

Report on the ELA/JLP Joint Class: ARW Stream 3 and Intensive Japanese C during the Winter Term of 2016

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1. Introduction

In the past, joint classes between the ELA and JLP programs were conducted for students to confirm their progress in the language learning process and also as an attempt to prompt exchange between the two groups of language learners. At the International Christian University (ICU) in the 1990's, Shimazaki et al.(1996) conducted joint courses based on the existing personal relationship between the teachers. Also, Era (1995) put into practice joint classes not on an ad hoc basis, but as part of the curriculum for both programs.

Today, it is no longer a part of the curriculum. While the university attempts to integrate both Japanese and non-Japanese students within its campus, those ELA students who do not live on campus have very little interaction with students taking the JLP courses. Dornyei (1994) asserts that a major strategy for stimulating motivation for language learners is for teachers to set up activities that place students in contact with native speakers of the language the students are learning. Thus, joint classes are an opportunity to maintain or increase motivation for both groups of students by giving them the opportunity to practice using the language they are learning.

This paper is a report on the two joint classes that were conducted at ICU between the Academic Reading and Writing (ARW) Stream 3 course from the English for Liberal Arts (ELA) program and the Intensive Japanese C course from the Japanese Language Program (JLP) in the winter term of the 2016 academic year. This paper will explain the class content, method, background information on each course, and the students' reflections and reactions to the joint classes.

2. Class Background

2.1 ELA

New students who enroll in ICU in April take the ELA program, and they are divided into four levels, called streams, determined by the results of a language proficiency test taken during orientation week. Stream 3 students are intermediate level students with a TOEFL ITP score between 450-550, and represent a large number of the students in the ELA program. Most of the Stream 3 students have no formal overseas educational experience and have had only a limited amount of interaction with non-Japanese people.

One of the courses ELA students take is called Academic Reading and Writing (ARW), which is 3 periods a week and has around 20 students per class. "Academic Reading and Writing-based"

classes have become the primary teaching model for many English for Academic Purposes (EAP) language programs. Brinton et al in their book *Content-Based Second Language Instruction* define content-based instruction as the “integration of particular content with language teaching aims... concurrent teaching of subject matter and second language skills” (1989). The “Academic Reading” portion of the ELA curriculum is categorized into “theme-based” models in which content is provided in the form of readings and lecture topics. In the first part of the winter term, the topic was bioethics.

2.2 JLP

The first year non-Japanese students are divided into 8 levels, determined by the results of a placement test taken in September. Intensive Japanese C covers level 5 and level 6 in one term. At the beginning of the winter term, Intensive Japanese C starts from the mid level of intermediate Japanese and finishes at the beginner level of advanced Japanese. In the winter term of the 2016 academic year, 14 students from various countries like Korea, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, the USA, the UK, Russia and Sweden, were enrolled in the course.

Intensive Japanese C consists of 15 periods per week to cover intermediate level Japanese grammar, *Kanji* and vocabulary as well as four skills. In addition, students are required to conduct a research project in Japanese using an interview themed “Understanding Japanese Culture and Youth”.

3. Joint Class Content and Method

The joint class was organized in a large classroom during the ELA and JLP scheduled class hour. In each class, students were divided into 7 groups. Each group had 2 JLP students and 3-4 ELA students. In the first joint session Japanese was used in the first part of the class, and English was used in the second part of the class. In the second joint session the first part of the class used English and the second part of the class used Japanese. At the end of both sessions, students were given time to reflect on the class.

3.1 Joint Class 1

JLP initiated, conducted in Japanese

- 1) Self-Introductions for 5 minutes.
- 2) JLP students interviewed ELA students in Japanese by asking “what and how” young Japanese celebrate Christmas and New Year’s. 14 minutes (7 min x 2 Students)

Examples of questions asked:

- What is your plan for Christmas and New Year’s Day?
- Who do you spend Christmas and New Year’s with?
- What is Christmas in Japan like?
- What kind of food do you eat for Christmas and New Year’s?
- Do Japanese eat KFC on Christmas Day?
- Why do you celebrate Christmas with a Christmas cake?
- Have you ever bought *osechi* from the convenience store?

- How much do you get for *otoshidama*?

3) Free Discussion for 10 minutes

ELA students asked questions in Japanese about how JLP students celebrate Christmas and New Year's and/or had a discussion about the topic.

