

# Performance Studies as a Tool to Promote English Communication Skills and Independent Learning

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## Introduction

In 2003, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology issued an “Action Plan to Cultivate ‘Japanese with English Abilities’” (from here on referred to as the ‘Action Plan’), which sets the following goal for English education: “Upon leaving the university, graduates should be able to use English at work.” While it is valuable to create such a plan, it is doubtful whether the goal is achievable by most students. One of the main criticisms is that the hours spent on English classes are not enough (Hato et. al 2004). We also have to be realistic about the current conditions English teachers are facing, such as large class sizes and low student motivation. Therefore, in order to achieve the ideal set in the ‘Action Plan,’ we need a major institutional change.

Since such a change would involve many factors that are financially and politically complex, however, it is probably more practical to set an achievable secondary goal of creating a classroom environment where students can gain independent learning strategies as well as fundamental communication skills. This could be the first step towards meeting the goals set by the ‘Action Plan.’ In other words, considering the wide range of students’ interests and ambitions, it seems more reasonable to offer an EFL class which helps students gain communication skills that they can use to meet their future needs. In this paper, based on the concept of “imitation as a way of acquiring performance knowledge” (Schechner 2005), I will explore the possibility of using performance studies to provide students with fundamental communication skills while at the same time helping them become independent learners.

## What Skills Are Necessary?

What, then, are the fundamental skills students need in order to achieve the goals set by the ‘Action Plan?’ To answer this question, I think it is necessary to introduce the notion of communicative competence. As proposed by Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (1980; Canale 1983), the skills students must have in order to be competent fall into these four areas: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences. They are summarized as follows:

- 1) grammatical competence: “knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, sentence grammar semantics and phonology” (1980: 29)
- 2) sociolinguistic competence: knowledge of the socio-cultural rules of language
- 3) discourse competence: the ability to connect sentences in stretches of discourse and to form a meaningful whole out of a series of utterances
- 4) strategic competence: “verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence” (1980: 29)

Among the four, grammatical competence should be regarded as the fundamental competence for overall communication. This is because EFL students must possess at least a basic understanding of English grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation in order to know what is being said to them and how they should respond. However, it is important to keep in mind that these four competences are closely related to each other and inseparable, so that studying one area separately from the others is not only ineffective, but also difficult. Therefore, classes should emphasize grammatical competence integrated with sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences.

Some people may argue that since Japanese students intensively study grammar and vocabulary in preparation for college entrance examinations, other kinds of competences should be emphasized at the university level. However, as Kumiko Torikai points out, Japanese EFL learners, especially when compared to the EFL learners in China and Korea, are not only poor at listening, but also grammar and vocabulary (98-102). As a first step, therefore, we need to focus on gaining proper pronunciation and basic grammar (especially basic sentence structure) along with a reasonable amount of vocabulary.

## Why Performance Studies?

In this section, I will discuss why performance studies is a useful method to teach fundamental communication skills. Performance studies views all human communication as a performance. It encompasses a wide range of disciplines, such as ethnography, cultural studies, literary studies, theatre, anthropology and gender studies. This paper forgoes such a large scope in favor of applying the field to an EFL class, focusing on the aesthetic performance of text, namely, theatre and oral interpretation. A key concept is the meta-recognition of embodiment (i.e. performance), where the process is more important than the outcome. As Richard Schechner, a pioneer of performance studies, states, “the close relationship between studying performance and doing performances is integral to performance studies” (2002: xi). If we consider communication as a performance, performance studies enables students to obtain English skills through actual performances, encouraging self-reflection on what they do and how they do it.

There are three major components of performance studies which are helpful in an EFL class setting. The first characteristic is its emphasis on embodiment. As Elyse Lamn Pineau advocates, it is important for students to be aware of the “‘body as a medium for learning’ [that] requires the rigorous, systematic, exploration-through-enactment of real and imagined experience in which learning occurs through sensory awareness and kinesthetic engagement” (132-33). Especially in a language class, this type of physical awareness should be very useful for students who wish to gain and internalize knowledge about the target language, particularly proper pronunciation.

