners. The effectiveness of English recitation has been discussed by English teachers and researchers. Previous studies such as Matsui (2006; 2008), Ishigami & Ito (2009), Wang et al. (1993) and Stodolsky et al. (1981) have reported that English recitation can enhance learners' pronunciation, intonation, grammar awareness and other related factors. For example, Matsui (2006) reports positive outcomes from in-class recitation contests. In his study, students first engaged in intensive read-aloud training. After fostering awareness for English phonological characteristics by reading aloud, the students participated in in-class recitation contests. A questionnaire survey was conducted to investigate students' feedback on the recitation contest. According to Matsui (2006), positive responses from students indicated that participating in the contest motivated them to practice English speaking. Furthermore, the study results showed a correlation between ranking in the contest and overall grade for the English course.

Although Matsui's (2006) study provides evidence of the effectiveness of English recitation on Japanese learners, there have not been enough studies on the effectiveness of English recitation or teaching of English public speaking at Japanese universities. Specifically, although various organizations, including secondary schools and universities, hold English recitation contests for Japanese EFL learners, not many are reported academically. With these circumstances in mind, this study compares and discusses learners' self-evaluation and contest judges' evaluation of English recitation performances by Japanese university students in an official recitation contest. By conducting a comparative analysis on the characteristics of learners' self-evaluation and those of the judges' evaluation, this study aims to extract information to improve the teaching of English public speaking skills for Japanese EFL learners.

3. Data and Method

3.1. Data

Data for the analysis were learners' self-evaluation and judges' evaluation scores, which were collected during an official English recitation contest at a Japanese university (cf. Fuyuno et al., 2014). The contest was open to all students at the university regardless of majors and grades. Thus, every student was qualified to

apply for the contest. However, owing to a large number of applications, the final contestants were selected by drawing lots. Participants were divided into two groups according to the difficulty levels of assignments. The contest offered two levels: Part 1 for intermediate-level students and Part 2 for advanced-level students. In the enrolment procedure, students who had studied abroad for more than three months and/or students who majored in English/English Literature were advised to enrol for Part 2. Other students selected the level on they wished to enrol.

Each part comprised three types of recitation assignments. Participants selected one assignment from the three options. The major difference between assignments for Part 1 and Part 2 was the length of recitation. For Part 1, the recitation length was approximately two minutes, and for Part 2 it was four minutes.

In the contest, a team of judges evaluated the contestants' performances. The judges included two Japanese English teachers and two native speakers of English teachers; all had taught English at higher education institutions for more than three years. They evaluated each performance based on the pre-provided evaluation items shown in Table 1. (For the original Japanese version, refer to the Appendix.) Each judge rated each item between 1 and 3 (1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good).

Table 1: List of Evaluation Items

#	Evaluation Items
1	Articulation of each English sound is accurate
2	Linking of words and liaisons are well expressed
3	Word accents are accurate
4	Sentence intonations are accurate
5	Overall fluency: the speech is naturally fluent
6	Good voice volume: the speech can be clearly heard from anywhere in the hall
7	The speaker has confidence and enthusiasm in his/her attitude
8	The speaker expresses the contents of the speech well
9	The speaker maintains eye-contact with the audience
10	The speaker uses gestures and facial expressions effectively

During the contest, judges manually scored each contestant's performance on their evaluation sheets. At the end of the event, the scores were collected and input into a computerised database.

Contestants also scored their own performances. Directly after performing their English recitation on stage, participants self-evaluated their performances using the same evaluation sheet as the judges. The contestants' self-evaluation scores were also collected and input into a computerised database. This study analysed self-evaluation data from 22 Japanese university students and the judges' evaluation data for the same students.

3.2. Method

To compare contestants' self-evaluation scores and judges' scores, the average value of self-evaluation and judges' scores was calculated for each evaluation item. First, the self-evaluation scores from each part were averaged respectively. Then, for judges' average scores, all four judges' evaluations were summed and averaged. Furthermore, the difference between learners' average scores and judges' average scores was calculated for each item. The scores by judges were higher in every evaluation item for both Part 1 and Part 2. Thus, the gaps between self-evaluation and judges' evaluation were obtained by subtracting the self-evaluation average score from the judges' average score.

As previously mentioned, the original scores were on three levels between 1 and 3 (1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good). However, for convenience of statistical analysis, raw scores were adjusted into a -1 to +1 range when computerised. For example, when the raw score for an evaluation item for a contestant was indicated as '1', we recorded it as '-1'. For a raw score of '3', the score was computerised as '+1'. When the raw score was a neutral '2', it was processed as '0' in the database.

