Building an Effective English Support Center: A Preliminary Needs Analysis of Student English Skills and Abilities Required for Participating in an Authentic International Collaborative Event - World Youth Meeting

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Abstract

This is a preliminary study to assess students' English language needs in terms of individual skills and the skills required for carrying out an authentic international collaborative event. Furthermore, this study will seek to clarify the role of the English Support Center, the English Lounge, in providing English language assistance both before and during this event. The role of the Center and Learning Advisor in the authentic international collaborative event has been to provide English language assistance on a drop-in basis as well as giving English presentation skills lectures at the event. This study will focus on one work group, made up of first and second year presenters, as this group requires strong English skills to prepare and deliver an English presentation in partnership with students from overseas. The study will rely on scholarly sources, emails, Facebook comments, and surveys of current and former students, interviews with senior students as well as observations by the Learning Advisor both prior to and during the W.Y.M. 2012 on August 7th and 8th. The results of this study will be used to provide direction to the English Support Center, the English Lounge, leading to improvement in the service delivery prior to and during the event. Furthermore, based on the findings this researcher wants to propose areas where English Lounge classes, activities and counseling could be modified to provide better event specific support for one group, the first year presenters and other first year students as well.

Keywords   English Support Center, needs analysis, international collaborative event

INTRODUCTION

Needs Analysis according to Nunan ('88:5, '96:24 in Moll 1999) should be a 'starting point for syllabus design' and involves 'analysis of the language, information about the learner, beliefs about the learning process itself, or a combination of these.' While this kind of broad analysis is certainly advantageous when planning a new curriculum from the initial stages, the focus of this research is on contributing to an already successful curriculum that has been in place for a number of years. For this study a more general definition of needs, as in Berwick ('52 in Moll '99), 'a gap or measurable discrepancy between a current state of affairs and a desired future state' will be

used. The focus of this needs analysis then is to first look at what English language skills instruction first year students are receiving; secondly, what language skills the presenter group needs to carry out the tasks associated with giving presentations at an International Collaborative Project, the World Youth Meeting. In this study it is important to focus on students' 'accomplishments and abilities rather than deficits' (Holt & Van Duzer, '00) to give them the confidence to complete their work and the event. Furthermore, this needs analysis will give the English Lounge Learning Advisor some idea of the 'current level of performance in English' as well as 'provide an opportunity to collect samples of authentic texts, both spoken and written, which will be used by them [students] in a target environment' (Shing and Sim, '11) in this case the W.Y.M. Furthermore, as in accordance with Nadzri the 'needs analysis will enable the instructors to translate the language needs into linguistic and pedagogical items which in turn allows for the development of good curriculum for the courses and offers effective guidance to the instructors' (Nadzri '04 cited in cited in Shing and Sim, '11). In this case those would be the courses offered at the English Lounge by the English Advisor.

Nihon Fukushi University (N.F.U.) has been hosting an International Collaborative Project (I.C.P.) called the World Youth Meeting (W.Y.M.) since 1999. The purpose of the event is to engage students and allow them as 'learners [to] develop a more meaningful understanding [as] active participants in their own authentic setting like the International Collaborative Project.' (Kageto & Sato, 2010) The focus of the event is to have students from N.F.U. in cooperation with students from various universities in Asia prepare and give presentations where the main language is English. The event derives much from the educational constructivist perspective whereby the learners 'actively construct their knowledge rather than passively receiving knowledge from their teachers or environments.' (Kageto & Sato, '10) As such the event is managed and carried out by students of the executive committee and work groups. The event takes a constructivist approach and as such 'includes such elements as modeling, coaching and scaffolding.' (Kageto & Sato, '10) While a certain degree of English ability is required for every group, for the purpose of this study the focus will be on the presenters. They were chosen as a focus group because the successful completion of their work requires them to have the broadest range of English skills.

Research Questions

The first two questions were which work group to focus on and which group needed the widest range of skills to successfully complete their work? After selecting a single group, this study will seek to gain a better understanding of the English language skills required for carrying out that role at the W.Y.M. This will be clarified further in the second stage of research. The central research question is what lexical items or conversation skills do students need to successfully do their work at an I.C.P. like the W.Y.M.? The findings then would be used by the Learning Advisor to make lessons or activities to help presenters acquire and practice skills that would enable them to be more effective communicators in English at the W.Y.M.