The second component of performance studies is its emphasis on peer learning. By performing before others in a variety of situations, as Nathan Stucky and Cynthia Wimmer point out, “students have the opportunity to increase their skills in working in community with fellow students and in ensemble.... They learn how to evaluate speech elements of volume, pitch, tone, rhythm, and pace and movement elements of posture, pace, and spatial reactions between people and between people and objects” (9). Classes in performance studies involve students working together and engaging in the reflection and exploration of what they are learning as a group. In foreign language study, the potential benefits of peer learning are many. Considering student motivation, for example, Reiko Ikeda emphasizes the following merits: 1) increased resources for learning, 2) greater understanding of the material given and 3) emotional support in a communal atmosphere (52-7). Peer learning is a powerful element in performance studies.

Based on the works of constructive philosophers such as Paulo Freire, Jean Piaget, Lev S. Vygotsky and John Dewey and closely related to the second component of peer learning, the third characteristic is an emphasis on self-learning through social interaction. In a performance studies class, teachers are expected to “deemphasize lecturing and telling and encourage instead the active engagement of students in establishing and pursuing their own learning objectives” (Noddings 115) through embodiment. In its essence, gaining independent leaning skills is the core of performance studies. With the use of performance, independent learning can be introduced into an EFL class.

### **Imitation for Independent Learning**

According to Schechner, “all behavior consists of recombining bits of previously behaved behaviors” (2006: 35). Something seemingly new is actually a different way of presenting something already established. Therefore, performance studies claims that we can gain knowledge about something established through conscious imitation. As for learning a foreign language, imitation has been utilized in many EFL methodologies. Though now discredited because of its association with passive and monotonous learning, the audio-lingual approach is one example. While some styles of imitation are more effective than others, good imitation can be



active and exciting.

Examining how distinguished language learners, such as Heinrich Schliemann and Makoto Ohmi, or members of such groups as the Hippo Family Club, acquired their target languages, Yosuke Yanase finds several common elements in good imitation. The two key elements are recognition and performance. Good imitation is an active process of recognition driven by high motivation. Closely related to performance (i.e. embodiment), recognition is deepened through the performance itself and the evaluation of others. This greater recognition, in turn, enables a better performance. In order to be effective, performances should be repeated with little use of meta-language. This is because recognition is nonanalytic and does not require meta-language or teacher involvement. Free from the teacher's instruction, the highly motivated learner can find her/his own form for the imitation (48-53).

Drawing from Yanase's points, then, it is safe to say that if students are motivated, imitation can be used to develop independent learning skills in order to acquire a foreign language. The key is motivation. In order to lead students to good imitation in class and at home, there are two crucial factors: the careful selection and the effective usage of course materials. I will discuss these factors in the following sections.

### **Application of Performance Studies to an EFL Class**

In this section, I will show an example of applying performance studies to a first year university EFL class. In order to motivate students, it is important to repeatedly remind them of the short term and long term goals for the class. For an EFL course utilizing performance studies, the short term goal would be to understand how to absorb the model given through imitation, while the long term goal would be to perform/embody the model of their choosing, using the methods they have learned. It is crucial for students' learning that they know why they are doing what they are doing in and outside of class. Throughout the course, students are repeatedly reminded that every activity is a preparation for the final performance they will present. In the final project, students are then given the freedom to choose what to do and how to do it.

The course consists of the following stages: 1) selection of materials, 2) initial instruction, 3) demonstration of imitation, 4) class work and 5) final project. Hours allotted to each stage will vary depending on the students' progress.

#### **Stage 1: Selection of Course Materials**

It is always challenging to select teaching materials which are motivating for students. If the students are all majoring in the same field, selecting something related to their studies would be the obvious choice. When the class consists of learners with different majors, however, more general materials with intellectually stimulating topics are desirable. Recently, a variety of teaching

resources with authentic models have become available in many different forms, such as CDs, DVDs and the Internet. Since DVDs are often too expensive for students to buy for independent study at home, the use of textbooks with supplementary CDs or Internet sites might be a more reasonable option.

If students are able to access the Internet at home, they will have even greater opportunities to be exposed to English in a real-life setting. For example, “American Rhetoric (<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/>)” is a good resource for authentic models. It gives the top 100 recorded speeches in history and the top 100 movie speeches along with their transcripts. For most of the broadcasts, students can actually see videos of the speeches, allowing them to observe body language and facial expressions. If Internet access is not available, textbooks with supplementary CDs are an option that, although less motivating than Internet materials, could give students more focused information relating to their fields.

## **Stage 2: Initial Instruction**

As Yanase points out, too much instruction from the teacher might hinder students’ learning. On the first day of class, therefore, we will discuss the students’ goals, course requirements and basic information on imitation. The information given on imitation consists of the following four areas: basic rules of how to pronounce English sounds, how to use phonetic symbols, fundamental grammar based on chunks and resources for independent study.

