

An Experiment in Integrating Content Lectures in English: A First Step in Building an International Curriculum

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1. Introduction

The need to provide classes taught in English is growing in Japanese universities. For some time now, Ehime University has been offering a limited number of master's and doctoral courses designed for international students in which all instruction is given in English. The website for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Working Group to Consider Globalism in the University (大学グローバル化検討ワーキンググループの検討状況, 2010), has a list of what is especially needed to make universities more international. 'Classes which are taught in English' is at the top.

As English content-based programs increase in number, more and more of the faculty members are beginning to realize that they will need to prepare to teach using English at some point. However, few professors are ready for this challenge, and the university has, to date, provided little guidance for those who do need to use English in the classroom. The authors of this report came together in 2008 and formed an ad hoc committee to discuss the issue, recognizing that something needed to be done. They also happened to be members of the Committee to Plan Strategies for Becoming a Global 30 University, the purpose of which was to find ways to further internationalize the university. The need to prepare faculty to present content courses in English was discussed by the committee and mentioned in its final report 'Issues Related to the Internationalization of Ehime University' (愛媛大

学の国際化のための課題, Fukuda, Feb. 26, 2010) where it was stated that 'the Japanese students are waiting for (the university) to be more proactive in offering classes taught in English' and to provide more chances for exchange with foreigners.

The ad hoc committee, mentioned above, decided to offer a class taught in English with a different lecturer conducting each 90-minute session, thus providing a training ground for those professors who wanted to practice. The initial goals in establishing this course were:

- 1) To provide a venue in which faculty and researchers could practice teaching in English.
- 2) To give Japanese students the chance to improve both English language and study skills.
- 3) To promote exchange on campus by providing a class which both Japanese and international students can attend.

Until recently, most English-only content courses at national universities in Japan were designed for international students at the graduate level. The authors felt it was also necessary to provide Japanese undergraduate students more opportunities to encounter English in the classroom and to interact with international students. As noted by the Global 30 committee mentioned above, the university currently offers very little support in preparing Japanese students who want to study abroad. This class provides a good jumping-off point by offering Content-Based Instruction (CBI), and the response of the students thus far has shown that Japanese students want this chance.

This class also fulfills a vital need for international exchange students who need course credit but are not able to understand classes taught in Japanese. Our experience thus far has also shown that even those who do not need the credit are often very happy to have the chance to attend a class which they can understand.

This paper is basically a case study explaining how the class was organized, how it evolved from the first to the second term, and discusses student and faculty feedback. The results provided some general guidelines which can be applied to teaching in English.

It should be noted that the authors are not specialists in CBI or English for Special Purposes and this was not a research project. The authors hope, however, that reporting what was observed and learned would be of benefit to others who are considering the introduction of classes taught in English at the undergraduate level as one aspect of internationalizing the university curriculum.

2. The 1st Class

(1) Basic Background

The authors decided to offer the class in the fall of the 2009 academic year. A proposal for the course was submitted to the General Education Center which was accepted, and then a syllabus was put up on the university website.

Faculty members who had expressed interest in trying to improve their English and/or who were known for being comfortable using English were asked to give lectures. Organization of the subject matter essentially consisted of trying to maintain a balance between the sciences and humanities.

The first, mid-term, and final class sessions were run solely by the authors. The remaining twelve sessions included lectures on such topics as: Superconductivity-- Principles and Applications, Cultural Cold War and CIE Films, Evolution of the Brain, Soseki Natsume's *Botchan* from the Linguistic Points of View, Sustainability of Paddy

Fields in Japan, and Children's Literature in English.

(2) Student English Level

The organizers decided not to set any English proficiency requirements for enrollment in the class. Any student who was interested was welcome, and it was thought that those who could not follow would simply drop the class in a process of natural selection.

Twelve students (including one international student) enrolled in the class. Four other international students attended as auditors because they were eager to take part in a class in English and they enjoyed the exposure to many different fields of research.

(3) Prep Sheets

Each lecturer was asked to prepare a 'prep sheet' that would be handed out to the students a week in advance to allow them some time to prepare. We asked that the prep sheet include a vocabulary list and a summary of the topic so that students could prepare for special terms and material they would see during the lecture.

(4) Evaluation/Grading

The students were evaluated based on their active participation during the in-class discussions and on two reports (mid-term and final) they submitted in English. For the reports, the students were asked to choose the lecture topic which had interested them most and to write about 1) why it interested them, 2) what else they would like to know about the topic, and 3) how they think that topic is relevant to their lives or future.