Research Design and Methods
Design

In the first stage this study consisted of an online survey, which provided the necessary background information to create a focus for the next stages of research. The second stage involved an examination of emails and Facebook comments exchanged between presenters and their overseas partners, interviews with Nihon Fukushi University students who will be presenters and observations of these students engaging in group work prior to the W.Y.M. The results from these undertakings enabled the researcher to gather data on students' evaluation of their group communication success both in the email stage and later in the face-to-face stage. By making use of a variety of data collection methods, it is the intent of the researcher to come to 'more convincing and accurate findings and conclusions' (McMillan & Schumacher, '00 as cited in Kays, '08)

Participants

The study will be conducted primarily with first year students from N.F.U. International Welfare Department (I.W.D.) in the presentation groups as they interact with their partners from overseas.

Setting

Nihon Fukushi University is located in Aichi Prefecture, Japan. The university has six faculties including International Welfare Development. This faculty's focus is on producing students with grounding in both welfare and with strong English skills who can 'contribute to organizational management and to the community. Students pursue studies in a broad range of fields, including welfare, development, the environment and economics, and improve their skills in English and facilitation. Students are given the skills to support the self-reliance of people from developing countries in their nation-building efforts, to make international contributions to industry, and to be involved in business that transcends borders.' (Nihon Fukushi University Website, 2012)

This I.C.P. is an integral part of and large focus for the I.W.D. faculty's program. Classes in the faculty syllabus provide English language skills development as well as more specific event related instruction. These classes involve not only teacher instruction but also a degree of collaborative interaction or scaffolding between students from the freshmen to junior years.

Starting in 2009 a new facility was opened at N.F.U. Mihama campus called the English Lounge. The mandate of the English Lounge and the Learning Advisor is to provide a broad range of English language support services to the entire student body. It is the primary goal of the English Lounge to provide students with opportunities to use their English and build their intrinsic motivation to further their study and use of English.

Data Collection

International collaborative projects such as the W.Y.M. necessitate the usage of information and communication technology in tandem with a high level of English communicative competency (Kageto & Sato, '10). Consequently, it seemed appropriate to use an online survey in the first stages of this needs analysis. Given that the students had various levels of proficiency with English, a Japanese translation of the questions and choices was provided. In open-ended questions students were given the choice of writing in English or Japanese.

The first year I.W.D. students were surveyed in three classes and participation was voluntary. The survey was conducted online through a site called Survey Monkey. An explanation was provided to students regarding the purpose of the survey and all the surveys were anonymous.

The aim of the online survey was to gain general insights into students' English proficiency levels as determined according to their own assessment. Furthermore, there were questions regarding students' daily English usage and goals for usage to assess in part students' interest in and commitment to acquiring English language skills.

The second stage involved having students, their overseas partners and staff, agree to forward emails between the presenters and their overseas partners to the researcher. By examining these exchanges the researcher was able to gain insight into the areas where students were having difficulty communicating with their overseas partners.

A private W.Y.M. Facebook page was set up by the head of the I.W.D. faculty as a forum for participants to interact before, during and after the event. The researcher was given permission to collect comments as further data for analysis.

Interviews were conducted one-on-one with students to check the researcher's findings against the students' own feelings and observations of their communications with their overseas partners.

Observation data comes from informal notes taken by the English Lounge Learning Advisor in classes, English Lounge yearly reports and during the I.C.P. over the past three years as well as at this year's W.Y.M. 2012.

First Stage - Analysis of Online Survey

The initial survey data was collected and percentages of responses were tabulated by the online service, SurveyMonkey. This site is designed to assist researchers to easily prepare, give and analyze survey data. The initial survey helped the researcher to decide to focus on one group rather than attempting a wider survey that may not have given concrete lexical data that could then be incorporated into useable class materials.

