

Developing an International Joint Course

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Abstract

Many Japanese universities are trying their best to internationalize their Schools and Departments. While we work on all aspects of the university system for internationalization, we often identify an area for short-term objectives. My university is developing a virtual campus program to be based on the multimedia educational system now under construction. My research project is to develop an international joint course in international communication in the Internet. One course here means a one-semester, two credit program, meeting once a week for 90 minutes for a period of the minimum 12 weeks. In this presentation, I plan to explain our concept of international cooperation in course development for a campus on the website.

(1) Introduction

While the number of school-age children is remarkably decreasing in Japan, Japanese universities, colleges, and junior colleges are trying their best to survive the ice age befalling the tertiary educational schools. Some have already experienced a smaller student enrollment than financially required, likely to be forced to close down eventually. However, many institutes see this trend as a good opportunity to improve their competitiveness. International cooperation is one of the means to enhance this capability. Let me tell you something we are trying to do at my Department of International Communication (DIC) in the Graduate of School of International Politics, Economics and Communication (G-SIPEC), Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo.

(2) DIC in G-SIPEC

The disciplinary environment of our International Communication programs is rather unique. We are one of the three pillars of the Graduate School of International Politics, Economics and Communication. We work closely with other

two departments of international politics and economics. We also have a good working relationship with the Graduate School of International Management. Our students can take 5 courses offered in other departments, 5 out of the 15 courses required for fulfillment of the MA program. (Actually we call a course a subject in Japan.) Our International Communication program is also composed of three major areas of academic inquiry: (1) language and communication, (2) comparative culture and regional studies, and (3) social information and internet studies.

Some of the courses we offer in the language and communication component, for example, include: communication, intercultural communication, international communication, negotiation and consensus formation, intercultural dialog, intercultural rhetoric, pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, language policy, cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, contrastive linguistics, etc. Let me hasten to add that most of our students are middle-aged business and other professional people coming to us for further education and possible career change and upgrading. We offer most of our classes in the evening. Right now our International Communication hosts about 80 MA, 8 Ph.D. students. Our campus is 20 minutes away by metro from the major business sections of Tokyo. The establishment of our Graduate Department, first of the kind, ten years ago was a response to a growing demand for advanced and professional education expressed by a working population.

(3) International Partnerships

One of the main features of our graduate department is a series of international partnerships we have concluded with institutes overseas for joint research and visiting professor projects. Other departments have their own international cooperation programs. Let me restrict myself to the International Communication Department, which I have chaired for ten years. Right now we have good working relations with two universities in China: Harbin Institute of Technology and Beijing Foreign Studies University. Professor Jia Yuxin and Professor Hu Wenzhong have a few words about our relationships in our brochure reproduced here, the words that are descriptive of our program.

Prof. Jia: I believe that our partnership will last long and will surely make greater contributions worldwide.

Prof. Hu: I've been impressed by the farsightedness of the department leadership, the high academic level of the faculty and the command of English on the part of the students.

When we had the 5th ICCS in Harbin in 1995, I met Prof. Jia and Prof. Hu there. That was 3 conferences ago. Since then we have been working together to hammer out joint projects in interinstitutional research collaboration. Prof. Jia and Prof. Hu taught an intensive course in Chinese communication styles in our department. We also have good connections with Chulalongkorn University Language Institute, Thailand, and with SEAMEO RELC in Singapore. We have

exchanged human resources for research and educational purposes exploring issues involved in English as an international language in Asia. Our current U.S. partner is East-West Center, the University of Hawaii. We are now trying to develop joint research projects on second language acquisition. We expect to conclude an agreement with Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia, soon.

The gist of our agreement is very simple. As you see in a sample document below, we are chiefly interested in joint projects on academic research and course development at the graduate level, particularly for MA programs.

Partnership Agreement:

This agreement provides for joint research programs between X and Graduate School of International Politics, Economics and Communication, Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo, Japan (hereafter called G-SIPEC). In order to promote the development of collaboration between the two institutions, X and G-SIPEC have agreed, after a series of discussions, to encourage the implementation of joint research projects and education as follows:

1. Mutual visits of scholars and researchers in the fields of specific interest to both institutions;
2. Exchange of educational resource materials and publications that are of mutual interest to both institutions;
3. Collaborative research and joint lectures that are of mutual interest to both institutions.

(4) International Collaborative Project on Web-Based Lecture Series in International Communication

In an attempt to take advantage of these international partnerships, we are now starting a web-based lecture series in international communication. As a starter, I got a three-year fund to study how to present my course on the internet. I have taught a course titled international communication. In my course I have concentrated on issues in English as an international language after discussing some other important topics in international communication studies.

We offer a course once a week, running for a minimum of 12 weeks in a semester. One period consists of 90 minutes. My project now is to produce a course package for a virtual campus that is being constructed in the Multimedia Lab of the University. As of now I have designed the contents of the course as follows.

Web-based lecture series in international communication:

- Week 1. English as a Language for International Communication
- Week 2. Internationalization and Diversification of English
- Week 3. World Englishes
- Week 4. New Englishes

- Week 5. English as an Asian Language
- Week 6. English as a Japanese Language for Multinational and Multicultural Communication
- Week 7. English across Cultures (to be taught by Prof. Andy Kirkpatrick of Curtin University of Technology.)
- Week 8. English and Japanese Communication Styles
- Week 9. English and Chinese Communication Styles 1 (to be taught by Prof. Jia Yuxin of Harbin Institute of Technology)
- Week 10. English and Chinese Communication Styles 2 (to be taught by Prof. Hu Wenzhong of Beijing Foreign Studies University)
- Week 11. American English and English as an International Language (to be taught by Prof. Robert St. Clair of the University of Louisville)
- Week 12. Essay test

In this project, we plan to have the web furnished with:

- 1) All articles published in Asian Englishes (Vol.1-Vol. V) (which is an international journal of the sociolinguistics of English in Asia/Pacific published by the ALC Press in Tokyo)
- 2) Video lectures
- 3) A chat room and bulletin board system for student interaction
- 4) office hours for student-faculty discussion, and
- 5) an English-Japanese dictionary.

Thus, we hope to create a paperless classroom on a virtual campus. We are scheduled to install the course package on the web in 2003.

(5) Conclusion

Tertiary education requires international cooperation in such fields as course development and lecture enrichment. Joint work is much easily done, with a campus in the cyberspace becoming increasingly a matter of reality. Joint work in these undertakings should prove indispensable if the lecture content is to be constantly updated and its quality kept improving. Our extended experience in collaboration is expected to create a really international academic institute, where the international faculty e-teach, and the international body of students e-learn. We will certainly encounter many intercultural hurdles, but we should be able to clear them one by one in our professional spirit of good will and mutual support.

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