

# **The Prominence of Rhetoric in Japanese University English Oral Communication Courses**

**Richard Miles**

Faculty of Global Liberal Studies, Nanzan University, Japan

## **Abstract**

Due to a rapidly globalizing world, there has been a recent resurgence in the demand for university graduates entering the workforce who understand and utilize spoken English rhetorical strategies and techniques. These rhetorical skills are necessary in a wide range of fields (e.g., advertising, communication, international relations, politics, psychology, etc.), yet rhetoric rarely features in EFL or ESL curriculums. With the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan emphasizing the need for English education to specifically foster the development of oral communication skills through the Global Human Resources (GHR) project (2018), there is a definite need for integrating instruction on English rhetorical strategies and techniques into the curricula of higher education. However, explicit rhetorical instruction in EFL and ESL curriculums in Japan almost exclusively focuses on written genres, such as essay writing. The core research question framing this exploratory study is: How prominent is instruction on rhetoric in Japanese university English oral communication courses? This qualitative study firstly examines if rhetoric-based instruction is addressed in a sample of English language oral communication textbooks, before documenting the language learning experiences of ten Japanese university students. An amalgamation of the data reveals a dearth of explicit rhetoric-based instruction in Japanese university English language oral communication courses. The implications of this finding are discussed, and suggestions are then proffered on how to better equip Japanese university graduates with practical English language rhetorical tools so that they may play a more active role in the globalizing world.

**Keywords:** EFL, higher education, oral communication, rhetoric