The Use of Dramatic Dialog in Teaching English to Volunteer Tour Guides in Korea

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Through the use of dramatic dialog to volunteer tour guides in Korea, their motivation and ability to use English have been greatly enhanced. Each lesson follows three phases: rehearsal, performance and debriefing. The use of dramatic dialog has opened the place of a functioning speech community.

1. Introduction

What makes a successful or good language learner? A number of traits like willingness to take risks and the ability to paraphrase what is not well understood could be posited (Rubin and Thompson, 1982). Traditionally teachers provided exposure to the target language and the motivation to continue studying the language. Instead of the teacher-dominated classroom, the use of dramatic dialog has opened the place of a functioning speech community in which natural conversation is simulated.

This paper covers the following contents: introduction, the origins and development of ESP; the three dimensions of language; dramatic dialog: rehearsal phase, performance phase, debriefing; and conclusion.

2. The origins and developments of ESP

As with most developments in human activity, ESP was a phenomenon that grew out of numerous converging trends. It is definitely not a planned and coherent movement. The three main reasons common to the emergence of all ESP are as follows (Hutchinson and Water, 1987: 6-8): the demands of a Brave New World, a revolution in linguistics and focus on the learner.

The end of World War II in 1945 heralded an age of enormous and unprecedented expansion scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale. This expansion made a world unified and controlled by technology and commerce. These two forces brought forth a demand for an

international language. For various reasons, most strikingly the economic power of the United States in the post-war period, this role fell to English.

A whole mass of people wanted to learn English, not for the pleasure or prestige of knowing the language, but because English was the key to the world of technology and commerce. Before the Second World War a knowledge of a foreign language had been generally regarded as a sign of a well-rounded education, but few had really questioned why it was necessary. However, as English became the accepted international language of technology and commerce, it created a new generation of learners. Mechanics had to know English in order to read instruction manuals. People in business had to speak English if they wanted to sell their products. Doctors and engineers needed the knowledge of English to keep up with developments in their field. Moreover, English was a must for a whole range of students whose course of study included textbooks and journals only available in English. All these and many others knew why they needed English.

The oil crises in the early 1970s accelerated this development. Consequently a massive flow of funds and Western expertise was poured into the oil-rich countries. Simultaneously English became big business and commercial pressures began to exert an influence. Time and money constraints created a need for cost-effective courses with clearly defined goals.

At the same time the demand was growing for English courses tailored to specific needs. Traditionally the aim of linguistics had been to describe the rules of English usage. But the new demand shifted attention away from defining the formal features of language usage to discovering the ways in which language is actually used in real communication (Widdowson, 1978). One finding of this research was that the language we speak and write varies significantly. In English language teaching this brought forth the view that there are important differences between, for instance, the English of law and that of commerce. These ideas generated English courses for specific groups of learners.

In *Episodes in ESP* Swales (1985) introduces an article on the nature of Scientific English which was written by C. L. Barber in 1962. In the 1970s descriptions of written scientific and technical English appeared-so-called

English for Science and Technology (EST). There were studies in other fields such as the analysis of doctor-patient communication.

To summarize, the view gained ground that the English needed by a specific group of learners could be identified by analyzing the linguistic characteristics of their specialist area of work or study.

In the meantime, new developments in educational psychology also contributed to the rise of ESP, by emphasizing the central importance of the learners and their attitudes to learning (Rodgers, 1969). Learners were seen to have different needs and interests, which would have an important influence on their motivation to learn and accordingly on the effectiveness of their learning. This generated the development of courses in which relevance to the learners' needs and interests were primary. The usual way of achieving this was to take texts from the learners' motivation and thereby make learning better and faster. All these factors helped the growth of ESP.

3. The three dimensions of language

In the use of dramatic dialog, the following three dimensions of language should be considered:

1. Information exchange (with its grammatical orientation).
2. Transaction (with its focus on negotiation and the expression of speaker intentions).
3. Interaction (with an emphasis on how language works to portray ro les and speaker identities).

