I
Cultural Diversity in the U.S.: Regions, Ethnicity and Music
On Demand Lecture Series Offered Online to English Majors

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Abstract

The content-based English classes of the English Department of Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College (HGUJC) have been offered as part of the department’s core curriculum since 1993. The concept of this curriculum development was to enable
Japanese college students to acquire introductory college-level knowledge in liberal arts subjects in English. In their first year in college, students were trained to strengthen their English skills, e.g. writing, reading, speaking and listening, so that they were expected to cope, in their second year, with subjects such as Sociology, Anthropology, History, Life Science, Psychology and Geography, all of which were taught by international teachers with proper professional degrees.

After 10 years of successful implementation of the content-based curriculum, HGUJC was selected by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to receive the Distinctive University Education Support Program (Tokushoku GP) in 2003 for two years and again in 2005 for the Modern Education Needs Support Program (Gendai JP) for three years. HGUJC was the only two-year college in the country to have won these two grants for five consecutive years at the time.

In 2004, when we were working on creating advanced e-learning course materials for these content-based subjects, the Forum for On Demand Lectures Circulation (FOLC) suggested that we produce on demand English lecture programs to be distributed online. The following was FOLC's proposed distribution scheme:

In April 2006, an official agreement was signed between HGUJC and Waseda University. In September of the same year, the first year of the full on demand lecture distribution started through Waseda's Open Education Center with an enrollment of 30 students. The program was offered for three years until 2009. The program continues to be offered at HGUJC, using a blended learning approach.
2. Hokusei On Demand Project: Program Design

Program design was in accordance with the FOLC guidelines, which stipulated that each chapter consist of 45-60 minutes of VTR viewing, followed by a quiz and BBS entries and that the 15-week program would be punctuated by mid-term and final examinations. A team of three faculty members agreed that the on demand lecture program would be created in an omnibus format, in which each faculty member would produce a 15-20 minute video for each chapter.

As there was no previous model to follow, program was designed through frequent and intensive brain-storming sessions among the team members. By December 2005, the first sample lecture of "Cultural Diversity in the U.S.: Regions, Ethnicity and Music" was completed and was introduced to Hokusei students.

3. Creating/Editing Video Lectures on "Cultural Diversity in the U.S.: Regions, Ethnicity and Music"

The team of three instructors and one support staff member of the English Department worked on creating and editing each new video program. In my case, I wrote the text of each chapter and filmed my own lecture on the video. Then, I prepared Powerpoint slides to go with the video and inserted numerous private and copyright-free photos as well as other multimedia materials. After finishing the original production for one video lecture, I made an instruction sheet which specified how the video should be cut and synchronized with the separate voice files. The
following is an example of one chapter's instruction sheet delivered to the support staff.

On Demand Program       KYoshida
VTR Editing Instruction
A. ① The Lewis and Clark Expedition   1804-1806
B. ② Yoshida Bookmark

C.   

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VTR</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>(First sentence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missouri@FortBenton.MP4</td>
<td>00:03-01:32</td>
<td>file</td>
<td>This is the Missouri River...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FortBenton.MP4</td>
<td>00:04-01:20</td>
<td>viv*</td>
<td>The riverbank which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri.MP4</td>
<td>00:20-00:54</td>
<td>file</td>
<td>I said that the first white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L&amp;CIntro.MP4</td>
<td>00:00-01:36</td>
<td>viv</td>
<td>Hello, everyone, I'm...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri&amp;Memorial.MP4</td>
<td>00:00-02:20</td>
<td>file</td>
<td>The Louisiana Purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greatportage.MP4</td>
<td>00:00-01:00</td>
<td>file</td>
<td>In the Lewis &amp;Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threeforks.MP4</td>
<td>00:01-01:02</td>
<td>viv</td>
<td>I'm at the Missouri headwater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ThreeForksnv.MP4</td>
<td>00:00-01:37</td>
<td>file</td>
<td>On June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L&amp;CMemorialNV.MP4</td>
<td>00:00-01:25</td>
<td>file</td>
<td>The Lewis &amp; Clark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LittleBigHornRiver.MP4</td>
<td>00:01-00:43</td>
<td>viv</td>
<td>This is Little Bighorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBHNoVoice.MP4 (ner**)</td>
<td>00:00-02:28</td>
<td>file</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBHMemorial.MP4 (ner)</td>
<td>00:00-01:57</td>
<td>file</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBHCrazeHorse.MP4 (ner)</td>
<td>00:00-00:43</td>
<td>file</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marjtalks.MP4</td>
<td>sec.1</td>
<td>viv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sec.2</td>
<td>viv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D. ⑦ Ending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*voice included in video   **no editing required

4. Program Distribution through Two Software Packages: Moodle and Ub!Point

Completed course materials were distributed through two web applications: Moodle, a free and open-source course management system, and Ub!Point, an online learning system through which streamed video could be synchronized with Powerpoint slides. The following section highlights how students navigate the Moodle and
Ub!Point screens in order to watch lecture videos, take quizzes and make forum entries. This is illustrated below with actual screen shots of the pages Hokusei students worked on in 2011.