Examples of questions asked:

- Does your country have any special event or custom for the Christmas and New Year's holiday?
- Who do you spend Christmas and New Year's with?
- What do you do for Christmas/New Year's?
- Does your family gather on the first day of the New Year in your country? Why? Why not?
- What foods do you eat for Christmas and New Year's?
- What kind of TV programs do you/can you watch on New Year's Eve?

ELA initiated, conducted in English.

1) Presentation of the reading text for 10 minutes.(2.5 mins. × 3 students)

ELA students read "Reconsidering Brain Death: A Lesson from Japan's Fifteen Years of Experience" written by Masahiro Morioka. This reading is about Japanese Organ Transplantation Law and brain death. The students read the whole text. The text was divided into 3 parts. Each student in the group was responsible for one section and summarized that section in English to present to the group.

2) Discussion for 20 minutes.

After the students summarized the text for JLP students, the students prepared discussion questions related to the section of the reading and discussed those questions in English with the group. Example questions they asked were:

- What is the organ transplantation law regarding brain death patients in your country?
- If you were brain dead would you want to donate your organs?
- Do you have donor cards in your country?
- Which do you think is better: the system in Japan or the system in your country?
- Japanese Organ Donation Law changed in 2010 where now only family consent is necessary. Whereas, prior to the change in 2010, both family and patient consent were necessary. What do you think about this law?

Reflection

At the end of the class, students had 5 minutes to reflect on the joint class session. The students responded to the question "What did you learn from this class?" Students wrote their answers in English or Japanese.

3.2 Joint Class 2

ELA initiated, conducted in English

1) Self- Introduction in English (2 minutes)

2) ELA Presentation (5 min) + Discussion (5 min) = 10 min ×3 person = 30 min

ELA students worked on an essay of 1,000 words or more on ethical issues in bioethics. Topics for the essay were determined by the students. The topics include euthanasia, cloning, sperm banks, organ trade, and xenotransplantation. By the second joint class, the majority of the students had finished writing 8 paragraphs. For this joint session, ELA students summarized their essays in English and prepared discussion questions based on their topics.

JLP initiated, conducted in Japanese

1) JLP Interim Report on Interview Project (5 minutes to present + 5 minutes of discussion×2 students=20 minutes).

JLP students finished an interview project focusing on “Understanding Japanese Society and Youth”. Each student chose a topic according to their interest. For example, “Importance of English for young Japanese students,” “What are social problems for Japanese people?” and “Women’s language in Japan.” JLP students reported on their interview results in Japanese to ELA students and also asked them for their opinions in Japanese.

Reflection

At the end of the class students had 5 minutes to reflect on the joint class. They responded to the question “What did you learn from this class?” Most JLP students responded in English while most ELA students responded in Japanese.

4. Student Reflection

4.1 Joint Class 1

At the end of the joint class, the students wrote a reflection of the joint session in English or Japanese. JLP students reacted about their Japanese use/ability, the new things they learned about Japanese culture and organ transplantation, and they wrote encouraging words about the ability of ELA students.

Examples of JLP student reactions:

- It was very helpful talking to native Japanese speakers about what we’ve been discussing in class. It is easier to remember grammar and vocabulary in this kind of context.
- Was able to gain new knowledge of Japanese culture.
- I learned a lot about brain death, and what the Japanese opinion is about.
- I learned about what Japan does for their Organ laws. I don’t even know what my own country does, but now I know more about Japan.
- I also learned that a lot of Japanese people believe that a person is in their heart, not their mind. This makes it difficult in cases of brain death.

- Japanese people feel Christmas is more of an event for couples. They feel New Year's is the most important time of the year.
- They try and be with family for New Years, and do, indeed do New Year's cleaning.
- Japanese people have inherited a lot of traditional traits, and it is so ingrained in Japanese culture, they sometimes don't realize it themselves.
- I learnt a lot about the New Year's in Japan. I think Japanese traditional activity is interesting.
- Despite having a lot of difficult words, ELA students were able to explain everything well! Even in other branching topics, they were still able to converse very well, and explain very well.
- Impressed by the high level of the ELA students.

ELA students commented about trying to incorporate non-verbal communications methods they witnessed from JLP students, reflected about what they could have done better, and noted what they learned from JLP students.