(5) Student Survey

Each week, the students were asked to fill out a short, written survey in which they commented on that particular lecture. We have provided a chart in Appendix 3 (Supplementary data*) to show how the students responded to one of the

lectures. Students were asked to rate each category on a 1 to 5 scale, with 5 as the most positive response.

(6) Reflections on the 1st Class

Attendance was good, although three of the Japanese students dropped out midway.

During the final class session the students were asked to discuss the class itself. Their feedback revealed that, although the English was difficult, the students felt that the course was interesting and they were glad to have it taught in English. They were also glad to have the chance to share ideas and have discussions with the international students. The prep sheets received mixed to poor reviews, in that they had not been standard in format and, in many cases, were too long or difficult to be very helpful. Accordingly, the students reported that they often did not bother to read them before class. They expressed a strong desire to have less lecture time and more time for discussion or group work. The students' comments are provided in Appendix 1 (Supplementary data*).

The general response from both students and faculty was positive, so it was decided to offer the course again in the 1st term of the 2010 academic year.

3. The 2nd Class

The format of the 2nd class was essentially the same as the 1st; each class was taught by a different person, students were evaluated by participation in in-class discussions and by a mid-term and final report, and they were required to fill out a short survey each week.

The name, however, was changed to Issues in Research Today and the topics of the lectures was also changed so that students could take the class again for credit. This was mostly for the international students who needed the credit.

Sixteen Japanese students and five international students enrolled in the course.

(1) Moodle

The incorporation, on a limited basis, of the LMS Moodle in the second class was the greatest change in the organization of the class. It was hoped that this would make it easier for students to see the prep sheets, especially if they had missed a class, and to save class time by having the weekly survey online.

It was mainly a "post and run" approach in which Moodle was used to distribute the prep sheets and other information and to allow the students, in turn, to submit their reports online. This distribution and submission proved especially useful in a course like this because the lecturers normally met the organizers and students only during the particular class meeting in which they were giving their lecture. (A sample of the Moodle page is shown in Appendix 3, supplementary data*).

Moodle is known for being especially effective in facilitating interaction among the students and between the students and teacher(s), but in this case the only interaction was student feedback through the weekly surveys and the final questionnaire.

The use of Moodle will be augmented in the next term. The students will have to respond to the prep sheet questions on Moodle before the lecture takes place. They will be evaluated on their participation in this online 'discussion'. This will give the students a chance to write in English. Two international students will serve as TA's to monitor and encourage the other students to join the online discussion.

(2) Lecture Time Limit

In response to the feedback from the 1st class requesting less lecture time, the professors were asked to limit their lecture time to 50 minutes and use the rest of the time for discussion, group work or some class activity. However, the lecture time often exceeded the 50-minute limit. This was, in part, due to the prep sheets (see below), but it also appeared that many professors

are not accustomed to dividing class time between straight lecture and some other activity.

(3) Discussion Management

Discussions were not always successful. Students complained that they were provided no discussion structure or specific goals and that made it very hard to proceed. In some cases, the students were asked to just 'talk about the topic' and so they didn't know what was expected of them. This may be due to the fact that some faculty members are not used to having discussion in class.

International students as TA's will help facilitate discussion in the next term. Some guidelines for planning discussions will also be provided for the lecturers.

(4) Prep Sheets

Based on the student responses to the final survey in the 1st class, we asked that the vocabulary list for the prep sheet be limited to 10 words and that the summary also be short. Professors were encouraged to add a question to get students to think about the topic beforehand.

Unfortunately, there were still problems with the prep sheets. The format and length varied greatly depending on the lecturer, and many students ended up not reading them before class. The professors then had to spend class time going over the material that the students were supposed to have read before the class, thus increasing the lecture time. This resulted in less time for discussion.

In order to make the prep sheet more useful in the next term, the lecturers will be provided with a template, which includes specialized vocabulary, a short summary of the topic, questions and/or discussion topics.

The students will also be given points for accessing it and more points for participating in a pre-class discussion on Moodle.