(1) Managing the Class Schedule, Forum Entries, Quizzes and Grading (Moodle)

Registered students first log in to the Moodle page of the selected class and check the class schedule for the semester. The Moodle page is also used for taking quizzes after viewing each movie, for examinations and also for writing forum entries and a final essay.

(2) Opening the Ub!Point Front Page to Select a Chapter to View (Ub!Point)

As the Hokusei program uses two systems, students need to log in again to the Ub!Point page in order to view the selected video lecture.
(3) Viewing Multimedia Materials (Ub!Point)

After logging in a new window opens and students watch a 15-20 minute video lecture. The screen has two parts, one for the video and one for Powerpoint slides which are synchronized with the video.

(4) Quizzes, Forum Entries and Examinations (Moodle)

After students finish viewing the lecture, they need to go back to the Moodle page and take a multiple choice quizz for that lecture, which is followed by a forum entry in
response to a topic each instructor prepared.

[Quizzes]

(5) A Complete Text to View as a Reference (Moodle)

For each video lecture, a complete text is available for students to refer to by clicking the icon “Text” listed in the prospective chapter on the Moodle page.
10-03 Las Vegas, Hoover Dam and the Military West (Yoshida)

"Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas, Nevada" - the sign says. We are arriving right in the heart of the Entertainment Capital of the World, Las Vegas Boulevard. Las Vegas is located in the southernmost part of the state of Nevada near the Arizona border. It is easy to be dazzled by the glitzy image of the city but Las Vegas perhaps offers a lot more than you can see here. By looking back on its history, I hope you will be able to understand this corner of the Southwest in a somewhat different light.

Las Vegas Celebrated Its Centennial
I am looking down on famous Las Vegas Boulevard, known as the Strip. The Strip is lined with mega-hotels, casinos of the highest class, more than 30 million tourists visit the city every year.

In 2005, Las Vegas celebrated its 100th anniversary. In the early 20th century, who could possibly imagine that a small frontier town built with the coming of the railroad would become the Gambling Capital of the World a hundred years later?

History of Las Vegas
The Las Vegas valley had been home to Native Americans for thousands of years. In 1829, the area was discovered by Spanish explorers. They were attracted here because of the natural springs and meadows around the area. They called the valley Las Vegas, which is Spanish for "the meadows."

Las Vegas officially became a city in 1911. Ever since, jobs and money were steadily available because of the development of the railroad, the introduction of legal gambling and the construction of Hoover Dam.

(6) Midterm and Final Examinations and a Final Essay to Submit Online (Moodle)

The midterm and final examinations are also multiple choice, like the quizzes, with 30 questions randomly selected from the quiz questions. In addition, students are required to submit online a final essay of 400-500 words on a topic they select from a list of topics prepared by the instructor.

[Final Essay]

I chose Vegas, and I discuss in detail about New York City. When I watched the video lecture about New York City, I was so interested in New York City and the history of the city. Especially, I was impressed with the story of Liberty and the history of a lot of immigrants. I didn't know those histories before watch the video, so I write about the two things.

The Statue of Liberty is the most famous statue in the United States. We can see the Statue of Liberty from Liberty Island whose name is in New York Harbor. Every year, about two million people visit to see the statue. The statue was designed and built by Frederic Auguste Bartholdi in France and the big statue came to New York Harbor from France in October, 1886, as a result of the effort of the American Immigration Association of 1876. Miss Liberty wears a crown which has the inscription in French "Liberty Enlightening the World" and a torch on her right hand, symbolizing leadership, power, and strength.

In addition, I was the most impressed with the history of Ellis Island and a lot of immigrants. There are Ellis Island near Liberty Island. More than 12 million immigrants came to the island between 1892 and 1954. Ellis Island is the welcoming center for immigrants entering the United States. It is really surprising to know about it. Almost all the immigrants didn’t know what was happening, and of course, they didn’t know the language. However, they might have high hopes at the time. There is a big red brick building in Ellis Island, which is called Ellis Island immigration museum, and organizations or testimonials about them were done there. The Registry Room of the building is the biggest witness to the history of immigrants. At the time, they had to pass a lot of detailed mental testing. If they failed some tests, they couldn’t enter the country. Therefore, Ellis Island was a gate for enter the country but was also called "Isle of tears." In 1900, the number of immigrants who passed through the island was 100, 113.