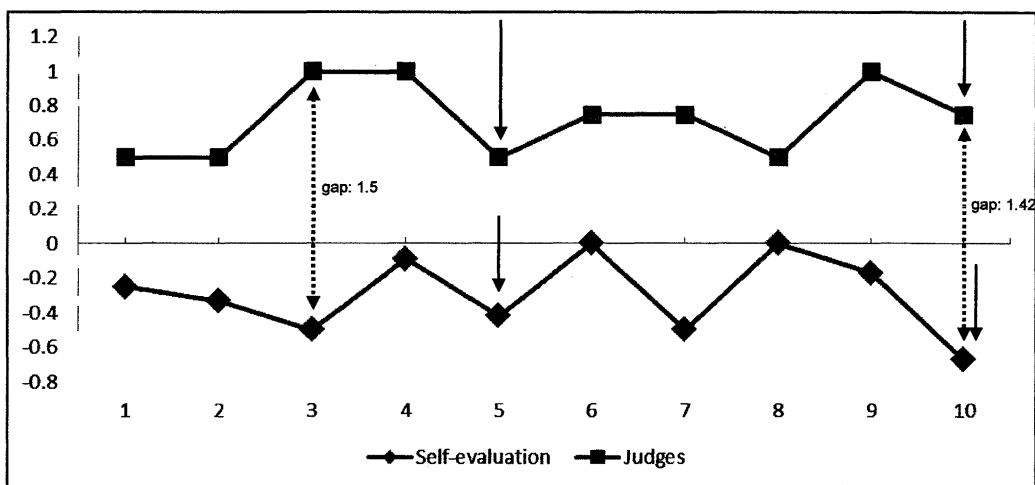
4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results of Intermediate-level Students

The results of self-evaluation and judges' scores from Part 1 are shown in Table 2. Based on Table 2, the values in Rows A, B, and C are plotted in Graph 1.

Table 2: Average Scores for Part 1

A. Item #	B. Self-evaluation	C. Judges	D. Average $((B + C) / 2)$	E. Gap $(C - B)$
1	-0.25	0.50	0.13	0.75
2	-0.33	0.50	0.08	0.83
3	-0.50	1.00	0.25	1.50
4	-0.09	1.00	0.46	1.09
5	-0.42	0.50	0.04	0.92
6	0.00	0.75	0.38	0.75
7	-0.50	0.75	0.13	1.25
8	0.00	0.50	0.25	0.50
9	-0.17	1.00	0.42	1.17
10	-0.67	0.75	0.04	1.42



Graph 1: Average Scores for Part 1

First, from the results in Table 2 and Graph 1, relatively large gaps between students' self-evaluation scores and judges' evaluation scores are evident. Specifically, Item 3 '*Word accents are accurate*' and Item 10 '*The speaker uses gestures and facial expressions effectively*' exhibit large gaps between the self-evaluation average scores and judges' average scores. In both cases, judges' scores are higher than the self-evaluation scores. Based on this, students at intermediate level may have difficulties in evaluating their own English accents and their gestures in public speaking.

Second, from Table 2 and Graph 1, the average scores for self-evaluation and judges are both low for Item 5 '*Overall fluency: speech is naturally fluent*' and Item 10 '*The speaker uses gestures and facial expressions effectively*'. This

indicates that intermediate-level students may need more training on fluency and gestures/facial expressions to improve their public speaking skills.

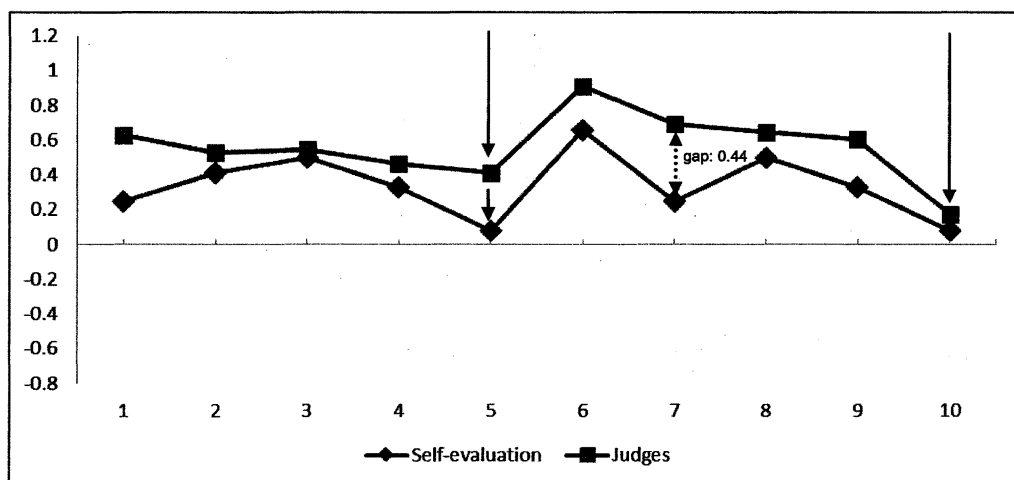
Specifically, Item 10 '*The speaker uses gestures and facial expressions effectively*' appeared to be difficult to self-evaluate and perform. Further investigation on teaching effective gestures and facial expressions for English public speaking is needed.

