

Report: Globalization at Kobe City College of Technology 2014-15

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ABSTRACT

From April, 2014 the writer of this paper was employed full time by the City of Kobe as a full time English teacher at Kobe City College of Technology. It has been almost 10 years since KCCT put globalization as one of the three main goals of the school, and the employment of a full-time native English teacher was a big step in moving towards that goal. Considering the situation, the writer of this paper felt both a lot of pressure and great possibilities were laid before him. Of course there had been native English teachers working part-time at KCCT for years already, but the difference in responsibility is quite great when one's primary purpose is to propagate globalization on-campus. Teaching English communication skills in the classroom is the main responsibility, however outside of the classroom is equally important regarding the globalization of a campus. On top of those responsibilities, the foreign teacher must also decide how much of the Japanese paperwork, emails, meetings and duties are mandatory or if some of them can be done in English instead.

Keywords : communication skills, globalization, native English speaker

1. April, 2014 – A New Start at KCCT

The writer was employed full time as a native English lecturer at Kobe City College of Technology as of April 1st, 2014.

In August of 2014 the writer traveled to Massachusetts, in the United States of America. This is his home state and he has many connections there. His father is a retired Electrical Engineer and he has many colleagues in the area as well. The writer contacted several technical high schools, colleges and universities. Particularly of interest was Worcester Polytechnic Institute where a close friend to the family and doctor in the field of Electrical Engineering is still employed there and the school seemed very welcoming of students or teachers interested in study or research, or doing something in collaboration. At first glance the financial burden seems too large to recommend for students to apply, as full time students, however scholarships and various programs are available to consider in the future. It is about 1 hour from Massachusetts Institute of Technology by car, which is in Boston, the state capital. The writer is willing and able to approach other schools in foreign countries to help establish connections that could eventually lead to friendly destinations for our students and teachers for study abroad, sabbaticals and homestays. Not only

outbound program expansion, he could help organize inbound exchange programs allowing KCCT to invite bright young students and instructors from around the world to visit and study, research or teach at the KCCT campus.

2. March, 2015 – Travel to Dunedin, New Zealand

Because the writer is part of the Global Collaboration Research Committee he had the opportunity to help chaperone a group of students going to study abroad. He accompanied third and fourth year KCCT students, supervising them with one other Japanese Engineering teacher on a two week study abroad and home stay program at Otago Polytechnic. The school has wonderful facilities with very kind and helpful staff and faculty.



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Pic.1 Engineering English at Otago Polytechnic

They were very accommodating to our students as well as to the chaperone teachers. All of the classes were held in English and most of them were focused on some sort of engineering concepts.

Engineering specialists in civil engineering and mechanical engineering had the students doing hands on experiments which proved to be valuable learning experiences that they will not forget. In order to run the experiments all in English, they also carefully explained everything before-hand in the classroom, giving our students new vocabulary and PowerPoint explanations of what they were going to do. The practical hands-on experiences included preparing cement cylinders then testing the durability of the cement, creating a wooden trestle bridge then testing to see how much weight it could support before it broke, and also making 3-D CAD projects of interlocking puzzle pieces and a nut and bolt with animated videos at the end.

There was a conversation English class every morning which was very practical and students had to talk in all English for one minute to their peers each day, many times in a row.



Pic.2 Students talking in English at Otago Polytechnic

At the beginning of the two weeks, students complained that it was difficult to speak for one minute but after two weeks they could speak for five minutes with no problem. The greatest evidence of the students' progress was noticed when they came back to the KCCT English classroom. When students are asked to speak in English in front of the class, they always are very slow to agree and are usually very shy. Every student that went to New Zealand when asked to speak in English in front of the class showed no hesitation and was very comfortable speaking in English, or at least tried to answer the teacher's questions or follow the teacher's directions.

