

Research Note

# Cultivating Confidence in Public Communication: Teaching Bodymindfulness and Sensitivity to Energetic Presence

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## Abstract

*Approaching public communication as an integral expression of all four aspects of one's bodymind—body, emotion, mind, and spirit—provides a foundation for student efforts to relax and express themselves authentically. My experience teaching three undergraduate classes of a total of 56 students of diverse nationalities confirmed that emphasizing prelinguistic aspects of self-presentation seems an especially beneficial approach for speakers of more than one language. Cultivating bodymindfulness—attending to somatic-emotional sensations especially during interpersonal interactions—through conscious breathing promotes understanding of connections between these four aspects of being. Bodymindfulness also enables development of awareness of one's bodymindset—the existing pattern of being in one's bodymind—and offers a means of shifting it so that one's presence is more poised and effective in conveying a desired message congruently. This paper will explain the approach I used and the effect it seemed to have on the students. First I will describe what and how I taught and then I will share some of the students' reflections. Undergraduate students responded well to this approach and consistently reported gains in confidence when speaking in either English or Japanese in classroom presentations.*

## Encouraging Use of the Whole Self as an Instrument of Communication

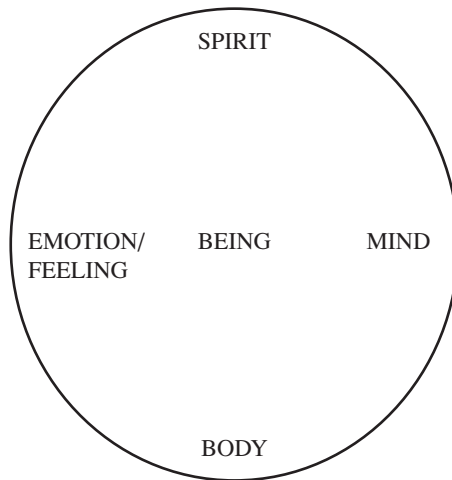
Speaking in public is widely recognized as one of the greatest fears that human beings have. The stress and anxiety attendant on expressing oneself publicly are often cited in marketing training on how to present one's ideas in front of others with confidence. Public communication, public speaking, or presentation skills courses are regularly offered in schools and training programs around the world. Whether the course is taught in English or in the native language of the country or of the class members, most students approach this type of learning with hesitation or even trepidation. Speakers of more than one language may feel particularly vulnerable when speaking in a language they are not confident they have mastered. Teaching and learning in classes of multilingual students of varying language backgrounds presents an exciting challenge to both teacher and students to explore the foundations of languaging and to share discoveries as they begin to develop mastery of the fundamentals of expressing oneself in public.

Emphasis on prelinguistic experience as the foundation of languaging (Gendlin, 1981, 1991; Shapiro, 1985, 1988) can contribute to relieving non-native speakers of the over-concern about speaking correctly that may inhibit effective communication. A speaker's presence communicates poise and confidence or their lack nonverbally before a speaker opens her or his mouth to share thoughts verbally. Presence is defined in the Random House Dictionary (1987) as "the ability to project a sense of ease, poise, or self-assurance, especially the quality or manner of a person's bearing before an audience." Although a confident demeanor is obvious to an audience, cultivating it can be an elusive goal, its components hard to describe and even harder to master.

My approach in three undergraduate classes in public communication totaling 56 students of diverse nationalities began with encouraging students to pay attention to their internal states and their overall state of being. *State of being* refers to the phenomenon other people sense as a person's energetic presence or what Damasio terms *background emotions* (2003). I use *energetic presence* to describe a person's living presence and the message it communicates whether or not the person is conscious of it (Nagata, 2002; Palmer, 1999). This is variously described as the atmosphere a person creates, the *vibes* others get from her, or the field or aura surrounding the personal space around the body (Eden, 1999; Feinstein, 1998; Hunt, 1996; Leonard, 1986, 1997; Nagatomo, 1992; Yuasa, 1993). Leonard (1997) refers to this as one's "own personal electromagnetic signature" (p. 14). When discussing the rhythmic synchronic process of entrainment that occurs within and between people, E. T. Hall (1983) writes, "Rhythmic patterns may turn out to be one of the most important basic personality traits that differentiate one individual from another" (p. 164). Throughout the course, students were reminded to pay attention to their own energetic presence and those of their classmates and teacher as it provides a powerful foundation for verbal communication.

I used the Quaternary Model of human development that I adapted from Carl Jung (McLaren, 2000; Nelson, 1993; Schwartz-Salant, 1995) to describe the components of presence that are the expression of the state of being of the human bodymind

(Dychtwald, 1986; Pert, 1997, 2000; Shaner, 1985; Wilber, 1996).



