Curtain CALL: Online Performances for Integrative Motivation

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Outline of this show & tell presentation

- Some student performances become online audio, so podcasting is first contextualized in the Osaka Jogakuin College (OJC) curriculum
- A Computer Communication class plays a role in the research and shows motivating Web 2.0 activities that can result in online performances
- Four kinds of OJC campus EFL contests and some off-campus student performances are introduced, some of which are turned into podcasts
- EFL contest performances and their podcasts are analyzed in terms of student motivation
- A student is interviewed concerning what performances she engaged in during the current semester, and how they affected her motivation
- Her responses are analyzed in terms of what constitutes a performance and the types of motivation involved in various performances
- Tentative conclusions are suggested on how integrative motivation can be enhanced by technology
- Show podcasts and other online performances involving students
- Limited references for theoretical frameworks; a new area of research
- Questions and comments
Podcasting performances in the OJC curricular context

OJC = Osaka Jogakuin College; EGAP, EPP = English for General Academic, Professional Purposes; BICS = Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, CALP = Cognitive-Academic Language Proficiency
Computer Communication course activities

Activities involving the WebCT LMS
• Discussion Board (asynchronous)
• Chat (synchronous)
• Student Homepages – with photos e-mailed from their mobile phones, self-introductions, and links to sites they like for independent EFL study

Web 2.0 activities
• Posts to their campus blogs in English recognized as an alternative to LMS
• Yackpack – a group voice discussion board; can write a summary first
• Listen with earphones to podcasts students select from recommended sites
• My Pop Studio – design one’s avatar, mash-up music videos and reality TV shows; it also familiarizes students with online video editing techniques
• Watch curriculum-related online videos, e.g. “Witness” for human rights activism and a tutorial on video camera techniques
• Experience using a video camera in class and make a video for YouTube
• Voicethread narrated slide show of one’s region as the class presentation

Outside of class
• E-mail and Mixi SNS (social networking site or service) for communication
## OJC 2 & 4-year college EFL Contests

All are motivated by a campus-wide audience, prizes, & polished performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contest</th>
<th>Contestants, year, class</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
<th>Preparation assistance</th>
<th>Motivational factors, extras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peace Dialogue</strong></td>
<td>Pair, 1ˢᵗ, Topic Discussion</td>
<td>Spring for late spring</td>
<td>In class, out of class, teacher help</td>
<td>Represent their class, online podcast &amp; script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td>Pair/group, 2ⁿᵈ, Paper &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>Late spring &amp; summer for early fall</td>
<td>Out of class, teacher help</td>
<td>Represent their class, online podcast &amp; script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Song</strong></td>
<td>Whole class, 1ˢᵗ, Phonetics</td>
<td>Fall for college festival</td>
<td>In class, possibly outside</td>
<td>Class solidarity for friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary</strong></td>
<td>Individual, 1ˢᵗ to 4ᵗʰ, all students</td>
<td>All year for winter</td>
<td>Self-study room AWL worksheets</td>
<td>Personal accomplishment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Plus auditions & coaching for regional English speech contests off campus
Performances and Motivation: Issues

Different types of performances are motivating in different ways. The four OJC contests arose organically, but arguably appeal to complementary motives that drive students to excel. Each contest is visible and audible in English to an audience in an auditorium. Each allows students to polish their skills by extra practice outside of class, and there are prizes. Similar conditions also apply to regional English speech contests, for a small number of students for high stakes in terms of training and possible rewards.

What makes the song and vocabulary contests different from the peace dialogue and presentation contests in terms of motivation? Then what makes each contest different from the rest in appealing to different types of motivation, learning styles, strengths among the four skills, social issues such as peer group dynamics, identity issues such as bilingual goals, and activating other potentialities of students?
Performances and Motivation: Analysis

The song contest is a prepared performance with whole classes competing as part of a required course in Phonetics. Teachers decide on a popular song and the individual students are not selected or treated distinctively by having the choice whether or not to participate in the song contest. Through group solidarity they can enhance friendships. Thus they are invested in the process socially, but do not have much autonomy as individuals.