(5) Student Survey Results

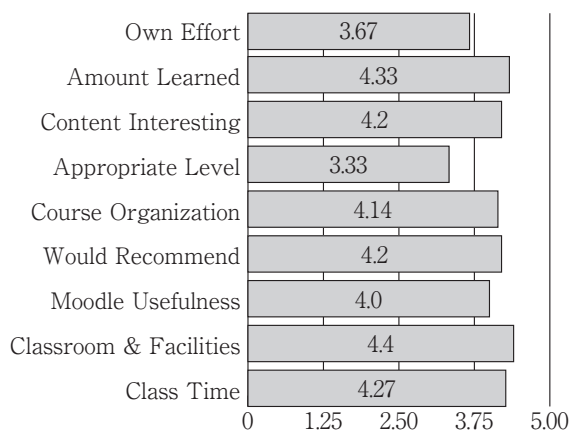
As with the first course, the students were asked to fill out surveys about each weekly lecture. (See Appendix 2, supplementary data*.) This was essentially the same survey that students from the first term were asked to complete, except that it was to be done at their own leisure via Moodle. (We had run into time problems when lectures during the first term ran over, and the students had no time to fill out the questionnaire.) The survey consisted of four 5-point Likert-scale questions, a checkbox question regarding the understandability of the English during the lecture, and a final open-ended question where the students could provide suggestions, comments, etc. The results of the individual surveys were provided to the lecturer that particular survey covered.

Prior to the final class, the students completed a longer evaluation survey which covered the course as a whole. This time, the survey consisted of nine 5-point Likert-scale questions and three open-ended questions regarding the students' impressions of the entire course. The

Final Questionnaire

Course Evaluation/授業評価					
1	Please rate the following using the scale 1(=strongly Disagree) - 5(=strongly Agree)				
	1	2	3	4	5
I put a lot of effort into this course.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learned in this course.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The course content was interesting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The level was appropriate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The course was well-organized.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend this course to other students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moodle helped in information exchange.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The classroom and facilities were good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The time (Friday 3rd period) was good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	What did you like or find useful about the class? (optional) 日本語でも良いです。				
	<input type="text"/>				
3	Do you have any suggestions for changes in the course?(optional) 日本語でも良いです。				
	<input type="text"/>				
4	Comments, greetings, suggestions, anything at all. (optional). 日本語でも良いです				
	<input type="text"/>				

Results of #1 of the Final Questionnaire on a 5-point scale with 5 the highest.



results (on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest) are shown in the graph above.

The final class session was used for reflection and the students reported that they had learned English and gained knowledge of various topics. They also became more aware of how ‘international students think’. They enjoyed the group work and discussions, and wanted more, saying the group work, especially, was a good way to learn. Many of the students, both Japanese and international, said they enjoyed having exchange with each other. Some also noted that the class made them think. All the comments can be found in Appendix 4 (Supplementary data*).

(6) Feedback from the Lecturers

One lecturer commented that teaching in English stimulated him to think more about teaching strategies and he could see that it would help to improve his teaching in general. Lecturers made use of group work, discussion, slides, etc., in order to present the material so that it could be understood by the students. Some indicated that student attitude was generally good, making it easier to teach. For example, one lecturer, in an email, was pleased that the Japanese and international students interacted well with each other. See Appendix 5 (Supplementary data*) for the list of the lecturers’ comments.

(7) Content-Based Instruction

The authors began with the idea that Japanese faculty need practice and some sort of methodology in order to teach in English with confidence. The benefit for the Japanese students was considered, but it was not the primary impetus for initiating the course. However, it rapidly became apparent during the first course that the course would also help and encourage Japanese students in their English language study. We realized that we were inadvertently providing Content-based Instruction (CBI), which is ‘based on the idea that language is acquired most effectively when it is learned for communication in meaningful and significant social situations’ (Okazaki, 1997)

While it was not the original intent to design a content-based class, conducting the course for two semesters has made the authors aware of the possibility of expanding this project to other subjects. For example, at Morioka Junior College (Catlin, 2002), students in the international course have to take at least one class given in English. Another example is Chuo University, its 2010 syllabus includes a list of 68 CBI classes taught in English. A gradual introduction of such courses at Ehime University will benefit the Japanese students and make the university more appealing to international students.

4. Conclusion

The experience gained from the two classes was reported by the authors in a Teaching in English Workshop on August 31, 2010. In the workshop, a few basic guidelines that came out of the observations and the feedback from the students and instructors were introduced. Here are the points we introduced :

- 1) Language: Perfect English is not necessary, but it is helpful to learn some ‘classroom English’ such as ‘Turn to page 37 in your books.’