Concerning pronunciation, the problem is selecting a realistic goal for EFL students. Specifically, should native-like pronunciation be the final product or is intelligible pronunciation sufficient? As English has become an international language, many different varieties of English have developed around the world, such as in India and Singapore. Therefore, the necessity of acquiring native-like pronunciation in an EFL class has been greatly debated (Jenkins 2000, 2002). While students should be encouraged to imitate native speaker patterns as closely as possible when practicing at home, precise pronunciation is not demanded in class.

The main purpose of introducing phonetic symbols is to help students reproduce English sounds correctly. This means that students are not required to mechanically memorize the symbols or transcribe the class materials phonetically. Rather, phonetic symbols are repeatedly used in pronunciation exercises so that students will eventually be able to identify them with the English sounds they represent. There are at least two reasons why students should learn phonetic symbols. One reason is that phonetic symbols help students avoid using katakana to represent English sounds. The second reason is that phonetic symbols enable students to understand how to pronounce new words by themselves. Phonetic symbols can then be an important tool for independent learning.

Regarding fundamental grammar, the concept of chunks is presented to help students imitate the speech model. From research based on cognitive psycholinguistics, it is now believed that

spoken English is understood and produced based on perceptual/productive sense units (chunks) rather than on words (Kadota 1986; Suzuki 1999; Kono 2001 et. al). From his research, Shuhei Kadota hypothesizes that written English is also understood through chunks (2002, 2006). Empirically, the concept of chunks has been used as a training method for simultaneous interpretation, especially sight translation. The use of chunks for grammatical instruction has also been promoted in the EFL class (Suzuki 1997; Tsuchiya 2004; Tanaka 2006 et. al). What is important to note is that mechanical memorization of the chunks presented by the teacher should not be demanded. Instead, students should be encouraged to recognize chunks on their own, understand their meanings and apply them to imitation practice.

In order for students to identify chunks, it is helpful to explain the major chunk groups and their basic arrangement in a sentence. Yasushi Suzuki suggests the following four chunk types: chunks that make the subject of a sentence, verb-centered chunks, adjective chunks and adverbial chunks (188-9). These chunk groups can be the starting point for students to connect the sound and the content of the model they imitate.

As for resources, the use of the Internet should be emphasized. There are many Web sites that are designed for students, such as Konan University's "English Pronunciation Practice for Japanese Learners" (<http://kccn.konan-u.ac.jp/ilc/english/index.html>). In class, students are encouraged to expose themselves to as many authentic English materials as possible, not only for daily practice but also for the final performance. However, because of the lack of regulation, it is not easy to ensure the information presented on the Internet is accurate, or the English used is correct. "Intute" (<http://www.intute.ac.uk/>) is a good site which introduces students to educationally reliable Internet content.

Another important use of the Internet is e-mail. Since a comprehensive explanation of the model to be imitated is never provided in class, students are encouraged to use e-mail to ask the teacher about what they do not understand or about how to make their performances better. Even with self study at home and peer learning in class, students will encounter a variety of problems, so it is important to have a means to ask individual questions. E-mail could be one such tool.

As for grading, it is necessary to make sure that the learning process, rather than outcome is evaluated. This means that active participation in class activities is expected. In order to show their effort, students are required to turn in a portfolio which includes worksheets from each lesson (described later in this paper) and their final project report (consisting of the worksheet and discussion summary from their final performance). As Laura Miccoli points out, portfolios can be an effective way to promote reflection (2003).

### **Stage 3: Demonstration of Imitation**

At the next stage, students learn how to imitate the given speech model. In order to help them understand the process, two learning aids will be provided: a checklist for pronunciation and a



worksheet for the model.

To produce proper English sounds, students should learn how to use their tongue, lips and teeth, as well as the phonological differences between English and Japanese. The information necessary for pronunciation exercises in and outside of class will be explained and demonstrated by the instructor. Students will also be provided with a pronunciation checklist (See Sample 1) based on the phonological differences between Japanese and English (Vance 1987; Tsujimura 1996) and the intelligibility of Japanese English (Suenobu et.al 1992). Students are to use the list to check their pronunciation while practicing by themselves. It is important to note that the checklist should focus on the basic points students can understand. Furthermore, students should not be required to check all the points in the list every time they imitate the model. Instead, they should be encouraged to concentrate on a few points at one time.

