

「授業を行うにあたって工夫していること」

I think because the classes I teach at Sapporo Medical University are (almost) entirely in English, it is appropriate that my comments here be in English as well.

With few exceptions, students entering Japanese universities have studied English for at least six years. However, although efforts have been made in recent years to incorporate a more “communicative” element in the upper secondary schools, student participation tends to be passive, and the classes are mostly teacher-focused. As much as possible, I try to create an atmosphere in the classroom in which students play an active role in participation. Students are encouraged to speak as much as possible (including those in listening classes), and whenever possible, the responsibility is placed upon them to initiate interaction. (Toward that end, I will rarely call on students in class. It is far more preferable that they volunteer information themselves.)

The majority of the first-year students I teach are in listening classes. The material we use mostly consists of actual news reports or stories. This means students are exposed to “authentic” English, spoken at natural speed. At times, particularly during the first few weeks of the courses, this comes as a shock to some. However, I like to think that most students adjust quickly and recognize the value at listening to English that is spoken at natural speed. It has been gratifying to note that almost all students show considerable improvement as the classes progress, whether (or not) they actually realize this.

「学生への要望・アドバイス等」

In almost any subject, and perhaps especially foreign languages, there are limits to what instructors can do for students. Without self-initiative, students are likely to struggle. As such, it is important that they try to overcome whatever reluctance they may feel to speak in classes. They should be determined to participate as much as they can, regardless of their English level. At the same time, it is also necessary for students to develop “thick skins.” In any class, they are bound to make mistakes at times; when this happens, it is important that they listen to and reflect upon correction, rather than retreat into a shell, determined to never speak up again. They have, after all, chosen a profession that is, while rewarding, one that can bring with it almost unspeakable pressure at times. Students must be ready to accept correction, which may often be bluntly offered, and understand this for what it is: an attempt to prepare students for the so-called real world.

Regarding English specifically, as much exposure to the language as possible is ideal. Watching and responding to reports, speaking as much as one can, reading, it all helps, and can and should be done both inside and outside the classroom. Students should also recognize that the English comes in all forms and that the simple ability to be understood is far more important than perfect pronunciation or a splendid vocabulary. Over the course of the students’ careers as physicians, in fact, the majority of their patients with whom communication will be in English will likely not be those considered traditional native speakers. More than anything else, these patients will value communication, and that in turn is what students should strive for in their study of English.