There were daily tours of the Polytechnic facilities or some introduction of a native New Zealand activity such as an introduction to playing cricket. There were also 2

occasions where the Japanese students could meet with Kiwi engineering students to eat lunch together and exchange stories about their school life. They showed our students a giant JENGA game made by the school's carpentry students, which was fun for everyone to try. Otago Polytechnic's staff also set up a hospitality class to host the KCCT students where they listened to the student presentations introducing Japan, followed by small group discussions (groups of 3 or 4 students) in a computer lab allowing students to use the Internet to help explain their favorite things back home. These were great global learning opportunities with international exchange happening very naturally for the students and on future programs it would be great if the number of student to student interactions could be increased. Both the Kiwi students and the KCCT students seemed to have a great time talking to each other.

Off campus excursions on weekends included a scenic train tour of the beautiful local area scenery, a bus tour of the city and area including observation decks overlooking Dunedin, a visit to an albatross and penguin colony and a visit to the local Cadbury Chocolate factory. Besides these tours, many students' host families took them to other local attractions and sight-seeing destinations. The Southern Island of New Zealand is more rural which means it's a great vacation destination even for Kiwi people, so there are lots of gorgeous sight-seeing spots.

One of the optional trips scheduled for the KCCT students was to visit Queenstown for a weekend but the students opted to not go and spend more time with their home stay families. Nishida-sensei and the writer of this paper were able to rent a car and travel to Queenstown which is a town near the center of the Otago Peninsula that has scenic beauty second to none. The purpose for making the three hour trip was to confirm the quality of the area for future trips and decide whether it would be worth offering it as an optional tour to KCCT students or not. It was decided that it would indeed be a special weekend if they could go, but it would involve more money not only for the traveling and staying overnight, but any activity in Queenstown was quite expensive. However, for jet-boat rides, skydiving, bungee jumping and other outdoor activities, many of which could not be done in Japan, it was the perfect setting.

3. Regarding home stay programs

A very interesting and important thing to note about the homestay families in New Zealand is that the KCCT students stayed in homes with teachers' families that work at the Polytechnic Institute. Also, many of the families had more than one international student staying at their house. The government paid money, or the school pays money to

the homestay families to help support the living expenses of the international students. Perhaps this money was collected partially from our student fees as well. The writer has not asked about the details directly to Otago Polytechnic staff but is looking forward to doing so in the future if allowed. We should think about developing a more realistic system if we are going to have a proper homestay program at our school. Continuing to do a completely volunteer based home stay recruiting plan from KCCT students' families will become more and more difficult and long term home stays will be nearly impossible for foreign students interested in studying at our school. Getting advice and inspiration from schools that already have good programs working, that have similar conditions to our school would be a valuable source of knowledge in this area. The writer is very happy to contact other schools to find out more information about how a good homestay program is run.

4. On campus at KCCT

Since the writer was hired he has been the representative of the global society outside of Japan at KCCT on a daily basis. The particular advantages and disadvantages can be thought of this way. Some students are afraid of foreigners and try their best to avoid any contact. However, that is a small percentage of the student population. Most students are very eager to test the limits of their English and are much more willing to challenge speaking in English with a foreigner than with a Japanese teacher that may be very good at speaking English. Students have more motivation to speak in English with a native English speaker. They are generally more motivated in class as well. Greetings are more common as it is considered more of a fun challenge than a required task. Cultural differences for example, such as holidays; Christmas, Valentine's Day and Halloween offer special opportunities for fun interactions between the students and foreign teacher as well. Also, there is a natural curiosity about the way things are done in a different country, compared to in Japan.

The writer of this paper has willingly taking on responsibility to make opportunities for motivated students to speak English outside of the classroom such as eating lunch together. Other students can practice their English when they visit the native English teacher's research laboratory or by getting involved in the speech contest which will allow them to work on a one-on-one basis with the native English teacher. The writer is also responsible for the ESS club with Dr. Imamura at present, and he teaches the students in the club once a week on Thursdays for an hour or an hour and a half. This is an open club and other students not regularly in the ESS club are able to visit if

they like, which is highly recommended for returning exchange students, although to date it has not been utilized by them so much. Because the ESS club doesn't have tournaments or other weekend commitments the native English teacher is able to visit other clubs and enjoy their activities with them on an irregular basis as well. The writer enjoys playing table tennis, tennis, soccer, baseball, archery, Kendo, and volleyball so there are lots of chances to interact with students doing club activities in their favorite sports. The writer also enjoys music, photography, drawing, games and other cultural activities, so in the future joining in a band to sing some western music or helping with an art exhibition or something of that nature might be fun for those types of students as well.