- 2) Time Management : Balance lecture time with other activities.
- 3) Outline : Provide an outline at the beginning of the class and follow it so the students can follow.
- 4) Visual Material : Use visual aids whenever possible.
- 5) Discussion : Have a simple question to get the discussion started. Set some kind of goal. Use this time to see how well the students have understood the topic.
- 6) Don't ask if they understand. Instead ask a content question. The response will indicate if they understand or not.

Thus far, the results from the two courses have suggested that the CBI classes benefit faculty and students, both international and Japanese. Students have a chance to develop and improve their English skills and get a small taste of what a class might be like abroad. They are also able to pick up much needed discussion skills and practice writing in English. Both international and Japanese students have indicated that they are very glad to have the chance to be in a class where they can exchange ideas and opinions and learn from each other. It expands intercultural exchange on campus.

For lecturers, this class provides a chance to practice conducting a class in English. It encourages them to avoid a non-stop, 90-minute lecture and to use various methods to engage the students and to get them to be more active in class. It is hoped that these lessons will transfer to the classrooms where Japanese is used as well.

As stated at the beginning of this report, the authors are not specialists in the field of CBI or curriculum development and recognize the need for further work to be carried out by researchers from those fields. In-depth research on how such classes can be increased at the undergraduate level could also play an important role in internationalizing the university curriculum.

References

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- * : Supplementary data can be down loaded from the following web-site : <http://web.opar.ehime-u.ac.jp/books/cat14/>

Appendix 1: Student Comments - 1st Term
(Comments were slightly edited for clarification.)

Prep Sheet

Didn't use it.

It would be more useful if students were required to do something with the prep sheet before the class.

Use more figures, graphics, etc. to make it easier to understand.

Too much text is boring.

Some were too difficult to read.

Time Management

90 minutes is too long for a straight lecture.

They should limit the lecture time to 50 minutes.

Topic

Have more non-Japanese related topics.

Organize topics in related subject areas.

Use games.

Level of Topic Content

It is up to the lecturer to decide the level of difficulty of the subject.

Classroom (a laboratory classroom in Aidai Muse)

Too big.

Too cold.

Seating was not good because not everyone faced the front.

The students should have their own desks.

Other comments

Have native speakers as lecturers.

Do experiments in English.

Have more group activities.

Let students talk more.

Appendix 2: Moodle Page Layout of the 2nd Term

Topic outline	
	<p>Issues in Research Today(異文化まなざし)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  ニュースフォーラム  Evaluation/授業アンケート Template
1	<p>4/9 Introduction to the Course (Tanaka, Vergin, Bogdan) Class Schedule (tentative) and Requirements Moodle Access Instructions Group Discussion ("What is Research?")</p>
2	<p>4/16 Tropical Greenhouses (Romdhonah:)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Tropical Greenhouses Prep Sheet  Class Evaluation 「授業アンケート」 4/16
3	<p>4/23 Radiation and its nature (Toshiro Tanaka: Engineering)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Radiation Prep-Sheet (PDF download)  Brief Report on Radioaction Lecture  Class Evaluation 「授業アンケート」 4/23  Radiation (Tanaka) Presentation Slides PDF
4	<p>5/7 What is Science? (Takase: Agriculture)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  What is Science (Takase) PrepSheet  What is Science (Takase) Presentation Slides (PDF Download)  Class Evaluation Sheet/授業アンケート 5/7
5	<p>5/14 Is Food Self-Sufficiency Important? (Okuma: Agriculture)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Food Self-sufficiency (Okuma) PrepSheet  Class Evaluation Sheet/授業アンケート 5/14
6	<p>5/21 Current Status of Science and Technology in Japan (Hosokawa: IIR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  PrepSheet (PDF Download): Current Status of Science and Technology of Japan (Hosokawa)  Class Evaluation Sheet/授業アンケート 5/21
7	<p>5/28 Sustainable Development (Kobayashi: Africa and Asia Center)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  PrepSheet (PDF): Issues in Research (Kobayashi)  Presentation Slides (Kobayashi) (PDF)  Recommended Links (Kobayashi)  Assignment (Kobayashi)  Class Evaluation Sheet/授業アンケート 5/28
8	<p>6/4 Public diplomacy (Tsuchiya: Law and Letters)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Prep-sheet (Tsuchiya)  Class Evaluation Sheet/授業アンケート 6/4
9	<p>6/11 Midterm Activity and Report Submissions (Sato:Ed. Center)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Prep-sheet (Sato)  Education Video Links (Sato: 6/11)  Midterm Report Submissions Due 6/18  Midterm Report Template File (New Format)  Midterm Report Template File (Old Format)  Class Evaluation Sheet/授業アンケート 6/11