The process of imitation consists of the following steps: 1) listening, 2) mumbling, 3) text marking, 4) content analysis, 5) parallel reading, and 6) individual reading. For more motivated students, recitation in front of the class can be added as a seventh step. The worksheet (See Sample 2) is provided to help students follow these steps.

Sample 1: Checklist

- (1) Did I breathe out strongly from the stomach?
- (2) Did I distinguish strong stresses from weak stresses?
- (3) Did I put a weak stress on the second vowel in a diphthong?
- (4) Did I distinguish [ɑ], [ʌ], [æ] and [ə]?
- (5) Did I pronounce [i] properly?
- (6) Did I distinguish [l] from [r]?
- (7) Did I distinguish [f] from [h]?
- (8) Did I distinguish [v] from [b]?
- (9) Did I distinguish [θ] from [s]?
- (10) Did I distinguish [ʃ] from [j]?
- (11) Did I distinguish [ð] from [z]?
- (12) Did I distinguish [ʒ] from [ʒ]?
- (13) Did I use proper intonation?
- (14) Did I use proper assimilation?
- (15) Did I use proper linking?
- (16) Did I use proper elision?






For more  
motivated  
students




## Sample 2: Worksheet

Excerpt from " <i>The Perils of Indifference</i> "		Notes:
<p>What is indifference? Etymologically, the word means "no difference." A</p> <p>ange and unnatural state in which the lines blur between light and darkness,</p> <p>and dawn, crime and punishment, cruelty and compassion, good and</p> <p>What are its courses and inescapable consequences? Is it a philosophy? Is</p> <p>there a philosophy of indifference conceivable? Can one possibly view</p> <p>indifference as a virtue? Is it necessary at times to practice it simply to keep</p> <p>one's sanity, live normally, enjoy a fine meal and a glass of wine, as the</p> <p>around us experiences harrowing upheavals?</p> <p>Of course, indifference can be tempting -- more than that, seductive. It is</p> <p>much easier to look away from victims. It is so much easier to avoid such</p> <p>interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward</p> <p>troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair. Yet, for the</p> <p>person who is indifferent, his or her neighbor are of no consequence. And,</p> <p>therefore, their lives are meaningless. Their hidden or even visible anguish is</p> <p>of no interest. Indifference reduces the Other to an abstraction.</p> <p><u>Pentad</u></p> <p>Agent:</p> <p>Purpose:</p> <p>Scene:</p> <p>Act:</p> <p>Agency:</p> <p><u>Pronunciation checkpoints</u></p> <p>1)</p> <p>2)</p> <p>3)</p>	<p>Double-spaced for marking.</p> <p>Whatever students feel is helpful to improve their imitation should be written down here, such as the plot line, important chunks and comments on the model.</p> <p>Answers to such questions as "Who is speaking?" "Why is s/he speaking?" "Where and when is s/he speaking?" "To whom is s/he speaking?" "What is s/he speaking about?" and "How is s/he speaking?" should be noted here. If possible, comments should be written in English.</p> <p>At least three checkpoints for pronunciation should be selected from the checklist.</p>	

First, students listen to the model several times and then are asked to mumble (or loosely imitate) the model to grasp its rhythm as a whole. Next, the students mark the text provided in the worksheet. Since our goal is to imitate the model, not to analyze it in detail, the notation should be minimized to the following:



Pause :	Stress : ●	Rhythm : 
Intonation :  	Linking : ~	Chunk : /

“|” should be put at a pause. “●” should be put underneath a stressed syllable. “” should be put where students want to emphasize the rhythm. “” or “” should be put where they feel the intonation rises or falls. “~” should be put where they should link continuous sounds. “/” should be used to distinguish the chunks they think are helpful to imitate the model.

The next step is content analysis based on dramatism. Developed by Kenneth Burke, this method relies on five fundamental elements known as the pentad: agent, purpose, scene, act and agency (1945, xv). In performance studies, the pentad is used to analyze human action as a performance with such questions as: Who is doing it? (agent), Why is it done? (purpose), Where and when is it done? (scene), To whom is it done (scene), What is done? (act) and How is it done? (agency). As Ronald J. Pelias points out, “[m]any performance studies practitioners find dramatism a particularly appealing critical method for analyzing aesthetic texts because dramatism looks at aesthetic texts with a language that is both highly familiar and easily translated into performance behaviors” (48). Therefore, to achieve a good imitation, students are asked to analyze the content of the model from the viewpoint of each element in the pentad.