**Figure 1. The Quaternity Model of the Bodymind.**

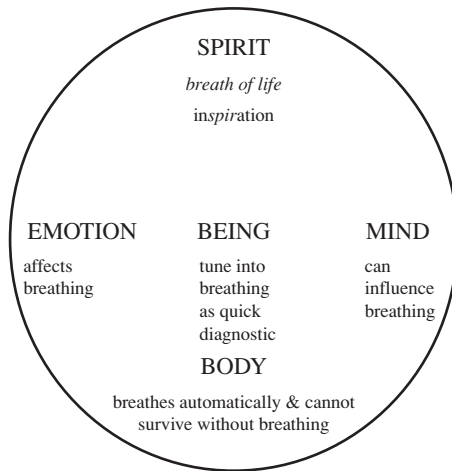
The definitions used as starting points in presenting this model to the students are as follows:

- **Consciousness:** a person's entire inner experience: thoughts, sensations of the body, emotions, visions of the spirit (Nelson, 1993)
- **Being:** sometimes called *self*; the integral state of all aspects of the self
- **Mind:** the part of a person that reasons, thinks, imagines, feels, wills, perceives, and judges
- **Body:** a person's physical structure and material substance; the body gives bounds to the personality
- **Emotion<sup>1</sup>:** emotion is a complex collection of chemical and neural responses forming a distinctive pattern, an automatic response to a stimulus, that changes the state of the body proper and the state of brain structures that map the body and support thinking. The result is to place the organism in circumstances conducive to survival and well-being (Damasio, 2003).
- **Spirit:** incorporeal, transcendent aspects of human being; connection with a larger creative source of meaning, the universe, or the divine

Approaching public communication as an integral expression of all aspects of one's bodymind—body, emotion, mind, and spirit—provides a foundation for student efforts to relax and express themselves authentically. Cultivating bodymindfulness through conscious breathing promotes being present in the moment and experiencing connections between these four aspects of being.

I coined the expression *bodymindfulness* from the two words *bodymind* and *mindfulness* (Nagata, 2002). As mentioned above, bodymind emphasizes the systemic, integral nature of lived experience, and mindfulness is a Buddhist concept and practice of cultivating awareness. Awareness has two components: attention and in-

tention (Chopra, 1994). Awareness includes a flow of biological information that can help you relate more skillfully (Young, 1997). Bodymindfulness can be used to attend to such somatic-emotional sensations that are often out of awareness (Pert, 2000), especially during an interpersonal interaction when one's attention may be focused on the other(s). Attention to and care for your bodymind affects your internal states. Breathing consciously is the simplest, most fundamental way to tune into your current state and to care for and calm yourself. Cultivating bodymindfulness with conscious breathing also helps one recognize the interaction and mutual influence that body, emotion, mind, and spirit have on each other (Pert, 1997). I used the following figure to introduce these ideas prior to teaching the Bodymindfulness Practice.



**Figure 2. Breathing as the Connector of the Aspects of Being of the Bodymind.**

I began each class with a seemingly simple exercise which I termed the Bodymindfulness Practice. It promotes development of awareness of one's bodymindset—the existing pattern of being in one's bodymind—and offers a means of shifting it so that one's presence is more poised and effective in conveying a desired message congruently.

**Bodymindfulness Practice**

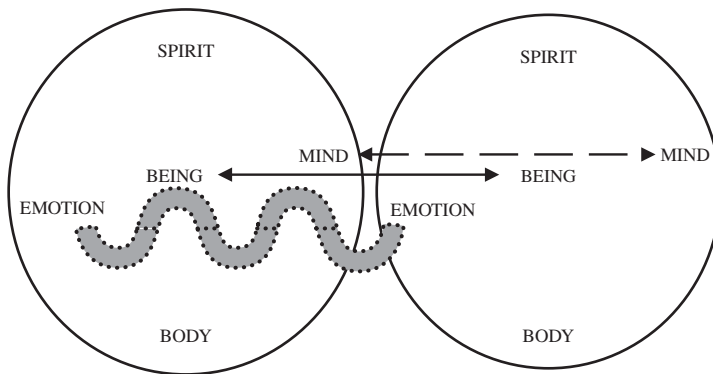
- Presence requires being present in the moment: *Be here now*.
- Tune into your breathing and see what it tells you about your current state of being.
- Breathe more deeply and evenly.
- Set your intention for your participation here.
- Use bodymindfulness to **Be here now!**, especially when you hear the bells to remind you.

The bodymindfulness practice is intended as a means of attuning to one's feelings, diagnosing one's own internal state, and then changing it if deemed desirable. It is a distillation of Asian practices that can be done anytime, anywhere, at no cost, and

in the complete privacy of one's own bodymind. No one else needs to know that it is needed or being performed.

I used Tibetan meditation bells at varying times throughout the classes to remind students to use bodymindfulness. I purposely chose times that were likely to make them aware of differences in tension prior to, during, and after making presentations. I repeatedly encouraged the students to use the bodymindfulness practice on their own each time they entered a new space or began to interact with someone outside the classroom.

The bodymindfulness practice focuses attention on one's intrapersonal state, but that is only half of the dual perspective that is required for effective interpersonal and public communication. I used the following model to explain resonant emotional communication between two bodyminds (Nagata, 2002).