Appendix 3: Weekly Student Questionnaire on Moodle - 2nd Term

Questionnaire

このアンケート調査は、授業をより良くする目的で実施するものです。成績には一切影響しませんので、率直に回答してください。

This survey is carried out for improving faculties' teaching techniques. It does not affect your grades in any way.

- 1 The prep sheet was helpful in preparing for the class.
「予習シート」は予習に役立ちました。

Strongly Disagree/全くそう思わない	Disagree/そう思わない	Neutral/どちらとも言えない	Agree/そう思う	Strongly Agree/強くそう思う
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 2 The level of the class was appropriate.
授業の内容について、難易度は適切でした。

Strongly Disagree/全くそう思わない	Disagree/そう思わない	Neutral/どちらとも言えない	Agree/そう思う	Strongly Agree/強くそう思う
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 3 The organization and/or method of presenting the subject of the class (including handouts, visual images, etc.) helped you understand the content.
授業の構成や進め方（配布物・視覚教材などを含む）は、内容を理解する上で役に立ちました。

Strongly Disagree/全くそう思わない	Disagree/そう思わない	Neutral/どちらとも言えない	Agree/そう思う	Strongly Agree/強くそう思う
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 4 The English was understandable.
英語は理解できました。

Strongly Disagree/全くそう思わない	Disagree/そう思わない	Neutral/どちらとも言えない	Agree/そう思う	Strongly Agree/強くそう思う
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 5 If it was hard to understand, why? (You can choose more than one.)
理解しにくかった場合、それはなぜですか？

- 1. Spoke too fast 早口すぎた
- 2. Pronunciation was not clear 発音が不明瞭
- 3. Spoke too soft/low 声が小さい/低い
- 4. Vocabulary was too difficult 語彙が難しすぎる
- 5. Didn't face the class when speaking 学生の方を向いて話さない

- 6 Comments, greetings, anything at all.(optional).
日本語でも良いです。

Appendix 4: Student Survey Results from the 2nd Term
(Comments were slightly edited for clarification.)

Good Points

Good to have international students in class
Nice to have many different topics.
Nice to have different professors each time.
Learned the Japanese perspective on the topics.
I learned a lot and I thought a lot.
Group work is good way to learn.
I became interested in other countries.
My English improved.
It was fun to actually experience English in the classroom.

Suggestions about Language

It would help to have some kind of summary in Japanese at the end of class.
Lecturers need to adjust their English to the class level.
Don't use words that were not explained.
Use a little Japanese when the subject is difficult.

Suggestions about Discussions

More discussion.
Discussion should have a point.
Make sure international students are in each group.

Other Suggestions

Air conditioning was too strong. Let's have more concern for environment.
Students should read the prep sheet.
Hold the class out of the classroom sometimes.
Have students use Moodle to chat about the next topic before the class.

Appendix 5: Lecturers Comments from the 2nd Term
(Comments were slightly edited for clarity.)

- 1) The number of students, approximately 20, was appropriate. If the number is much larger than this, interaction between students and the professor is difficult.
- 2) Keeping 30min for discussion was good. Some Japanese students actively interacted with foreign students.
- 3) It was great opportunity for me to talk something in English to students who don't specialize engineering. I sometimes make presentation in English about my research topics to experts or the special subject to graduate students. But this time, the audience was ordinary people. I felt that even words I could use was restricted.
- 4) Japanese professors have rarely had chance that their classes were evaluated by foreign professors. This can be a good FD opportunity.

- 4) I enjoyed the class very much. Students were cooperative. They took positive attitudes towards the class. I appreciate that.
- 5) The problem, however, is their skill in understanding the essence of the lecture and in summing it up in a paper.
- 6) Among the papers submitted to me after the class, there was only one paper which seemed to grasp the essence of what I wanted to convey. It may be difficult to acquire such a skill even in their mother tongue. So I assume that probably the problem is not limited to English courses only.
- 7) I hope the class will further help students develop their capability to communicate in English.