I could learn that the immigrants are very important for the United States through the video lecture because of their didn’t enter the country, the culture or history of the country is different from now. Then, I felt New York City is necessary city to the United States again.
5. Grades and Class Evaluations

Students' scores are automatically calculated as they complete quizzes (20%), view lectures and make forum entries (30%), take midterm and final examinations (20%) and write a final essay (30%). Each student’s final grade is the total of these four scores and each student can check his/her current scores as the class progresses during the semester.

Class evaluations written by forty registered students in the academic year 2011 revealed positive results. When students were asked in the survey about the course content and the instructor in the statement “on the whole, this class was satisfactory and met my expectations,” their evaluations totaled 4.82 on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ (1) to ‘strongly agree’ (5). To the statement “I attended the class with much enthusiasm,” which was intended to measure each respondent’s attitude toward the class, students’ responses showed a mean of 4.57. These high scores clearly showed class participants’ level of satisfaction as well as how much energy they gave to complete this highly demanding online lecture series.

6.1 Problems of a Full On Demand Lecture Program

As the team of instructors looked back on the full on demand distribution to Waseda University from 2006 through 2009, we found some problems with this style of distance learning. First, it is more challenging than blended or hybrid courses as students and lecturers are not able to interact directly. Second, students are free to choose the time to do classwork for a full on demand course. This freedom may work negatively, however, as it may be hard to keep up with the weekly schedule. This is particularly so when a course such as the Hokusei program requires students to open a new chapter every week.

Third, it was noted that technical problems are harder to solve, especially when our computer system runs differently from the system the receiving students use for their own university’s programs. Finally, a high dropout rate, which is common in all distance learning programs, may pose a serious challenge to relying on a full on demand program distributed solely on the Internet.

6.2 Advantages of Using the Moodle and Modular Learning Approach

In spite of the aforementioned problems, the Hokusei program had advantages that could be shared with other language education experts and institutions. The program was designed from the early planning stage to adopt a modular learning approach. Each of the 15-20 minute lectures was produced as an independent “module” and each module could be studied alone or in various combinations.

From the course management point of view, Moodle is easy to handle and instructors can make “instant” changes to meet class management needs or to create scaffolding. In other words, instructors are able to serve as the system managers. By simply ‘turning editing on’ for the Moodle page, the system managers can rearrange their own modules and customize the contents for target learners. We can add or delete support materials such as quizzes, the BBS (forum) or topic titles.

Students can check their grades at any time from their smart phones by logging in to the Moodle page. Maintaining transparency in grading as such helps boost students’ morale and aspirations for gaining higher scores as they want to collect more ‘points’ when they see their already gained scores.
6.3. Prospects of On Demand Language Education

The major objective of on demand education has been said to be that it can reach a large number of learners whenever and wherever a computer is available. In the context of language education, on demand lectures can also offer a unique educational opportunity which caters to each individual student’s abilities, interests and needs.

Earlier in this section, problems of a full on demand program were enumerated: A lack of face-to-face contact between the instructor and the learners, the negative effects of flexibility incorporated in ‘you can study at any time, from any place’ approach, the difficulty of solving technical problems, and the high dropout rate. On the other hand, it was argued that a blended approach, in which lessons are given partly in a face-to-face classroom environment and partly on demand on the Internet, proved to be effective in keeping the students’ interest and boosting their morale.

It is too soon, however, to conclude that a blended approach is more effective than a full on demand program distribution as a way to increase English proficiency in Japanese classrooms. We need more such endeavors and future research by language experts in order to validate this argument.

Acknowledgements

This article is a revised and edited version of an original multimedia presentation of the same title offered by Kayoko Yoshida at JACET Chubu Chapter’s English Education Forum held at Meijo University Satellite Campus in Nagoya on June 2, 2012.

I am indebted to Professors Edgar Pope and Robert Gettings for their support and advice. I worked closely with them in order to create and distribute the on demand video lecture series delineated in this paper. I need to stress that the program I introduced here was not completed alone but was the result of the joint efforts by the three instructors and that some sections of the paper inevitably overlap with our previously published papers and presentations.

References

Yoshida, K. & Gettings, B. (2009, July). "Accomplishments & Prospects: 3 Years of On Demand Lecture Distribution through Waseda Open Education Center". Distant Learning Center Symposium conducted at the 2nd CCDL International Teachers’ Workshop, Joint Meeting of JACET-ICT, LET Kanto Chapter, DLC, and FOLC-CCDL.