**Figure 3. Resonant Communication and Energetic Presence of State of Being.**

This model uses the Quaternity to represent two people communicating. The straight line with arrows at both ends indicates the direct communication of the state of being that is felt when people first encounter each other whether or not any words are spoken. This immediate impression that people receive of each other is what I mean by the term *energetic presence*. Sometimes a person becomes aware of another's energetic presence without there being a mutual exchange, but typically there is one. The waves represent vibrations of emotion that pass between people nonverbally and are described by Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson in *Emotional Contagion* (1994) as *automatic affective resonance* (p. 182). The phenomenon of emotional resonance is what such colloquial expressions as *being on the same wave length* or *getting bad vibes* refer to (Nagata, 2000). There is a growing body of biomedical and psychological research that describes emotional resonance (Buck & Ginsburg, 1997; Fedele, 1994; Jordan, 1984, 1997; Josselson, 1996; Larson, 1987; Levenson & Ruef, 1997; Lewis, Amini, & Lannon, 2000; MacLean, 1997; McCraty, Atkinson, Tomasino, & Tiller, 1998; Nathanson, 1986, 1992; Saunders, Howard, & Orlinsky, 1989; Sprinkle, 1985; Surrey, Kaplan, & Jordan, 1990)<sup>2</sup>. The broken line between the two minds suggests that there may be cognitive communication; but it is time-consuming to achieve, and typically there are gaps in understanding and even complete

breakdowns. Understanding how quickly and wordlessly state of being, especially its emotional aspect, is conveyed and how comparatively much greater effort is required to reach verbal understanding is crucial for developing confident public communication skills.

### **Course Approach and Content**

The classes were a mixture of students raised in Japan with limited English-speaking experience, bilingual Japanese young people, and international students who included both native and non-native speakers of English. The students were encouraged, not required, to use both English and Japanese at least once in separate assignments if they felt they could. Most of the students challenged themselves successfully this way, but some of them spoke only in English or only in Japanese.

When I adapted the course description below as I wrote the syllabus in 2002, I tried to prepare the students with a broad understanding of public communication as more than a narrow definition of rhetoric or public speaking.

This is a practice-based course for the development of basic public speaking skills. Public communication is not confined solely to language. Communication is a total package—language is only a portion of the message. Context, intentionality, paralanguage and other aspects of non-verbal communication, silence, feedback, and psychological and cultural interference all combine to create the total process of communicating. The intention is for students to develop greater self-awareness and confidence in presenting themselves in public regardless of what language they are speaking.

Most of the students expected to concentrate on the verbal aspects of their presentations, but my teaching encouraged engaging all three of their learning centers: head, heart, and *hara*<sup>3</sup> (moving center) in order to promote access to more of their personal resources and to communicate them in ways that would enable meaningful connections with others. Throughout the course, my message to the students was,

When you express yourself in public, you use your whole self as an instrument to communicate. Cultivate your consciousness of all aspects of your being so you can use them skillfully even when you are not speaking. The conscious development of self-presentation skills is an ongoing process that can improve and enrich your life.

As the basis for self-presentation and interpersonal communication using English and/or Japanese, throughout the course emphasis was placed on managing internal states and their synthetic expression in voice by using breathing and attending to a speaker's energetic presence. Bodymindfulness was encouraged as a way both to identify a lack of congruency between aspects of one's being and to promote a harmonious relationship of all parts of the bodymind. I repeatedly emphasized that all

**Table 1. Summary of Assignments**

Assignment	Emphasis	Learning as speaker	Learning as listener
1. <b>Reading:</b> (3 minutes) Select and read something that you care about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting material that communicates about you</li> <li>• Having an audience focused on you</li> <li>• Voice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poise</li> <li>• Vocal variety and volume</li> <li>• Seeing a videotape of own performance</li> <li>• Receiving written feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using checklist of presentation components to promote observation and analysis</li> <li>• Perceiving reader's values, interests, and concerns</li> </ul>
2. <b>Photo:</b> (2 minutes) Select photo of a person or small group that conveys a nonverbal message. Formulate and ask 2 questions while showing the photo on an OHP projector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting an appropriate photo</li> <li>• Preparing an OHP slide</li> <li>• Standing in front of an audience</li> <li>• Operating an OHP projector</li> <li>• Formulating and asking questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posture</li> <li>• Poise</li> <li>• Speaking on your feet</li> <li>• Standing in front of an audience, including periods without speaking</li> <li>• Making eye contact with an audience and timing questions</li> <li>• Receiving oral feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study of nonverbal aspects of communication carried in presence</li> <li>• Being a good listener by staying focused on the speaker and allowing eye contact</li> <li>• Using expanding checklist of presentation components</li> <li>• Orally appreciating performance strengths</li> </ul>
3. <b>Speaking from Experience:</b> Prepare and deliver a 4-minute speech based on your experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing a topic</li> <li>• Outlining</li> <li>• Delivering a speech from a podium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting personally important topic with audience appeal</li> <li>• Audience analysis</li> <li>• Preparing both Preparation and Speaker's Outlines (See Lucas, 2001)</li> <li>• Speaking from a podium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using expanding checklist of presentation components</li> </ul>
4. <b>Introducing a Speaker:</b> Interview a classmate and introduce his/her speech in 1-2 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating rapport with speaker and preparing audience for her/his speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovering, organizing, and delivering material that will create an appropriate atmosphere and motivate the audience to attend to the speaker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refining ability to perceive, evaluate, and apply components of speech construction and delivery</li> </ul>
5. <b>Formal Speech:</b> Prepare and deliver a 5-minute speech based on research and conduct a 2-minute Q&A session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing research on topic chosen for own interest plus audience appeal</li> <li>• Preparing and using visual aids effectively</li> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researching, organizing, and presenting material effectively using visual aids</li> <li>• Preparing for and conducting a Q&amp;A session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skillfully using expanding checklist of presentation components</li> <li>• Formulating and asking relevant questions</li> <li>• Making appreciative comments and constructive suggestions</li> </ul>