The vocabulary contest is not required and individual, but hand signals are utilized, and students could imitate others. Still, it appeals to very different drives compared to the song contest. The performance itself is not prepared, but all students are generally encouraged to study the academic word lists involved on their own with a view to the contest. Without much peer social reward, winners show little emotion compared to other contests.
The peace dialogue and presentation contests are prepared performances with student-created content. Classes choose their best group of two or sometimes more students. Those selected become class representatives, so there is some investment by all students in the contest outcome. The *kumi* involved are the closest equivalents to home rooms of the first and second year, respectively. A disadvantage compared to the song and vocabulary contests is that only the selected representatives perform, but all students had their chance to perform in front of their class. Contest spectators root for their own classmates and might also be inspired by excellent performances by others in their cohort. The contestants are treated distinctively, judged on the relative merit of their English performances. Better preparation and more interesting ideas are rewarded, with prizes for the top five of 15 groups (OJC two- and four-year colleges combined). Students who win awards are palpably moved, and celebrated by classmates.
The four contests evolved in practice over years, each intuitively staking out a niche in the complex socio-psychological terrain where the motivation of Japanese students to excel in English can be enhanced. Vocabulary, the newest contest, caters to receptive skills, understanding but not having to speak English. The other contests involve active skills, but in the song contest the individual voice can blend into the group inconspicuously.

One conclusion of the above analysis is that the peace dialogue and presentation contests evoke a wider range of cognitive and affective factors, and these two seem to be taken more seriously on campus. The students exhibit higher order thinking skills such as originality while being judged like English speech contestants.

Among other comparative benefits of the peace dialogue and presentation contests, students have the opportunity for coaching of their English speaking outside of class by their teacher, which may develop personal bonds and promote integrative motivation.
Online Performances and Motivation

It could be further argued that the transformative power of a polished performance in a campus contest is enhanced when the presentation goes online, where recognition by a global audience can be achieved. Student-generated content in the form of a podcast, video or other form of online presentation distinguishes the students as co-equal content creators in the target language community. Even when the students perform it anonymously to conceal personal information, they show undiminished personal satisfaction at the achievement. So the experience could be transformative in terms of integrative motivation, making the foreign language their own second language, a key development on the way to a bilingual identity. It has been observed that, compared to instrumental motivation to become bilingual, integrative motivation is correlated with becoming bicultural, a bridge beyond internalizing the language as a tool.
Student Interview: Background & Method

In the Fall 2007-2008 semester, one second-year student enrolled in the author’s Computer Communication class. As content-based English, it seemed ethically justifiable to interview her twice briefly in class with her written permission on a standard human subject research form in Japanese. The author wished to know what a student would regard as a performance, and her answers indicated that she had clear notions thereof without needing a definition. The author also wished to know how performances affected her motivation. There also her views were expressed unequivocally. The format was conversational, with the author taking notes of what she said, and she seemed glad to have the discussions. This approach can be justified methodologically as well as ethically in terms of sociocultural theory and social constructivism, where data from even one respondent can be informative.
A Student on Performances and Motivation

She reported the following as her performances this semester. Hereinafter transcriptions of what she said are highlighted in color, with the author’s clarifications in brackets:

- Voicethread presentation [a voice comment left on it by an EFL teacher in Europe showed her the power of online presentations].
- Played the organ twice a week in Chapel [elaborated upon later].
- Played bells in the Candlelight Service in December, which required a total of about 20 hours of practice.
- Graded in-class presentations
  - Asian politics and society – oral summary of paper.
  - Phonetics – Individual acting from “Toy Story” and group performance of Jazz Chants.
  - Topic Studies I – Memorized and performed part of “Twelfth Night” [course topics are supposed to be about global issues].
  - Topic Studies II – Human trafficking, oral summary of paper.
  - Aerobics – improvised routine, final performance.
There are many other kinds of performances even by students at the same college. Recalling the four campus English contests, this student was not a class representative in the presentation contest for second-year students (Topic Studies I classes in the 2-year college division). Regional speech contests were also mentioned. There have also been regional academic events at universities or community centers where OJC students have given presentations in English or bilingually for international audiences.

Knowing that one of her best friends was a former student of the author and his friend in the Mixi social networking site, the student added that her friend had spoken at local high schools after participating in the OJC study trip to India.

Many club activities also give rise to performances, some at the annual school festival in the fall. The baseball game between student and faculty teams with overhand fast pitching is another kind of performance with physical and mental pressures and risks.
Virtually without hesitation or prompting, she went on to discuss her thoughts and feelings about performances. Only the Voicethread slide show appeared outside of school, online, so the live audience was usually an issue:

Even if she could not do well, [the challenge was to make a] clear main point to the audience, prepare, research the topic [in the case of speeches], and manage time. Then she feels satisfied afterwards.

Usually it was a group [performance], so she felt pressure, then relief. Pressure was from friends or members [of the performing group], the audience, and the teacher, [especially] when it was graded. The audience creates good tension [italicized phrases in the student’s exact words will be featured in the analysis later].