The dimension of information exchange is illustrated in the following dialog.

A: Can you tell me what time this train gets to Kyongju?
B: Around 1:30 p.m. I think.

To understand the information in the dialog, students need to know that "A" has asked a question about the time of the train's arrival and "B" has supplied an answer. In making observations about the structure of the two utterances we are operating in the realm of grammar, which is built upon the way information is structured in a language.

We shift our focus to the intent of what is said when we move to the dimension of transaction. We search beneath the meanings of the words and their grammatical arrangement to investigate the purposes that the speakers may be attaching to what they are saying to each other. How will "B" interpret the intent of A's utterance in the sample dialog? Will "B" decide that it is nothing more than a request for information? "A" may already know what time the train is supposed to arrive in Kyongju and wishes, instead, to pass the time away on a long and boring trip by initiating conversation with "B". It will be "B's" task to interpret "A's" intention and then decide on an answer to give. In working out the transactions of a dialog we need to consider setting and non verbal elements such as the intonation used, the facial expression, such as the intonation used, the facial expressions, and the accompanying gestures, if any. If "B" interprets "A's" question as an invitation to chat and wishes to acept it as such, "B" can express that acceptance in a number of ways, such as by a friendly tone of voice and a smile. A decision not to accept such an overtune can also be signaled in various ways, such as avoidance of eye contact, falling intonation, and/or a lack of facial expression.

Whereas a consideration of transactions entails how speakers use language to express their intentions and attain their goals, a study of interactions leads us to analyze the ways in which the speakers use language to enact roles. The roles are sometimes overt and other times less overt whether the speakers are "information seeker" or "information giver."In any event, proficient speakers are expected to be able to associate what is said to one or more of these probable roles.

We cannot expect students to be able to discern all significant roles they encounter through conversations in the target language. However, we can hope that students will pay more attention to expressions that clearly demarcate social roles. The predictable adjacency pairs include such expressions like "Thank you," "You're welcome" and "Can I help you?, "Just looking." In real life sometimes it is possible to predict almost fully what each person will say to the other. In the classroom, the level of predictability is seen higher whenever students are required to recite prepared dialogs.

4. Dramatic dialog: three phases

From its early beginnings in the 1960s ESP has undergone a few phases of development. First of all, it should be indicated that ESP is not a monolithic universal phenomenon. ESP has developed at different speeds in different countries.

For example, in Korea many medical trainees including future medical doctors and nurses began to have lessons in Specific English in the 1970s when they were headed for different hospitals in English-speaking countries, especially in the U.S.A.

In 1988 when the 24th Olimpiad was held in Seoul, there were over 30.000 participants from 160 nations. At that time hundreds of Koreans worked as volunteer helpers and tour guides. Since English is a foreign language to Koreans, communication in English was a big problem. Therefore, those volunteers who were not fluent in English had a short-term training in Specific English. One of the books used by the volunteers was *Opening The Hermit Kingdom of Korea in English* (1986).

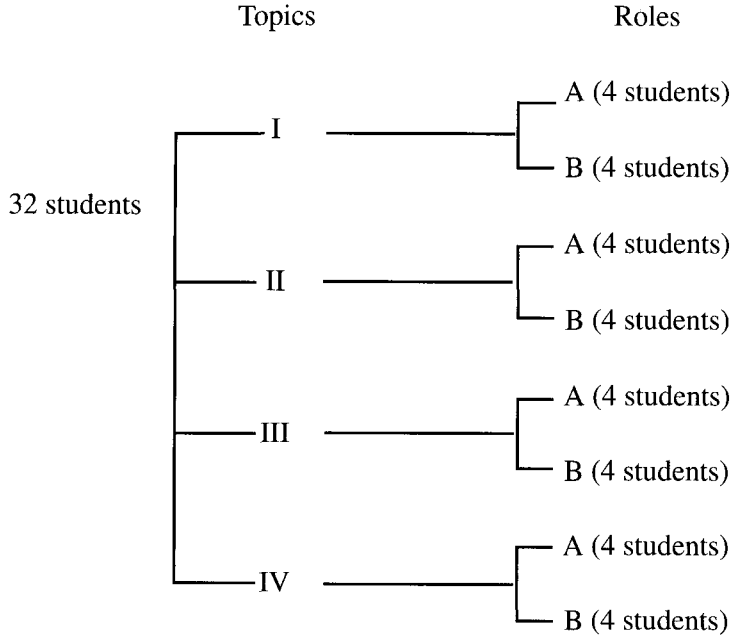
Some of the contents are as follows:

1. Airport Buses
2. Subways
3. Korean Restaurants
4. Kimchi
5. Talking about Family Members
6. Itaewon
7. The Open Markets
8. Seoul
9. Kyongbokkung Palace
10. Korean Folk Village
11. Museums
12. Han-gang River
13. Korea in the 19th Century
14. Korean Educational System
15. Radio and T.V.
16. Korean National Flag
17. Korea Alphabet Day
18. Panumujom
19. The First Birthday Party
20. Korean Names

Each lesson has a short introduction followed by a dialog between two people. Each lesson consists of twelve to fourteen lines of English conversation between "A" and "B."

4.1 *Rehearsal Phase*

First of all, students formed their own groups of eight and they were broken into smaller divisions. The following shows the breakdown:



Role groups formed circles to build solidarity throughout the rehersal period. Each role group was separated from the other role group. Students were given the freedom to ask any kind of questions they like and make any observations they considered to be relevant. Students had relaxed atmosphere of the rehearsal phase. Students were free to use their own language to accomplish the task at hand.

It is my observation that one of the major factors hindering the learning of a new language is fear or apprehension about performing it. By discussing the performance before it takes place, students can get rid of apprehension to a considerable extent. In fact through the skill and partnership of conversation, each member of the group learns how to play himself or herself silently. In this way, the knowledge that they have gained in the company of others is internalized.

Furthermore, there is another potential value to group work. Each student contributes his or her part to the collective knowledge of the group while taking

from this shared wealth what can serve him or her best under the circumstances. In this case the teacher's worth is established through his or her availability as a helper, coach, a director, and a source of knowledge.

According to Di Pietro (1987: 72-74), group tasks and teacher tasks are as follows:

> Group Tasks
> (1) Make certain that all group members clearly understand the charge.
> (2) Understand the "ground rules."
> (3) Consider all options open to realizing the goal and all possible reactions to these options by the other role.
> (4) Participate in choosing one member of the group to perform the role during the performance phase.
> (5) Follow the steps that lead to a group decision of how to play the assigned role.
>
> Teacher Tasks
> (1) Observe the dynamics of the groups as they form and be prepared to form the groups if the students are unable to do so.
> (2) Suggest options if the group appears to be stymied.
> (3) Be prepared to model utterances in the target language as needed.
> (4) Give explanations as requested but do not make them lengthy.

In talking about the Korean National Flag, there is no single style to be preferred over any other, and the teacher should be ready to accept whatever mode of thought seems to dominate in a given group. For instance, the task on the Korean National Flag may be treated in diverse ways. It could be idealistic, analytic, realistic or synthetic.

4.2 *Performance Phase*

Usually the performing students are the representatives of peer groups who share a stake with them in the outcome of the performance. The result depends on how well the performers can adapt their plans as they find out new information about each other and encounter each other's verbal strategies. The

non-performing members of the groups are great contributors to the performance because they participate in the preparation of roles as much as in a dialog indirectly. As for the remaining students in the class - those who were not members of these groups - they could be thought of persons witnessing an episode in real daily life. They, too, are participants in a significant learning experience.

Essentially the teacher's role is multifaceted. The teacher sets the general framework for the conversation and orchestrates the group members to help one another.

The introductory remarks are made in the target language. The general remarks made by a narrator before beginning the dialog could have the term "performance frame" coined by Scollon and Scollon (1981: 76). For instance, the frame for a dialog involving a Korean and a foreign tourist may be set as follows: "The action takes place between a Korean and a foreign tourist over a possible change of subways in downtown Seoul."