**Table 1. (Continued.)**

Assignment	Emphasis	Learning as speaker	Learning as listener
6. <b>Final Reflective Paper in English:</b> 3-8 pages (A4, 12-point font, double-spaced)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Journaling in any language throughout the course to reflect on developmental experiences as speaker and as analytical listener</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting personally important goals for self as a communicator</li> <li>Describing and evaluating experience, progress, and applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting personally important goals for self as a communicator</li> <li>Describing and evaluating experience, progress, and future applications</li> </ul>

aspects of self-presentation should contribute to the same message: appearance, non-verbal presence, and verbal content.

As shown in Table 1, the assignments were sequenced to build up the student's skills and confidence both as a speaker and as a listener who analyzes and evaluates the public communication of others. There were six major assignments: 1) reading something that reveals your values; 2) conveying nonverbal presence with a photo; 3) speaking from experience; 4) introducing a speaker; 5) making a formal speech based on research; and 6) writing a final reflective paper on personal public communication skill development. The students were encouraged to use both English and Japanese and to do at least one assignment in each language. Only the paper was required to be in English.

The first class began with a demonstration that dramatized the power of nonverbal communication because I did not speak to any of the students while they were coming into the classroom. I had arranged the chairs in a semicircle and used gestures to indicate where they should sit or to respond to greetings and questions. When class began, I welcomed them verbally, and we discussed what they had observed and felt about this unorthodox beginning of a new class. They quickly articulated a variety of feelings and interpretations about their new teacher and what the class might hold in store.

Exercises were sequenced to focus on paralinguistic and other nonverbal components of public communication prior to making speeches from a podium. The first activity emphasized the use of voice. The assignment was to sit and read a short selection chosen to reveal the reader's interests and values and to practice using vocal variety to maximize expressiveness.

From the beginning I emphasized the importance of sensing and managing one's energy and drew the students' attention to the following three points: 1) speechmaking typically provokes anxiety; 2) *stage fright* is normal and a healthy sign of being psyched up for a good effort; 3) the feeling of adrenaline should be thought of as *Positive Nervousness*, "a zesty, enthusiastic, lively feeling with a slight edge to it" (Elayne Snyder cited in Lucas, 2001) so that you feel vitalized by it and develop control. One student noted this succinctly in the following observation, "I learned how to use advantage of my nervousness and transferred it into energy for my enthusiasm in the topic."<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the course, the class audience filled out individual feedback sheets



on the components of presentation regarding each person's presence, how it was conveyed, and how the speech was constructed and delivered. The feedback sheets for each exercise increased in complexity and provided a framework that guided the development of perception and evaluation. While students filled out these sheets after each presentation, the speakers reviewed videotapes of themselves with the teacher, which enabled them to identify aspects of their self-presentation that had been out of their awareness. They often noted how their nervous energy leaked out in unconscious movements. Here is what one Japanese woman realized.

I got the feedback indicating that I was playing around with my hands and it was disturbing. What is interesting about this behavior was that I did not notice this disturbing movement of my hands at all. I was shocked to recognize this behavior on the video. I saw that this hand movement shows the nervousness within me... Reflecting this behavior, it was caused because I did not have the confidence in the message I wanted to convey... Through this exercise, I learned the importance of preparation and thinking about what to speak carefully beforehand.

As this passage shows, recognizing something a student had been unaware of promoted reflection. In many cases it also seemed to increase readiness to be open to feedback and suggestions.

Overall the most consistent reaction students had when looking at themselves on videotape was that they were surprised that they looked less nervous than they had felt. The following comment is typical.

The whole time, I felt really nervous, but when I was reviewing my video, I could not see so much of my nerve-racking inside appearing on my presenting outside. I felt really relieved after making my speech, and it is amazing how different I felt before and after.

Using videotape was both a revealer of and a reinforcement for the development of self-awareness of one's bodymind.

The second exercise was to stand and use an OHP projector to show a photograph of a person or small group. The assignment was to choose a photo that conveyed a message nonverbally and to formulate and ask two questions that would help the class perceive the nonverbal message of presence and to analyze how it was being communicated. Since the impact of energetic presence is felt most strongly on initial contact, students were instructed to show their slide and pause to create a silent interval so that the audience could concentrate on the photograph without being distracted by language.

The class was also instructed in nonverbal components of being a good listener. They were told to look at and allow the speaker to make eye contact because it provides a vital connection between the audience and the speaker. A bilingual woman with a multicultural background described how eye contact was energizing and a significant form of feedback for her.

I got positive response from the audience when I was making eye contact. Having the audience look back at me, or smiling or nodding during my speech really helps me when presenting because I feel their energy, and somehow I think that energy is transferred into my own body, in which I get to give back to the audience through my speech. Responses from the audience also make me understand that they are interested, and that I have to give them the best presentation because of their attention.

We practiced making eye contact by standing in a circle and throwing a soft sponge ball to a classmate chosen by making eye contact. This simple exercise gave permission and required that the students look at each other steadily. It was repeated briefly at the next two classes.