After content analysis comes parallel reading, where students recite the text out loud with the recording while glancing at the marking in the worksheet. Before actual parallel reading, a few practices using parallel mumbling might be helpful. Depending on how confident the students feel, a layered approach might be useful. First, a group of chunks is practiced and then extended to a sentence. Following sentence-by-sentence practice, a group of sentences is practiced and then finally extended to a paragraph. Paragraph practice should be followed by reading the whole text out loud with the recording.

The last step is individual reading, where students read the text out loud without relying on the recording. After reading the marked text several times, it is recommended that students read the original text (the text without marking) to assess their progress. In order to check how intelligible and comprehensible the students sound, it is also recommend that, if possible, they record their reading and compare it with the original.

For more motivated students, the extra step of reciting the text in front of the class should be encouraged. There are several ways to practice recitation, but the “lookup and read” exercise introduced by Michael West (1960) is probably the most commonly used. In this exercise, students memorize a sentence (or a group of chunks), and then look up and say it out loud without glancing at the text. The rest of the process is similar to parallel reading. Sentence-by-sentence exercises are extended to a group of sentences, a paragraph and finally to the whole text. It is important to note that, even though students are allowed to look at the text (and the marking in it) if

necessary, it should be referenced only when they have trouble reproducing the model.

#### **Stage 4: Class Work**

The following is an outline of a typical class lesson. The session consists of the following steps: 1) warm-up, 2) review of the previous lesson, 3) pair work, 4) peer reading and 5) in-class performance.

The first step is a warm-up dedicated to the following two activities: relaxing while doing breathing and pronunciation exercises and helping students to get to know each other better. This is crucial because the more relaxed the students feel, the more accurate and fluent their pronunciation becomes (Celce-Murcia et al. 1996). Since students are usually too shy and self-conscious to say or do something in front of others, it is also important to create a class atmosphere that encourages risk-taking. In theatre, many techniques (such as the method developed by Arthur Lessac) have been used for these purposes. In order to keep the warm-up interesting and refreshing, a variety of activities should be brought into class. These warming-up activities are aimed at helping students build trust among themselves and at preparing them to work together.

After developing a trusting atmosphere, we move to the second step: a review of the previous lesson. In this step, the teacher asks several questions in English about the material from the last lesson and students are expected to answer with or without help from the text. In the question-answer session, it is important to let students know that making mistakes is not a bad thing. Also, instead of mechanically reproducing the answers, students are encouraged to communicate with the teacher using the knowledge and the skills they have gained from the model.

Keyword recitation might also be helpful for review. In keyword recitation, the beginning chunk of each sentence is presented on the board or OHP. First, the teacher demonstrates the model recitation and then has the students practice it chorally. After that, the more motivated students are encouraged to perform it in front of the class. Even though students are allowed to look at the text (and the marking in it) if necessary, it is recommended that they reference it only when they have trouble reproducing the model. Sumio Tsuchiya points out the following considerations for keyword recitation: 1) While students need to be aware of what they are saying, they do not have to reproduce the exact words in the text; 2) Mechanical reproduction tends to become monotonous, so students should be careful about rhythm and intonation (97-8). Avoiding mechanical reproduction of the model is important for a successful review.

After the review, we move on to the worksheet that students prepared at home for the day's lesson. The third step focuses on pair work because students read the text to each other. It is important to remind the students that they should think of themselves as performers who are relating a story to an audience, not just reading the text. In other words, they should try to embody the pentad of the model they analyzed and make it their own. Before reading to each

other, however, students need to exchange the worksheets they prepared at home with their partners and show each other the checkpoints they selected from the pronunciation checklist. Then, after their performances, they give each other comments on whether the checkpoints were achieved as well as whether the performances were interesting or believable. Students are asked to change partners several times, thereby having even more opportunities to hear other students' ideas about the pentad as well as about their own pronunciation checkpoints.

To prepare for the in-class performance of the new material, the fourth step is peer reading. In this step, students are divided into groups of three or four. In each group, students clarify what they did not understand about the model, discuss their ideas about the pentad and explore how to incorporate their interpretations into the group performance. For example, in order to clearly show their interpretations, each member of the group can take turns reading individually or emphasize specific lines by reading as a group. Because students can explore different aspects of the performance, rehearsal is an integral part of peer reading. Students are also encouraged to discuss any difficulties that they may be having. It would be ideal if the students conducted this activity in English, but they are allowed to use Japanese in order to help each other deepen their understanding of the given model.

