

Individual Paper Session 1
Classroom SLA
Tuesday, July 4
9:00-9:30am

Learners' perceptions concerning their L2 performance in an out of class speaking task

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Attribution theory offers a useful basis for investigating learners' beliefs about their achievement or lack of achievement in language learning. This theory claims that people refer to causal attributions to explain their perceived success or failure (Weiner, 1980, 1986; Heider, 1958). However, existing studies in SLA largely rely upon students' overall impressions as language learners (i.e. Williams & Burden, 1999).

This study differs in that 143 Japanese university students reflected upon what factors influenced their performance in a speaking task they had just completed.

During their last scheduled oral communication class, each student left the classroom to speak to two international students waiting on a nearby street. In order to approximate a spontaneous conversation, the Japanese students had no prior knowledge about the conversation topic. Once they reached the street, one of the international students approached them asking for directions to the closest train station.

After giving the directions, they continued onto the second international student who asked the same question. The Japanese students then completed a questionnaire asking them to assess their performance in terms of perceived levels of accuracy, fluency and the ability to organize their directions into an easy to understand explanation. They also assessed the impact that the oral communication course, their perceived communicative competence, the interlocutors and the task itself had upon their performance.

This study found that these factors varied considerably with students' assessments of their performance as well as students' willingness to seek future opportunities to use English outside of the classroom.