I also stressed that it is important for audience members to stay focused on the speaker because a person's energy goes where his attention is placed. As the student above described, the speaker will very likely be energized and encouraged by the eye contact and attention of the audience and reciprocate with enthusiasm. One student reported her pleasure in speaking making a similar point. "Part of the reason that I really enjoyed it was because I felt the interest from the audience during my speech, and feedback from the audience like such really gave me the energy to stay enthusiastic on my topic."

The presenters were only required to ask two questions they had formulated beforehand to make it easier for the audience to understand what the picture conveyed from the point of view of the presenter. While the presenters waited at the beginning and during the intervals when the audience was considering and answering the questions posed, they were encouraged to concentrate on their posture and breathing. Using eye contact also facilitated timing the flow of the questions and ending the presentation. After the feedback sheets were handed to the presenter, she or he explained the answer to the questions and the message the picture was conveying from the presenter's point of view. Comparisons could then be made to check variations in perceptions of energetic presence and nonverbal communication.

This assignment turned out to be a good exercise in using breathing to maintain poise as the presenter had to wait while the class looked at the photograph and answered the questions in writing. Many of the students in the first class I taught commented on how challenging it was to be standing in front of people with nothing to do so in subsequent classes I emphasized "just standing and breathing." This seemed to provide a useful focal point that relieved some of the discomfort of standing before an audience without speaking.

After the class finished writing their feedback sheets, the students were invited to appreciate the person's work orally. Later in the course after the two formal speeches, suggestions for improvement were also included. Students consistently reported applying their observations of their classmates' presentations to the refinement of their own efforts with increasing self-awareness. A Chinese student commented, "I benefited from evaluating other speakers and often picked up tips on how to improve my own performance." These brief interactive oral feedback sessions also gave me chances to add to or elaborate on teaching points that I thought would bene-

fit the whole class.

The third and fifth presentations were formal speeches made standing behind a podium. These assignments included organizing and delivering verbal material, but this was after students had already practiced key elements of delivery and had begun to feel more confident. The first speech was based on an aspect of the students' experience that they wanted to share with the class since it is generally easier to begin by talking about something you know well. The final speech was to be based on research and to employ visual aids. Students were paired in order to prepare and deliver short introductions to each other's final speeches.

The gradual increase in the complexity of the assignments and the skills required to complete them was intended to stimulate learning and confidence as both a speaker and an analytical listener. The verbal complexity of the later speeches was built on this foundation of embodied confidence and resonant connection with an audience. The feedback I received from the students' final papers helped me evaluate how well my plans and teaching had worked and how to refine them for future classes.

### **Student Reflections on Their Learning and Its Impact**

Throughout the course students were encouraged to keep reflective journals as the basis for a short, 3-8 page final paper in English describing and analyzing their improvement in public communication skills. This range of pages was set to accommodate the wide variety of English-writing ability of the students in the class. I stressed that quality of reflection was more important than quantity, and some of the best papers were among the shortest.

#### ***Developing Confidence by Managing Energy***

The papers usually focused on the goals the students had set for themselves, phenomenological descriptions of their experiences, and their assessment of their own progress. They often noted that during the course, their nervousness changed to excitement, enthusiasm, and enjoyment. One bilingual Japanese woman had stated at the beginning of the class that she had lost her confidence when she arrived in college because she felt overwhelmed by the ability of the other students. I was gratified to learn from her final paper that she felt, "I could take my confidence of speaking in public back again." Another Japanese woman introduced her paper saying, "It was tough for me, but it made me find pleasure to talk in public."

One Japanese man reflected on confidence, how it is communicated, and where it comes from.

It is possible to tell whether a speaker is a good speaker or not, at the beginning of his/her speech. If one is confident, he or she will stand calm, make good eye contact, speak in a strong and understandable voice, and make sure that audience are understood... What makes them confident? Not only the speaker, but also audience has responsibility for it. I thought, if he or she

knows what he or she is talking about very well, and had prepared and practiced enough, confidence will just grow in his or her mind. However this is not enough. The eye contact from audience to the speaker is also important. It is because it makes the speaker think that he or she is understood, and audience is interested in the topic. If you want to listen to good speech, try to keep eye contact with them, and tell them that you understand. And if you want to be a good speaker, prepare and practice hard enough.

He recognized the role of both the speaker and the listener in cultivating confidence.

The feedback sheets for each exercise increased in complexity and provided a framework that guided the development of perception and evaluation of effective self-presentation. A bilingual Japanese woman with overseas educational experience referred to them and summarized many of the points other students mentioned.

This class was different from other classes in that I was considering not only content of presentations but also non-verbal elements when listening. I mainly analyzed what made the speaker look “present” or “confident.” In my opinion, voice and eye contact are especially important elements, but all the listed elements in the feedback sheet have a significant role to make the speaker present. It was helpful to listen to speeches according to many criteria because it made me aware that I need to pay attention to these criteria when I myself was giving a speech. Being a speaker also realized me the importance of being a good listener. To pay attention to speakers by making eye contact makes them confident and comfortable.

Her recognition of the complexity of what makes a speaker look present or confident should serve her well during her college years and in her future employment.