In the second stage of research emails, Facebook comments and observation notes will be carefully examined for lexical items to be incorporated into materials for classes. Also, observation notes of conversations will be examined for examples of successful communication strategies or ones that do not work to be used with modification as models to teach communicative strategies. Prior to and during the event, interviews and observations will also be used to provide insights into what lexical items and language skills the presenters need for the successful completion of their work at the W.Y.M.

Results of the First Survey

A total of 45 of the 49 first year students took the online survey. This high number of respondents among the freshmen class provided some useful general insights coupled with observations by the researcher.

Of the 45 first year students surveyed 30 had taken an English Proficiency exam.
A survey of students at the start of the academic year found that many of the students had passed the EIKEN English proficiency exam at a level equivalent to between that of junior to senior high school graduates according to the standards set by the Ministry of Education. (EIKEN, '12) The students' self-assessment was lower: 60　said they were at a beginner level and 31.1　at the low-intermediate level. (Table 1 - 1) From observations made in class and working one-on-one with first year students it can be said that they lack many basic skills. However, their speaking and listening was higher than their self-assessment.

(Numbers represent percentages of responses.)

A 61.9　of the first year students plan to use English for their future work. In fact, 42 of the 45 students plan

Table 1: Online Survey Results Summary for First Year Students

	Questions	Beginner	Low-Intermediate	Intermediate	High-Intermediate	Advanced	
1	English Self Appraisal	60	31.1	2.2	6.7	0	
2	Future usage of English	Work abroad	Work／Japan	Friends	Travel	Education	Relationship
		26.2	61.9	33.3	59.5	26.2	19.0
3	Resources used to study English	ICT	Class	Private funds	Entertainment	Conversation	Eng. Lounge	Other
		35.7	52.4	class　14.3	Movies 45.2	14.3	61.9	2.4
				books　16.7	TV　　35.7			
					Music　71.4			
					Radio　19.0			
4	English Skills by class	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Grammar	Pronunciation	Presentation
	Active Reading	76.3	50.0	60.5	31.6	39.5	42.1	7.9
	Comprehensive Study of Eng.	52.6	60.5	63.2	60.5	60.5	36.8	7.9
	Presentation I／II	57.9	31.6	50.0	39.5	15.8	28.9	84.2
	English for ICT	56.1	51.2	58.5	43.9	19.5	36.6	39.0
	English Lounge	94.9	79.5	51.3	43.6	38.5	66.7	25.6

to use English in some way in the future. Therefore, it can be assumed that English acquisition is an important goal for them. Travel was the second most important reason for future English usage at 59.5 . The I.W.D. faculty's Spring Fieldwork program may help to solidify this. First year students take part in professor led trips to several countries in the region with a focus on social welfare issues and English is the primary language of communication. (Table 1 - 2 Travel)

An indicator of students' commitment to acquiring English language skills is somewhat apparent in their responses to the question of whether they study or use English on their own. They were almost evenly divided on the issue of usage (52.4 Yes and 47.6 No). The division between usage and study isn't clear, as the two were included together in the same question, when in fact they should have been addressed separately as many students may use English but not necessarily consider it studying. Although the question is poorly worded, it is possible to conclude that students apparently are exposed to English outside of the classroom.

It is, also, of interest to note that music, movies, television and the Internet are highly rated in terms of resources used to study English. (Table 1 - 3) This shows that English is both an important feature of daily life for students and that these resources have not only a high entertainment value but also opportunities for study.

Turning to the English classes for first year students, this researcher can confidently state that teachers give time to all of the skill areas in the course of the year of study. It may seem out of place to say that even in, for example, the Active Reading class, some presentation skill work takes place. Students in this class are routinely expected to give short oral reports or summaries in front of the class on themes from the textbook. It is apparent that the students are aware of the various skills work in each of the classes. (Table 1 - 4) In fact there is a strong focus on study skills training in first year classes, (Table 2) including the importance of memorization and recitation. It is important to note that in the first year curriculum there are many assignments that require students to visit the English Lounge and consult with the Learning Advisor to complete homework assignments. In terms of daily attendance, the first year students have the highest attendance rate at the English Lounge.