There are various performance prototypes depending on the intended goals, assigned topics or pieces of background information. Some are constrained by the particular setting, and others are influenced by the time. The dialog between dissatisfied customers and the complaint personnel of a department store is ubiquitous. In this case students are able to conduct the dialog rather rapidly because they need not to maneuver to find out the other's role. A common complaint dialog is as follows:

A: May I help you?
B: Yes. This blouse I bought yersterday is too tight for me.
A: Didn't you try it on when you bought it?
B: No, I didn't. Because it was Size 6, I just took it.
A: Well, then, why don't you try on size 8? Some sizes run small'.
B: I will, thanks.

Another typical complaint episode can proceed in the following way:

A: May I help you?
B: Yes. This necktie I bought this morning has a dirt spot.
A: Let me see. It looks all right to me.
B: No it isn't. Look at this area here.

A: Yes, you're right. Didn't you notice it when you bought it?
B: No, it was wrapped in a box.

There are a number of options in the above dialog. Different options could be played out in the classroom.

Most conversations involving public services are routinized in some way: making purchases of various goods; taking a taxi; visits to the barber or hairdresser; getting a car repaired and so on. However, the exchanges that occur on anniversaries, holidays, rites of passage and the undertaking of new enterprises are ritualized performances. Whereas routines result from constraints on various personal goals attainable in the conversation, ritualized performances grow from people interacting in socially defined events (Di Pietro, 1987: 82-83).

The participants in a conversation are bound to follow Grice's "cooperative principle" (1975: 45). In other words, conversations have a format that dictates how participants should open and close a conversation, when they should take their turns at speech, and under what circumstances they can freely change the topic under discussion. For example, the following expressions signal topic changes in English:

That reminds me of..."
Not to change the subject, but..."
By the way..."
Do you mind if we change the subject?"

It is especially important for foreign-language learners to get used to those conversational management devices that can be used when, because of limited knowledge of the target language, communication breaks down.

4.3 *Debriefing Phase*

Teachers are expected to detect student difficulties as well as know enough about the cause of these difficulties to render the needed help at the right time. In this phase teachers willingly recast in more fluent style what students have said in the target language, suggest alternatives, give explanations and do

exercises of various types. Actually teachers facilitate the students' production in the target language.

Teachers ask the class if students were able to understand each performer without difficulty. If a student admits to having difficulty teachers ask the performer to repeat or paraphrase what he/she said. Teachers also ask if there were some grammar points or vocabulary items that could have caused the difficulty, and let some students provide an explanation.

Teachers let students know that making mistakes in the target language is natural, that accuracy grows with practice. In fact, the more one speaks or writes, the better one becomes at these activities.

It is a good policy for students to keep a checklist which shows new vocabulary items, grammar points, idiomatic expressions and some new "routinized" expressions in the target language.

The general emphasis of debriefing is placed on how well the performers accomplish their respective goals. Again accuracy comes with practice. Debriefing is not a time to evaluate and criticize students. Evidence of more successful or improved learning is to be found in subsequent conversations and performances.

5. Conclusion

The well-written dialog captures the dramatic element of a human conversation. In doing so, it enhances retention of what is learned when interaction is performed. Often the textbook dialogs are stilted and unoriginal. To avoid a total failure I encourage the students to write their own dialogs and perform them in class on top of the assigned textbook dialogs. The result was astounding. The level of motivation was on an upward swing. The dialogs written by the students were lively and incredible. Besides, they eagerly consulted me about things they might have said in different situations.

Orchestrating rehearsal, performance, and debriefing has turned out successful. As for the individual's linguistic components, accent and grammatical accuracy played important parts in establishing identities in a foreign language. However, maintaining an accent of some sort could serve as a communicative shield, protecting the nonnative from having to display total knowledge of or

commitment to the target-language community. Whether or not the volunteer tour guides become native like in grammar and pronunciation may depend largely on the way in which those guides construct a new identity in the target language.

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