Asked for whom she was mainly performing, she surprisingly said that it was more importantly (than the above groups alluded to in the question) for herself.
She felt that she could not prepare enough for [the sake of] the audience, but [by] preparing, she learned a lot from researching, [so] even if she could not say it well to the audience, she was satisfied with herself. It was not much different if she was not seen, as when she was playing the organ in the chapel, since [she thinks] everyone notices a mistake.

She has the motivation to prepare, to do her best for the audience. When friends perform well, she wants to speak as well. Maybe performances motivate her to master English.

At this point the author introduced the distinction between instrumental motivation for practical purposes and integrative motivation to communicate with and get closer to the L2 speaking world.
For school presentations English is more of a *tool*. When some students from Taiwan came here, her friend who had gone to India was motivated to communicate with them [in English].

In high school when her family hosted a home stay from a sister school, she was strongly motivated to communicate [in English].

She likes a TV program where Japanese people live abroad and they seem bilingual (and bicultural) in the country’s language [not necessarily English].

She would like to connect with the larger [English-speaking] world, but she is [not confident that] she will become bilingual [enough to do that].

When she sees Japanese people speaking English fluently, for example [with foreigners] on the train, it is motivating, a [kind of] *longing*. 
Performances and Motivation: Analysis

1. What do the English contests and student interview indicate about what constitutes a performance, the efficacy of student performances, and the interrelationship between performances and motivation?

• *demarcation* from ordinary classroom practice *in importance* this time it *counts*, so the performer tends to be *up* for it

• *preparation* disproportionate to the performance *in time* it *polishes* the skills involved toward a *peak* for the event

• *symbolic demarcation* from the ordinary classroom *in space* a designated performance area, a *stage*, podium or teacher’s position

• *having an audience* people see and/or hear the performance, at the time or later (online); they are visible or invisible to the performer, known or imagined

• *being judged or evaluated* feedback on the performance in terms of a grade, award or not, degree of applause, praise or criticism, possible publicity on campus or beyond
extrinsic, affective or situational influences on the performer anticipated, resulting or perceived social rewards or risks of standing out in a performance; effects of group dynamics, such as the student’s role or standing among friends or in her peer group; stage fright, fear of failure or mistakes, or, on the other hand, confidence that it will go well enough; her image in the eyes of teachers or significant others; perceived responses from the audience; value of the prizes offered to winners; other possible feedback or consequences

intrinsic psychological efficacy of performances having an audience activates the desire to excel in achieving certain goals (“performances motivate me to master English” - student), not only through performance pressure but also through productive pressure (“good tension”), and satisfaction at doing one’s best constitutes internal positive feedback

performances can evoke various kinds of motivation The same student explicitly indicated having both instrumental motivation (using L2 as a “tool”) and integrative motivation (“longing” to communicate well with target language speakers and perhaps to be a part of their world)
2. How might integrative motivation be enhanced by technology?

- Students reach a wider audience, enhancing the efficacy of performing for an audience. In this regard, positive feedback from abroad, such as a voice comment on a narrated slide show, makes a strong impression on students. EFL teachers in different countries can mutually elicit such feedback through professional networks such as the Webheads mailing list.
- Extra time outside of class is spent polishing students’ skills when a performance is recorded later, such as for a podcast. As it is not graded, such students show intrinsic motivation. Since the teacher is volunteering extra work for them, students may be grateful and feel that the L2 target community is more approachable. A more personal relationship is encouraged, which can be motivating to students (social networking outside of class, such as with Mixi, is another way to aim for enhanced integrative motivation).
- Student-generated content placed online makes students no longer merely part of a non-native speaking audience of passive consumers of English but rather co-equal content creators participating in the L2 target community.
- While further research is needed to make a definitive connection, it would be a mistake to overlook the palpable enthusiasm of students toward such tasks because of the difficulty of measuring affective factors essential to motivation.
References


For further investigation

Take note of the URLs below. Thank you!

- **Show & Tell:**
  Japancasting (podcasts): [http://stevemc.blogmatrix.com](http://stevemc.blogmatrix.com)
  Student-narrated slide show: [http://voicethread.com/#u24604.b25117.i140196](http://voicethread.com/#u24604.b25117.i140196)
  YouTube video filmed in class: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXBwr6gMrrM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXBwr6gMrrM)


- **Over 200 of the author’s publications, presentations, podcasts, videos, Web & mobile sites, an Asian Studies WWW Virtual Library 4-star site since 1997:**
  [http://waoe.org/steve/epublist.html](http://waoe.org/steve/epublist.html)
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