It is possible to conclude so far that students in the I.W.D. faculty have a degree of intrinsic motivation given their desire to use English in some way in the future and that they are aware of resources available for their English skills development. However, they appear to have a low sense of their own abilities.

So far we have looked at the first year student's English proficiency levels, resources and classes. Now we will look at the W.Y.M. work groups in more detail in terms of their English requirements. This event, given its international character involving participants from overseas, requires participants to have a wide degree of English skills. Kageto (Kageto & Sato, '10) detailed the twenty-two various work groups that students in the I.W.D. faculty join based on their own interests at the W.Y.M. This researcher has condensed the work groups and added six English skill categories required for each group based on previous observations and discussion with staff. (Table 3)

This is only a rough guide at best but should suit the purposes of this study. Every work group requires a degree of English ability as they may interact with participants from overseas at anytime during the event in both

Table 2: I.W.D. Courses and English Lounge- English Skill Work Provided for First Year Students

	Classes /English Skills	Year	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing/Grammar	Pronunciation	Presentation	Total Skills Areas
1	Active Reading	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some	5
2	Comprehensive Study of English	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some	5
3	Presentation I II	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	6
4	English for ICT	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Some	5
5	English Lounge	1	Yes	Yes	Some	Some	Yes	Yes	4

Table 3: English Skills Required of W.Y.M. Work Groups

	Group and English Skills	Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing/Grammar	Pronunciation	Presentation	Total Skills Areas
1	Chiefs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		5
2	Publicity			Yes	Yes			2
3	Overseas correspondence			Yes	Yes			2
4	Presentations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	6
5	Opening Dance	Yes				Yes		2
6	Hall Staff	Yes	Yes			Yes		3
7	Music Session	Yes				Yes		2
8	Accommodation	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		4
9	Workshop	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		5
10	Meals, name cards, guests			Yes	Yes			2

informal and formal situations.

The chiefs, presenters and workshop groups require by far a higher range of abilities. The chiefs, as they are responsible for overseeing the entire event, should be able to lend assistance or give advice to both students and participants at anytime. However, they are deeply involved in the running of the event and have less time for interacting with overseas participants. The workshop group is involved in their short program and only interact directly with overseas participants for a short time. In the case of the presenters, they must work with overseas participants initially through email and Skype to negotiate the focus and content of their presentation. Later in Japan, they must work one on one with their overseas partners to finalize the presentation script in English, and to prepare a PowerPoint presentation all the while negotiating with any cultural differences that may arise. (Kageto & Sato, '10)

To summarise, for participation in an I.C.P. such as the W.Y.M., a degree of competency in English is essential. In addition, having some confidence in speaking and dealing with misunderstandings in the process of preparing a presentation are important skills as well. (Kageto & Sato, '10) For these reasons, it was decided to focus on the presenter work group and the first years primarily as a means to ascertain what lexical items and other language skills would help them carry out their work most effectively.

Results of the Email and Facebook Chat Analysis
Second Stage

The second stage of the research involved collecting and analyzing emails or Facebook exchanges from four presenter groups. First year students headed two of the groups while second year students headed the other two groups.

This researcher received sixteen emails between first and second year International Welfare Development students and their overseas partners and the transcripts of eleven Facebook exchanges between a first year student and an overseas presenter. Neither the Facebook transcripts nor the emails contained lengthy exchanges but they did give a sense of the students' enthusiasm and desire to work together if the overuse of the exclamation mark is any indication. Also, in terms of the language used, it was apparent that errors in English grammar and spelling didn't impede communication. Initials instead of names were used to protect students' identities.

There are several points that are revealed on a closer reading of the emails and Facebook exchanges that the researcher thinks could be translated into teaching points, which could be incorporated into activities in the English Lounge or into lesson materials for other classes as well.

First, the researcher looked at the Facebook and email exchanges between a first year N.F.U. student and her overseas partner. Then the researcher looked at portions of emails between a second year student and her overseas partner.