In addition to increases in confidence perceptible to us all during class presentations, many students reported in their final reflective papers that they changed their initial highly general goal of overcoming nervousness and becoming confident when speaking in public to challenging more specific individual characteristics of their style of self-expression. They often recognized how placing their attention on one factor of their presentation affected other things that they had not previously noticed. When this came up in class, I noted the systemic connections within the bodymind and encouraged them to keep practicing.

A bilingual Japanese man decided to cultivate simultaneous awareness of all aspects of what he was doing as he communicated in class assignments. He demonstrated impressive self-awareness of the variety of factors he needed to consider in challenging mastery.

A speech involves two different abilities: the ability to organize and the ability to perform. My goals for this course were focused on these two points. More specifically, I have worked to become more self-aware, or to develop my “bodymindfulness,” especially while I am delivering a speech, and to be able to organize a clear structure for my speech... The ability to perform is

very different from the ability to organize. As I was reviewing my speeches on my video tape, I realized that there were actually a lot of things I was doing unconsciously while I was standing in front of other people (i.e. being less self-aware because of the nervousness) both in verbal and non-verbal ways: especially, standing (sitting) posture, eye contact, tempo or speed, voice variety, and timing. By reflecting on them and trying to pay more attention to them, not only my own but also others' as well, it became clearer to me that all of these aspects greatly affect a speech.

In her paper, a bilingual Japanese woman made a distinction similar to his between organization and performance that she dubbed as that between *matter* and *manner*.

As in the above passage, student papers frequently demonstrated self-knowledge of aspects of behavior and energetic presence that had previously been out of their awareness. Many of them used the metaphor of energy to understand how presence is communicated. A bilingual Japanese woman reflected explicitly on my teachings about presence and energy.

When I heard about *presence* and *managing your energy* in our first class, I understood what they mean but I didn't know how they were important for public speeches, just because they did not sound practical. But on the week 3, when we did the photo exercise, I realized what was meant by presence. Even though a presenter would stand there, showing the over-head without speaking much, I could get different feeling in each person. Some people very poised, while some others uncomfortable, etc. For me, presence was what communicates between the presenter and the audience, even beyond words. If the state of one's body and mind is right for her, that enables her to communicate well with the audience. When you are in front of people, it is not easy to feel your presence, or state of being. Now that I have experienced some presentations, I think that by having experiences you can manage yourself better and eventually ask yourself how you are doing.

A Korean-Japanese man who spoke only in Japanese during class emphasized his realization of the importance of nonverbal communication particularly through eye contact.

What I found about my presentation in retrospect is the importance of non-verbal communication, includes the gestures, postures, visual aids, and so on. I found my weakness in non-verbal communication, especially the eye contact. I learned effectiveness of the eye contact from watching presentations of the other. The presenter with a good eye contact seems to be successful at transferring the message to the audience, compared to the one without eye contact.

By observing his experience of his own energy and its effect on his thinking and speaking, a Japanese man had a profound insight into himself as a communicator.

I thought that when I am excited, I always forget about others, this time, audience. At the first speech, when I was really into it, I was speaking in the way that “I” could understand. Not the way that audience could understand. There were not enough consideration for audience. I think this is the reason why I put too much to say in my speeches. Got too excited, and forget about audience. I have to be careful about this, not only the next time when I make speech, but also in my daily life.

His rather technical speech had actually been well received by his classmates because of his contagious enthusiasm, but many of them did not quite understand the content. On reflection, he clearly recognized the implications for this level of deep self-awareness beyond its use in the classroom.

Like this young man, many of the most verbally and conceptually oriented students struggled with time management. The effect of time pressure and skillful use of pace and timing were the focus of many observations based in bodymindfulness of how to manage one’s energy. One Japanese woman with unusually highly developed balanced bilingual communication skills opened her paper by saying, “The most essential concept I learned in this class is the importance of managing myself.” In her analysis, she explored the various physical, physiological, and psychological factors involved in the act of communication and the relationship between time management and what she referred to as “managing my being.”

This young woman seemed to have come to the understanding that managing herself meant managing her energy so that she could manage her time and that these were not really separable. I repeatedly took the opportunity to encourage the students to avoid rushing as they could easily identify the effect it has on their bodymind and their composure when doing the bodymindfulness practice at the beginning of every class. Virtually all of the students noted in their papers that they recognized the value of preparation and practice and their impact on confidence. One Japanese woman summarized this well.

I realized the importance of preparation by both giving and listening to the speech, and I found out that if the speaker had prepared well, it gives the audience comfortable atmosphere. I also considered if I prepare well, I could speak in public more comfortably.

This is another example of the recognition many students developed that how they managed their energy and time was communicated by their presence and the atmosphere they created.

A multilingual Chinese student showed her understanding of how the presence of the speaker resonates with the audience.

Energy management is also important. How I feel in front of an audience affects my performance. If I show confidence and enthusiasm, I will gain their attention. The more I feel the audience is with me, the more fluent and confident my speech becomes. Therefore, learning to better manage my body-

mindset and energy during this course has been very important in improving my presentation.

Enthusiasm and confidence are contagious, and they do not need to depend only on linguistic and speaking skill.

### ***Contrasting Languages and Verbal and Nonverbal Codes***

As mentioned above the classes were a mixture of students with different language backgrounds and not all of them described themselves as bilingual. The students who took up the challenge to use both English and Japanese at least once in separate assignments were able to observe how speaking each language affected them.