4.2. Results of Advanced-level Students

The results for self-evaluation and judges' scores obtained from Part 2 are shown in Table 3. The values from Rows A, B, and C in Table 3 are plotted in Graph 2.

Table 3: Average Scores for Part 2

A. Item #	B. Self-evaluation	C. Judges	D. Average $((B + C)/2)$	E. Gap $(C - B)$
1	0.25	0.63	0.44	0.38
2	0.41	0.53	0.47	0.12
3	0.50	0.55	0.52	0.05
4	0.33	0.47	0.40	0.14
5	0.08	0.41	0.24	0.33
6	0.66	0.91	0.78	0.25
7	0.25	0.69	0.47	0.44
8	0.50	0.65	0.57	0.15
9	0.33	0.60	0.47	0.27
10	0.08	0.17	0.13	0.09



Graph 2: Average Scores for Part 2

First, by comparing Graphs 1 and 2, it is clear that the general gaps between self-evaluation and judges' scores are smaller for Part 2 than Part 1. This may indicate that learners at higher proficiency levels can self-evaluate more accurately than learners at lower proficiency levels. Second, the biggest gap between the self-evaluation and judges' scores for performances in Part 2 was for Item 7 '*The speaker has confidence and enthusiasm in his/her attitude*'. It seems that although students participating in Part 2 could better self-evaluate their performances than those in Part 1, attitudes such as confidence and enthusiasm were still difficult to self-evaluate. This may be because such attitudes are observable from appearance aspects such as posture. Learners would need mirrors or video recordings to accurately self-observe these aspects. On the other hand, speakers themselves can easily hear phonological factors, such as word linking and word accents. Therefore, students at more advanced levels seemed to more accurately evaluate their phonological characteristics in English speaking. However, factors difficult to self-observe, such as attitudes, may need more practice and training to self-evaluate and improve.

Second, similar to Part 1, the average self-evaluation and judges' scores were both low for Item 5 '*Overall fluency: speech is naturally fluent*' and Item 10 '*The speaker uses gestures and facial expressions effectively*'. This further supports the hypothesis that Japanese students have teaching and learning needs with regard to effective gestures and facial expressions in English public speaking.

5. Conclusion

This study compared learners' self-evaluation and judges' evaluation scores for Japanese EFL learners' English public speaking performances in an official contest. By analysing data of two groups of learners (Part 1: Intermediate level and Part 2: Advanced level) and by comparing the data with the evaluations of contest judges, several major findings were identified.

First, the self-evaluation scores for intermediate-level students of their performances were significantly lower than judges' scores. Particularly, intermediate-level students seemed to have difficulties in evaluating their own English accents and presentation gestures. This implies that intermediate-level learners need training in both phonological and presentation skills to improve their public speaking skills.

Second, in both cases (intermediate- and advanced-level students), the lowest self-evaluation and judges' scores were obtained for the evaluation items of

fluency and effective gestures (Item 5 '*Overall fluency: speech is naturally fluent*' and Item 10 '*The speaker uses gestures and facial expressions effectively*'). From these observations, fluency and gestures are primary targets for Japanese university students to improve their English public speaking skills. Especially, gestures and facial expressions seemed difficult to self-evaluate even by advanced-level students. Therefore, for this factor, a practical teaching method needs to be investigated and developed. As future prospects, we aim to research the effective teaching of English public speaking skills for Asian learners.

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Appendix

Original Japanese List of Evaluation Items

評価項目	
1	一つ一つの音が英語音声として正しく調音できている
2	リエゾンなど英語の音変化を正しく表現できている
3	単語のアクセントを正しく表現できている
4	文としてのイントネーションを正しく表現できている
5	不自然に途切れることなく流暢に英語を運用できている
6	声量が適度で、会場全体にはっきりと聴こえる
7	プレゼンターとしてふさわしい、自信と熱意のある態度で発表できている
8	内容をふまえて、聴衆に内容が伝わるように表現できている
9	聴衆とアイコンタクトが取れている
10	ジェスチャーや表情の変化などを効果的に用いている