Pic.3 Entering for the first time ever, KCCT took 3rd & 4th place at the 2014 Kansai Region Speech contest

The recent addition of an “English Lounge” at KCCT has opened the door for an official English speaking opportunity to students who want to speak with a native English speaker outside of the classroom setting. Since the start of this program it seems to be drawing about 20 students each time. If nurtured this could turn into a valuable resource for the KCCT students. The writer of this paper joined the first session, but a part-time foreign lecturer from Kobe City University of Foreign Studies has agreed to take care of the Lounge for the year of 2015-16.

Another great opportunity for students to speak with native English speakers is when international visitors come to visit our school. The writer of this paper is a member of the Global Collaboration Research Committee at KCCT and has many opportunities to help facilitate guests that come to visit KCCT. There have been international visitors from Singapore, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and other countries as well. During their visits KCCT students are always asked to show the international guests around

campus, eat lunch together with them, and present their research information in English to the guests. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to talk with native English speakers and non-native English speakers close to their age. Presenting their research information is a great opportunity for them to practice skills valuable for their future jobs and careers. Sometimes students' families are willing to accept international guests for a short homestay program. This is also valuable chance for them to experience international guests in a private setting. In order to continue families' cooperation entertaining international guests in this way we must consider offering money to help support the costs incurred by the international guests.

5. In the Classroom at KCCT

There is curiosity about how things are done in other countries that draws them to the foreigner and they are more likely to pay attention during class. The style of teaching also differs which can be good or bad for the students. A few students are much more comfortable listening to lectures and changes to their norm can make them uncomfortable or stressed. They are unable to assimilate to the changes and have negative feelings throughout the term. On the contrary, most students are stimulated by change, find it more interesting and are willing to try things outside of their comfort zone. The writer of this paper teaches English in different areas. Teaching for the TOEIC Test and the TOEIC Bridge Test require the native English teacher to drill the students on difficult vocabulary and grammatical points. These lectures are very difficult to be held all in English because of the content difficulty. On the other hand English communication skills lessons are taught for half of the syllabus. During these classes the native English teacher is able to encourage students to challenge their English speaking and listening abilities. Using group activities and pair work, students are taught practical communication skills. Rejoinders are the first lesson done in the communication English class. Rejoinders teach students how to respond when someone says something to them in English. In the second English communication class they are taught how to ask follow-up questions to help keep the conversation going. In the third English communication class they are taught how to confirm details to make sure they have not mistakenly heard information. The writer has specifically chosen a text entitled, "Conversation Strategies" by Kehe⁽¹⁾ for the English communication portion of his class. It is a valuable tool that teaches English in a very practical and useful manner for the English communication portion of his class. The writer also believes that many students are lacking in Japanese communication

skills, therefore this class may help them improve their communication in any language.

At the time of this paper being written the native English teacher has about 330 students to take care of. During the school year the writer of this paper starts by teaching all of the fourth year students, which translates to being first year university level students. On top of this the writer is teaching a humanities class for around 35 5th year students. After the first term the writer then changes from fourth-year to 3rd year students. This means in September the writer of this paper must learn to 240 students new names. On top of that as of 2015, the writer has begun teaching two more fifth year English classes. The focus of the fifth year English classes has been turned to presentations and English related to their future jobs and careers. Considering the burden of the other English teachers, this is not an extreme load, but it is very difficult for the native English teacher to give one on one time to each student. In the future it would be ideal to break the third and fourth year classes in half allowing the native English teacher to teach English communication skills to between 20 and 25 students at a time. There was a proposal made by KCCT President Ito for just such an adjustment, however, due to lack of teaching staff and funding it is impossible at this juncture. Also ideally, removing the necessity for the native English teacher to instruct about the TOEIC Test or TOEIC Bridge Test would be preferable. This would allow for the possibility of the native English teacher conducting classes completely in English.

References

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