Virtually all of the Japanese students who did not have much prior experience speaking English explicitly reported gaining confidence in making a presentation in English. Many of these students chose to do the reading assignment in English as they thought that would be the easiest one for them to do. One of these students described her experience of overcoming nervousness by focusing on what she described as *attitude* rather than her lack of skill in speaking.

I tried my reading presentation in English. Actually I cannot speak English well, so I did not have confidence at all. I was afraid if anyone could not understand my pronunciation as in public communication class there are many English native speakers. I practiced to read my favorite poem many times and then I abandoned my poor pronunciation. I could take it easy and I got less nervous when I gave up my speaking skill. Then I could give much priority to my attitude instead of English speaking... Actually my pronunciation was so poor that I felt it shameful. But in video, I seemed so confident and it was reflected in audience's feedback sheet too. That surprised me a lot. I could get my confidence and real pleasure of giving presentation.

A bilingual Japanese woman who had studied in an English-speaking country concluded her reflections by recognizing a point that is useful regardless of the language being used.

One very interesting thing for me was that I could try giving speeches both in Japanese and in English. Although they were different in length, in content and in style, I could learn something from it. For example, for the Japanese speech, I didn't have to care about making grammatical errors, but one peer pointed out my habit in Japanese word usage which I was never aware of. In English I was nervous and I looked at my notes too much, so I would need more practice. On the other hand, something common about any language is that to remember what you would say for transitions is very helpful. They will lead you to the right direction and keep you from getting lost.

A British man who had only been studying Japanese a few months made similar points about the effect on his presence and delivery of speaking in his less developed language. He did his final speech in Japanese and was proud of the result, but he realized that he had traded off his work on nonverbal aspects of his presentation skills because of his focus on expressing himself in a new language. He described that “the concentration needed for the Japanese element meant I could not focus on other points I had been specifically working on in English; I had nervous hand gestures and made a lot less eye contact than normal.” The limitations of his Japanese made it difficult for him to comprehend his classmates’ speeches when they were in Japanese, and he concentrated on the nonverbal elements and messages of the presentations when writing the feedback sheets. This is certainly a valuable approach for interculturalists to practice.

Speakers of more than one language usually feel different degrees of confidence when speaking in each language, but they may not be aware of exactly what needs to be improved unless they have a framework and the opportunity to refine their skills such as this course provided. Being able to differentiate precisely what is needed encourages the speaker to apply himself to skill development rather than avoiding using what he considers his weaker language.

Some of the students also reflected on the interplay of verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication. A Japanese woman educated in the United States titled her final paper “Gaining Confidence for Presenting Myself,” and described her realization of the necessity of attending to the nonverbal realm of experience.

There are two aspects on giving a speech. One is verbal and another is non-verbal part. Giving a presentation sounds as verbal part is a main aspect, but I learned it is not true. Verbal part is just a part of a speech, and non-verbal aspect is taking a part for giving a good speech. It is necessary to know how one should behave when giving the speech. Attitude of the speaker would change attitude of the audience.

She also recognized that there is an emotionally resonant relationship between a speaker and an audience so that it will pick up a speaker’s attitude. She and a woman quoted above both use *attitude* in a way that recognizes that it is an important component of presence.

A Japanese woman described her realization of the importance of nonverbal communication in promoting her confidence in her ability to achieve intercultural understanding.

I have difficulty understanding English. But I could understand my classmate’s English so well. That is because I tried to understand their non-verbal section, and speakers also express well using non-verbal section; i.e. facial expression, attitude, and presence. I remembered I have much difficulty in speaking English in telephone. I realized non-verbal section is important. Japanese language may be difficult for foreigners because it contains less non-verbal section; i.e. gesture and body language. I really felt non-verbal



communication as interesting.

Her point about the difficulties foreigners may experience in communicating with Japanese would be interesting to research.

### *Life Beyond the Classroom*

In addition to distinguishing their experiences communicating in different languages, the opportunity to reflect on a regular basis in a journal seemed to encourage generalization of student learning to other areas of their lives. The life implications of developing awareness of oneself as a communicator were consistently recognized by the students in some of the passages quoted above as well as those that follow here.

A multilingual Chinese-American woman began her paper by confiding that the course emphasis on setting her own goals and making her work relevant to her own needs had reminded her that learning in school is meant to serve her own purposes. She said that she had forgotten this since junior high school when her desire to learn had been replaced by pressure to get the good grades she would need to enter a renowned university as her parents expected. Here is her description of using the Bodymindfulness Practice followed by her reflections on what she had learned and how it would continue to be part of her life.

Prior to our first in-class assignment, we had short lessons on various public speaking techniques, and the one I found most interesting was learning how to take a deep breath. I found it the most interesting because it is something that humans do as individuals so unconsciously that we rarely realize that our ability to breathe comes with more functions than just the biological function to stay alive. I learned that by taking a deep breath, the body is soothed and the body and mind connects to accomplish one goal together. This breathing technique is especially useful when the body feels tension or nervous, because taking a deep breath, and focusing on one's breath really calms the body down, and allows the body to function more normally.

