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Teacher Assistant - Advanced English: Presentation <sup>1</sup>

## General Observations

[FN 1] The fieldwork I was set in was Seoul National University, South Korea. I am a teacher assistant for an Advanced English Presentation class in the business division. Many students were set on improving their marketing skills, conference skills, and overall international skills given that many students wanted to work globally. At the beginning of the fieldwork, students were set to give an overview of what they wanted to do and what they wanted to work on throughout the course. Many students said they wanted to work in marketing or raise their own business. This class seemed to be a good fit for their goals as one of the upcoming projects was to pitch a new, original project and sell it to the class.

[FN 4] During the final presentation, students were set out to create a presentation on their progress in their desired company—in other words, present for a **performance** review. Most students chose to present their **performance** reviews online. Students had a range of how detailed they would make their presentation. Some students would utilize the school library's conference room to create a more authentic **performance** review situation. Other students would simply use zoom to record and give their **performance** from home. As this was a group activity, all students needed to be present during the live presentation to give feedback and ask questions for the negotiation section.

## Focused Observations

In my last week of working with the students, I ended up watching five recordings of the final presentation and one live presentation. Most students opted to send in a recording, while

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<sup>1</sup>Key Words:

**Performance**

Korean

America

Flow

Body

Script

one group chose to perform live. The group that chose to perform live was more outspoken and was what the professor privately named <sup>2</sup>“the strongest group” (OC). <sup>3</sup>This may be due to how they consistently raise their hand during class, go above what is expected when performing, and often stay after class to discuss with the professor<sup>3</sup> (OC). Due to most students opting to perform online, students had some leeway on when they were able to submit their videos.

<sup>4</sup>Most students wore white shirts and black slacks<sup>4</sup>, much like the last class activity. Due to this project being more heavily graded, students were more serious when performing their pieces. During the recording sessions, most students rented out one of the Seoul National University library’s conference rooms and sat across from each other while one of them presented on the board. Much like a real business conference in <sup>5</sup>America, students wore semi-casual clothes to strengthen the atmosphere.

The students who performed their piece through zoom for their recording session wore more comfortable attire. Only two groups submitted their project using zoom. The <sup>5</sup>conference room was much better for grading<sup>5</sup> as it allowed students to perform in front of a live audience while allowing graders to see their <sup>6</sup>body language during their <sup>7</sup>performance (OC). The main focus of this class is to strengthen each student’s <sup>8</sup>performance skills as presenting is a general role that they will have in the world of business.

The students who performed through zoom had their bodies closer to the camera, giving graders less content to grade their <sup>9</sup>body language with. However, it was easier to see their facial expression. One disadvantage students had from doing this was the temptation to read their <sup>10</sup>script during their <sup>11</sup>performance.

<sup>12</sup>Korean students tend to rely on a <sup>13</sup>script, which was something the professor discouraged. However, working with a couple of SNU students one-on-one, I noticed that students heavily relied on a <sup>14</sup>script to not mess up their lines when presenting a topic. As consequence, their intonations were rather stiff and didn’t have the natural <sup>15</sup>flow you would hear during a conversation (OC).

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<sup>2</sup> Professor input - idea of what makes a strong performer

<sup>3</sup> Professor input - idea of what makes a strong performer

<sup>4</sup> Attire - common attire in Korea when presenting

<sup>5</sup> Attributes in performance

Although most students performed with perfectly memorized lines, their speech leading up to 5-minutes at most, their performance lacked the natural flow it could potentially have if they did not rely on scripted lines (OC). Four students performed with perfect ease, even with the scripted lines. Some students had some pauses as they tried to memorize their lines again. Three students looked at their notes and another student spoke in uneven high octaves as they tried to focus on their volume and script.

Korean students typically aim to perfectly match the rubric criteria, thus, their performance was very scripted. Due to Korean being their second language, perhaps this is not a surprise as speaking for 5-minutes straight on a topic could be difficult without advanced literacy.

This could explain why the American performers were more relaxed in their presentations<sup>6</sup>. Instead of sounding scripted, they spoke as if they were having a conversation with the audience<sup>7</sup>. Due to being more exposed to the English language, they had an advantage over their Korean peers (OC).

The Russian exchange student performed live as he was part of the “strongest group.” Although English is his second language, he performs without a script and tries to match the American students. Instead of recording his performance, the student performed live in front of the professor and me. He stuttered and made some unclear sentences, however, he kept going with his<sup>8</sup> performance. “I should have practiced more,”<sup>9</sup> he said. Although practicing more could have made his performance stronger, it stood out that he did not use a script and tried to converse with his audience.

## Reflections

The main thing we were looking for was flow and fluency while performing. Many students were able to perform with clear accents and perfect body flow and spoke without stuttering for a full 5-minutes. However, instead of simply being perfect, they must have flowed

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<sup>6</sup> Attributes in performance

<sup>7</sup> Attributes in performance

<sup>8</sup> Professor input - idea of what makes a strong performer

<sup>9</sup> Attributes in performance

as well. Part of this is from truly understanding your content and being able to summarize the concepts with ease. Practicing to perform in this way is similar to Gee's concept in "What is Literacy?" By being able to successfully read the content that they wrote—this means in their resume, job description, and points they would like to make on their hypothetical success in the company—they would be able to create a strong<sup>10</sup> performance.

Although this is true for a native English speaker, the professor and I also took into consideration that English is not the majority of students' native language. Instead of grading harshly, we opted to give them pointers for the next class.

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<sup>10</sup> Attributes in performance