The fifth step is the presentation of the group performances in front of the class. In order to prevent the model from being reproduced mechanically, the keyword recitation format might be useful. The spectators as well as the performers are required to participate actively in the presentation because after each performance, the audience is required to give feedback. This feedback could be in the form of a comment or a question based on the performer's pronunciation or interpretation of the text. Students should learn how to make comments such as "The presentation was good because ...." or to ask questions such as "Which part of the text was the most difficult to imitate?" and "Why was this particular sentence read by a group instead of one performer?" It cannot be emphasized enough that negative comments are not productive in any way while constructive comments and thought-provoking questions can only make the performances better.

In order to avoid repeating the same routine in each lesson, it may be helpful to introduce different kinds of activities to keep the students motivated. Depending on the learners' interests and needs, for example, some of Makoto Ohmi's extensive applications of oral interpretation to an EFL class (1984, 1988, 1996) could be incorporated.

### **Stage 5: Final Project**

The final project consists of the following steps: 1) selecting a model, 2) making a worksheet, 3) rehearsal, 4) final presentation and 5) discussion. The first step is to select a model. Students are required to select a model on their own from materials ranging from books to Web pages. They have to choose a piece that takes 2 to 3 minutes and has a message they want to convey to



others. Although any material that is not offensive would be acceptable, students are strongly encouraged to select a model with a recording and a transcript. Since this step is expected to be done outside of class, students should feel free to consult the teacher about anything related to the presentation either during office hours or through e-mail.

After selecting the model, the next step is to make their own worksheets for the model. Students can use the same format as the worksheet provided by the instructor. Instead of the section on pronunciation checkpoints, however, they must include a section where they explain why they chose the specific model and why they thought its message should be shared with the class. Since the worksheet will be used as a handout for the audience at the presentation, it should be written logically and neatly so that spectators can follow what is being performed in front of them. While some sections could be written in Japanese, English is encouraged.

The next step is rehearsal. Following the warm-up exercises, students are divided into several groups and take turns performing their pieces. After each performance, the performer receives feedback from the other members in the group. As in a regular lesson, students are encouraged to give positive and constructive feedback so that they can help each other improve. Students can write down anything they think is useful and add it later to the Notes section of the worksheet. After the discussion, each performer is given an opportunity to reshape the performance and explore other possibilities inspired by the feedback. The main goals of the rehearsal are to deepen the understanding of their pieces, feel more comfortable with and confident in their performances and be prepared mentally and physically for the final presentation.

The following step is the final presentation. After handing out the worksheets, students take turns performing in front of the class. Spectators are required to pick at least three pieces for later discussion, jotting down comments and questions. The keyword recitation format is used again to help performers avoid reading the material mechanically. If they want to, students can also use props to make their performances more active and compelling. Performance is a two-way communication where the performer and the audience share or co-create communal feelings. In other words, all the participants should enjoy the experience and feel it is meaningful. Students cannot learn anything from a dead performance. Only through a shared performance can students understand what the text really means. Experiencing such presentations is the ultimate purpose of using performance studies as a tool to learn English.

Finally comes the discussion. Using the notes they took while watching the presentations, students discuss each performance in terms of theme, style and especially language use. Because reflection is the key to a deeper understanding of the text, these discussions give students an opportunity not only to critically analyze each others' performances but also to reflect on their own. Students should then summarize the feedback they both give and receive. This summary, along with all their worksheets, is turned in as a final portfolio. Therefore, grading consists of not only

the final performance, but the entire process as well.

## Conclusion

This paper has explored the possibility of using performance studies as a tool to promote good communication skills and independent learning in a university EFL class. The fundamental concepts are imitation and meta-recognition. Imitation is a way to acquire performance knowledge. When students imitate an authentic model, they gain skills in such areas as basic sentence structure and proper pronunciation. Since the basis of good imitation is motivation, performance studies can be used to create an environment in which students feel supported, learn from one another and actually use what they have studied in the process of performance. The meta-recognition of embodiment leads to a better understanding of the target language. This is because students' self-reflection on what they do and how they do it is crucial to internalize the skills they have practiced in class. Using self-reflection and peer feedback, students also learn how to work independently instead of relying on the teacher. Because performance studies is such a powerful resource for learning, it can effectively be applied to an EFL class.

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