First Year I.W.D. Student Email - First Excerpt
(I.W.D. student) 1. thank you for your idea! i want to take in your idea. 2. we will focus on communication in a different situation and what we can learn through communication with meeting someone new. we will talk about that based on our experiences. and middle of our presentation, we will introduce "rapport". (how to make good relationships). 3. im considering how to take in your idea.. 4. and we have to complete our presentation by the end of July.. 5. lol

Looking closely at this Facebook exchange, we see in 1. the first year International Welfare Development (I.W.D.) student acknowledging her overseas partner's (O.P.'s) ideas, which included a wider focus on social issues and the desire to use them. Yet the next section 2 negates this. The lengthy explanation of their 'focus', marked by the repeated use of 'we', the point by point explanation which gives a precise plan of a presentation already prepared and furthermore gives the impression that the NFU student has already decided the presentation focus. The I.W.D. student mentions again in 3 that while they will consider how to include the overseas student's ideas in their presentation; the reminder in 4 of the July deadline finishes the exchange with a sense of there is no time to include your ideas or change the presentation substantially. Then again the 'LOL' works here to finish the exchange on a lighter note.
The I.W.D. student's use of language such as the repeated stress on the 'we' in the email has the effect of putting the O.P. in a secondary role. The O.P. appears to confirm this secondary position in her reply.

Overseas Partner Email
(Overseas participant) 6. okay.. :D 7. i have a question, how can we "connect to the future" through interpersonal communications or by merely meeting someone new? 8. anyhow, 9. i wud give in to your idea. 10. it's good. 11. maybe i could incorporate a small part of my idea in the rapport part, on how to make good relationships. here are my suggested topic for the report...feel free to edit or change or add anything, this are only some few options..

The O.P.'s reply indicates acceptance but in 7, questions whether the I.W.D. student's idea is in keeping with the W.Y.M. theme, which may be a good point but she then negates that criticism with the 8 'anyhow'. The next move is one of 9, acceptance and 10, a compliment with a request for the inclusion of some small part of her idea in the N.F.U. student's presentation 11. These moves by the O.P. acknowledge and accept their placement into a secondary position.
In terms of time management the I.W.D. student's pattern of communication works to develop a focus for the presentation quickly but at the cost of not fully considering the contributions of the overseas participant. Without some negotiation and a free exchange of ideas and discussion, the opportunity to make a better presentation becomes more difficult from the outset.

First Year Email - Second Excerpt
S1. I'm sorry that I couldn't reply your message on fb :(2. I wanted to, but I thought it's nice to send you a message after we decided clearly what we gonna do at the WYM. 3. Our main concept has changed from what A. send you a few days ago. Now we are focusing on the scant awareness of Japanese people toward the overseas. We are thinking of making a presentation that will make the audience think what should they do in order to become a

person who can think about world peace. 4. I hope you'll like the idea. 5. So, we made the a survey to know how much awareness people have toward the overseas. We want to compare the result between Japan and Philippines, 6. so can you please ask your classmates or friends to complete it?

This second exchange between another presenter group, headed by a first year student, follows a similar pattern. It is interesting to note that this student has a high degree of English language ability, having lived and studied abroad and in a country where English is widely used, so the problem must lie in a lack of skills training rather than in her English ability.

The initial apology for not using Facebook in 1 is explained in 2, as wanting to wait until the N.F.U. students had finalized their main concept for the presentation which they explain in detail in 3. The 'I'll hope you'll like the idea.' at 4 gives the impression that the presentation theme has been decided. The request for the O.P. to collect data in 6, using the N.F.U. student's questionnaire further reinforces the O.P. in a secondary position as in the first excerpt that was examined.

In both exchanges with the first year students there is little sense of openness to the contributions of the O.P. From the start their use of language creates the impression that the presentation themes have already been decided. Furthermore, the one sided nature of the language used in the emails as typified by using 'we' plus the strong 'will' creates a tone of authority that is reinforced by the dictating to the overseas participants their roles, collecting data, and the further 'I will consider how to include your ideas'. Discussions with the N.F.U. students revealed that this was not the message they had wanted to give. The emails do have a friendly tone overall the problem may lay elsewhere.