Examples of ELA student reactions:

- I was worried if I would be able to communicate with JLP students.
- I wish I could have communicated with more confidence.
- JLP students were good listeners- they reacted and made eye contact. It made me want to do what they did to be a good listener.
- I was unable to answer some of the questions posed by JLP students and it made me realize that I need to learn more about my own country.
- It was interesting to learn the opinions of JLP students who are from a different country, different culture. I learned there are differences in values among Japanese and other countries.
- I know a lot of English vocabulary, but it was difficult to use it fluently.
- JLP students speak very fluently and very fast, so it made me realize I need to improve my listening skill.
- The joint class heightened my motivation to learn English.
- JLP students use gestures when they speak; I need to do the same.
- I learned the similarities of New Year's among various countries and cultures.
- I realized that I need to explain my ideas more clearly, so the listeners can understand.
- I did not have the opportunity to speak or interact with September students, so this was a good opportunity to interact with them.
- On the topic of organ transplantation, it made me realize that one's upbringing affects their opinion.
- I was nervous to speak to a native speaker. It was difficult but refreshing.
- It made me confident that my idea could be understood in English.
- I learned how JLP students made arguments with logical reasons when discussing.

(Translated by M. Kuromatsu)

4.2 Joint Class 2

Just like the first joint session, the students wrote a reflection of the second joint session in Japanese or English. The majority of JLP students responded on ELA student's essay topics and their own presentations.

Examples of JLP student reactions:

- I like the format of ELA students' essay sharing: content, Q&A, discussion.
- The ELA students' topics are very timely, provocative and interesting.
- It was very fun to use both English and Japanese.
- The presenters made many good points.
- I learned about the different aspects of the medical and science field, which are controversial.
- ELA students made very clear arguments, and we had a lively discussion.
- I always look forward to the joint session because I got to learn a lot about the Japanese and also meet new friends.
- It's also fun to talk a bit more freely with ELA students and try to put all the grammar we learned together.
- By presenting my interview project to our Japanese colleagues, I could get their useful comments. Their questions to me were pertinent and made me think about aspects of my interviews and the theme I developed.
- My project theme is English learning experience of ICU students. I learned ELA's instructions after this session.
- For my interview, I heard about different ways in which ICU students are different than others.

ELA students mostly responded about the content of JLP students' presentations, feedback about their own presentations, and their own performance.

Examples of ELA student reactions:

- JLP presentations are very interesting because they write from the point of view that regular Japanese people would not notice.
- JLP presentations made me realize how interesting intercultural communication is.
- One of the JLP presentation topics was the concept of time. I could recognize that similarities in the concept of time between Filipinos and Okinawans.
- JLP students made me realize that foreigners try to understand Japan more than Japanese try to understand foreigners.
- I was surprised that what Japanese people feel is normal is considered amazing.
- It was great because I could get critical feedback on my essay.
- I was amazed by the improvements JLP students made with their Japanese language abilities.
- This class was very interesting and satisfying for me because I was always interested in how foreigners view Japan. I could finally listen to real voices!
- It was beneficial because JLP students actively gave feedback on ELA students' presentations.

- I could speak with more confidence than the first joint session.

(Translated by M. Kuromatsu)

5. Conclusion

There are several difficulties in conducting a joint class even at ICU. Firstly, there is unevenness in the numbers of students in the classes. More specifically, there are more ELA students than JLP students. As a result, this may affect class content and/or time management. In addition, JLP and ELA teachers currently have very little to no interaction. The ELA and JLP programs are separate entities and they are housed in different buildings. This means that ELA teachers do not know who the JLP instructors are, and vice versa. In our case, one of the primary reasons why the joint classes materialized was because of the close professional relationship between the ARW and JLP teachers. Another difficulty of the joint class session is scheduling. It involves prior organization and flexibility by the teachers regarding scheduling and class content. Both the ARW and JLP courses have a lot of material to cover in one term, so the joint classes are viewed as an extra event, different from the regular class.

ICU markets its international character, bilingual education, diversity, and globalization. However, it appears that on the whole, ELA students and JLP students have very limited interaction within which to practice their English or Japanese language skills with a native speaker. More interaction is necessary, and implementation of joint classes should be executed to increase motivation in language learning and to deepen their understanding of different cultures. Joint classes will encourage both Japanese and non-Japanese students to become aware of the global community around them and enhance further engagement with diverse people.

References

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