Throughout this course, I have developed many public speaking techniques to a deeper level ranging from simply learning how to breathe to projecting my voice and dealing with stage-fright. All of this I will be able to take with me to help me with whatever I will be pursuing in the future.

Many students mentioned that they used bodymindfulness outside the classroom with satisfying results, especially during job-hunting interviews. A bilingual Japanese woman introduced her paper with this as her goal and concluded with the summary in the second paragraph below.

My first aim to take this course was to be able to make a presentation without any nervousness in public. I just started the job-hunting, and I wanted to be calm down during the interview and to show the confidence. That is why I wanted to have an opportunity to practice the presentation skill.

As time passed, I could realize the process that I got used to making a speech. Now I can make a speech with confidence in Japanese. I will continue to practice making a speech in English. Calm down with deep breath and to concentrate the presence was very difficult for the first time since I could not imagine what it is like “be here”, but now I am doing this not only before the presentation, but also in a panic. This really helps me. I thought this course was very interesting because I could feel the progress.

Some of the graduating students stated that they expected to use their presentation skills on the job in the very near future. In noting this, A Korean-Japanese man also emphasized the significance he found in learning to be an analytical listener.

Of all lessons, though, I felt the best and strongest learning was to look at the presentations of the other. Analysis of them supplies a lot of suggestion to me, and I could always reflect what I learned from others to my own presentation. Also, making analysis to the presentations of the other have developed critical eye over not only other, but also over myself. I would like to utilize the lessons fully, and hope to continue improvement on the presentation skills at my work place from April.

Using bodymindfulness in class also had the effect of making students aware of the influence of their physical health and well-being on their lives in general. Several noted that they were convinced that they needed to take care of themselves to avoid becoming ill. One explicitly stated that she knew she would have to maintain her health when she had a job and could not just take time off as she had been doing as a student when she became ill.

What I found especially satisfying was that several of the students were quite explicit about how their experiences in this course affected their self-image in a positive way. They did not equate their learning simply with their improved skill in giving speeches in English but considered it to be at a more fundamental level in building self-knowledge and self-confidence. A Japanese woman expressed this succinctly.

I learned many things from Public Communication class. I knew new point of view of myself. I could learn presentation skills and about myself... This class teaches me much than I expected. Giving speech is a great opportunity to express oneself. There are many people that they felt weakness of giving presentation. This class makes us the other point of view.

A talented but self-critical Japanese woman reflected in a moving way on the change in her self-evaluation.

Through this Public Communication course, I mainly learned three things; that the confidence is backed by reflective practice, the relationship with the audience greatly affects speaker's achievement, and the necessity to continue rebuilding a self-image... If I were what I had have been before going

through the exercise in this course, I would torture my mistakes and never see its positive aspect. However, in the journal on 9/24, I wrote some progresses found in the exercise. This means that there have been some changes in my character. Owing to feedback sheets and the way of evaluation in a class, I can see and judge my exercises in both positive and negative ways. I learned that I have applied a negative self-image when I evaluate myself, and I have been not able to renew it. I need to continue rebuilding a self-image that is more balanced, and flexible.

Reading the students' reflective papers was gratifying and stimulating to me as an educator. It confirmed the efficacy of some aspects of the course as it was delivered and gave me ideas that helped me refine my teaching of presence, an essentially ineffable phenomenon that eludes verbal instruction. My description in this paper has included some of these improvements, such as explicit instruction and nonverbal demonstration of how to "just stand and breathe" when the presenter had to wait without speaking during the photo exercise. As an interculturalist, I also particularly enjoyed learning about the lifeworlds of these young people from around the globe.

## Summary

Teaching students to appreciate how all aspects of their being interact and affect how they communicate helps them to develop their whole self as an instrument of communication. The course was structured and delivered with the primary purpose of cultivating self-awareness and confidence. Students reported that the gradual building up of skills was effective in helping them develop an assured presence when speaking in front of other people. Emphasizing prelinguistic aspects of self-presentation seems an especially beneficial approach for speakers of more than one language. Cultivating deep self-awareness of one's bodymind is a method that can reward students with self-confidence they can incorporate into their multilingual, intercultural lives no matter what the context.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Damasio makes a distinction useful for interculturalists between *emotion* as defined above and *feeling*. A *feeling* is the perception of a certain state of the body along with the perception of a certain mode of thinking and of thoughts with certain themes. Emotions are actions or movements that precede feelings. Many are public, perceptible by others as they occur in the face, the voice, and specific behaviors. These displays provide particularly valuable cues for interculturalists. Feelings are always hidden, like all mental images necessarily are, the private property of the organism in whose brain they occur (Damasio, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> See Nagata (2002) for a review of this literature.

<sup>3</sup> See Hara: *The Vital Centre of Man* (Durckheim, 1956/1962). The *hara* or belly is considered the center that integrates the mind and heart for action (Hall, 1983). *Dan tian* is the Chinese name for it, and it is

considered the reservoir of *qi*, vital energy (Cohen, 1997).

- <sup>4</sup> Throughout this paper I describe the students only in terms of their gender, linguistic or cultural background without using their names. I have indicated whether a student considered herself or himself to be bilingual or multilingual because this self-construal is likely to have an effect on confidence. I have left the quotations as they were originally written without using the convention of *sic* to indicate incorrect grammar.

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