Given the time constraints, as most groups only establish their initial contacts in late June to early July for the event to be held in early August, and possibly the means of communication, not face-to-face, the first year students give the impression of not fully considering the other participants' contributions. This researcher thinks this may not be due to any insensitivity on the part of the I.W.D. students but rather to a lack of practice in the skill of negotiating and eliciting opinions of others. They want to quickly find a focus and prepare the presentation. As a result, the presentations end up having little depth in terms of thought or background research. In the Facebook exchange, the O.P. had suggested looking into bigger issues but the N.F.U. student didn't follow up.

Second Year Emails

By way of contrast the researcher looked at two exchanges between a second year N.F.U. student and her O.P.s. The exchanges follow a very different pattern and show the kinds of skills the first year students need to acquire. In both cases it is possible to observe negotiation and moves, which elicit ideas and contributions from the O.P.s.

Second Year Email - First Excerpt

S1. Hi, A., G.! Thank you so much for the hard work! 2. I will add the result of the questionnaire that you sent to me. 3. And, after you come to Japan, let's talk about our presentation in detail. 4. Until then, I wil continiue to sending e-mails to you about our presentation. 5. If you have any suggestions or questions, please, tell me.

This email from a second year N.F.U. student is a good example of students negotiating content and working closely together. The salutation and compliment in 1, sets a positive tone from the start as was seen in the first year's email but there are some significant differences in the pattern of exchanges.

2 is a promise to include the questionnaire data, which acknowledges the O.P.'s contribution to the presentation thus building a sense of the shared production of the presentation. Further evidence is seen of this with the next two statements 3, 4 and 5, which suggest further discussions after the O.P.s arrive in Japan and a request for suggestions and questions. This would give the O.P.s a strong sense of the importance of their contribution in the

ongoing making of the presentation. This pattern continues in the next excerpt.

Second Year Email - Second Excerpt

1.Hi, G., A.! 2. I think it's very good idea! We can make it. 3. But...I and A. thought that "defference of language is the main reason cousing some wars or conflicts?" 4. Because, according to the results of your questionnaire, "defferences in cluture or religion" is 23 . (Japan:8) 5. So,we thought that the reason of cousing wars or conflicts is defference in language rather than defference in value. 6. We are rethinking... 7. How about this?
Theme: Communication towards World Peace (Students' numbering)

1. We have believed that common language leads to world peace. 2. But, Is it the main reason?-----------(results of the questionnaire) 3. the real reason of cousing wars or conflicts is defference in value. we have to know the deffetence of it. 4. we should look at ourselves objectively. 5. What is the real meaning of communication?
go beyond language skill (generosity, kindness, knowing the defference as a defference etc...)

This email follows an inquiry by one of the O.P.s about using a video in the presentation. Once again the tone is very positive and open to the idea 1 and 2. This is followed by a suggestion regarding the interpretation of the questionnaire results in 3. The N.F.U. student 'suggest's, quoting the differences in percentages as her reason in 4 and 5, that she needs to 'rethink' her focus in 6, not the other way around. She then suggests from 7 a new outline that incorporates the O.P.'s focus on 'values' with the inclusion of their idea that communication plays a big part as well.

The most important feature of the second year email exchanges are the use of language that creates a sense of working closely together with the O.P. and being open to ideas and suggestions, which isn't apparent in the first year students' emails. This may come from the second year student's involvement in the W.Y.M. the previous year working with O.P.s, professors and senior students.

It isn't being suggested that the first year students didn't negotiate the presentation content or that the O.P.s did not have a say in the final presentation. From observations made at the study camp in the two days leading up to the event, it was observed that there was a strong willingness to work together among the first two first year groups and input from both the N.F.U. and the O.P.s were included in the final presentations.

Interviews

In order to check the validity of this researcher's findings it was important to get verbal input from the students themselves. Over a period of a week, the three students, 2-first years and 1-second year student were interviewed informally on a one-on-one basis. Initially, we reviewed the email excerpts and the students were asked how they felt their work with their O.P. went in the initial stages of exchanging emails. Lastly, this researcher's interpretation of the interactions was explained and the students' were asked for their comments on the researcher's conclusions.

Both of the first year students commented that they had felt the pressures of time and deadlines along with a lack of confidence in their ability to explain themselves clearly in English. They also said that as first year students they were not really certain what to do in terms of their presentations and in order to meet deadlines and incorporate input from their seniors and professors, they tended to just dictate to their overseas partners what they wanted. One advantage pointed out by one of the students was that using emails as a means of communication gave them more time to think of responses than the face-to-face communication did.

The students were asked if they felt that the presentations in the early email stage were good teamwork. They both said that the presentations at that stage mostly reflected their own ideas and opinions. However, after their

overseas participants came to Japan, things improved. After they had an opportunity to get to know each other and work together one-on-one, they said that the presentations became more balanced. Talking and working together allowed them to communicate more clearly. They were able to include a lot of ideas and opinions from their partners in the final presentation.

The second year student expressed many of the same concerns about her English skills and ability to communicate her ideas clearly. She further said that she was aware that when she had been a presenter in her first year, she tended to be very dictatorial in her email communications. Her awareness of this tendency made her want to ask for more input from her partners. She made a conscious decision to ask for suggestions and try to clearly state her own opinions. She wanted to build good cooperation from the start. What she found was that there were a lot of differences in their opinions but, like the first year students, these were ironed out during the study camp that preceded the World Youth Meeting in face-to-face negotiations.

Final Observations

It is clear that both first and second year students find the medium of email (written) communication much more difficult than face-to-face (verbal) communication.

In the early planning stages for the World Youth Meeting when first year students were required to depend solely on written communication through emails or Facebook messaging to collaborate with their partners, successful communication required for the teamwork was more difficult. These difficulties were partially due to the pressures of the event related time constraints and the students' weak written English skills. However, the I.W.D. students reported and the researcher observed that during the various collaborative group work such as the ice-breaking activities, a day trip to Ise Shrine and the study camp held immediately before the event, the teamwork greatly improved when students communicated face-to-face. They were able to ensure their message or intent was clearly understood and deal quickly with any misunderstandings. They were not able to do so as readily through their written communication as they were not able to observe the reaction or body language of their team mate.

Discussion and Suggestions

What this researcher would like to suggest are ways to help the first year students understand the differences in the two ways of communicating, in written email form and face-to-face, and also help them acquire the appropriate English skills to make the most of their work with their O.P.s from the earliest possible stage. The W.Y.M. is a unique opportunity for students to explore ideas and experiences outside of their own lives. It seems a waste of an opportunity not to fully discuss and explore ideas in order to broaden the students' perspectives.

To do this, students need to be made aware of the effect language can have on collaboration. It would be useful to have consciousness raising lessons, which would give students an opportunity to discover the differences for themselves. Once students become aware of the effect certain language choices and expressions have on their targeted audiences, they then can be taught language and expressions that convey their meaning clearly and in a positive tone. They would be best served with not only being taught the language skills for discussing and eliciting other's opinions and ideas but, also, by being provided with opportunities for practicing exchanges of this kind as well.

To this end several courses of action should be considered. One simple way would be to design classroom materials that include examples of both good and bad writing styles. By having students compare and contrast the two examples, they would discover for themselves the effects of both styles on their O.P.s. The goal is to heighten the students' awareness of the effect language can have and how using positive language and using expressions to ask for input and suggestions can create a positive atmosphere from the start of the presentation preparation process. To further reinforce these skills it might be advantageous to include discussion and debate activities in the English

Lounge Activity Lessons for first year and other students in the first semester. Lexical items in the form of lists of vocabulary and expressions would be included in the opinion sharing and eliciting activities. This could be used to build the students' language skills and confidence in sharing their ideas as well as training them to elicit the opinions of others. There are many activities and lessons readily available on the Internet that would suit this purpose. Later, incorporating current event topics or student generated topics for discussion could serve as a post I.C.P. motivator. It would be important to make some preparation for these lessons mandatory in terms of research into the background of the issues, which is another skill students need to hone. A final step would be to have students reflect on discussions in a written format, which would reinforce their writing skills and could, also, be used for post discussions.

Another suggestion would be for students to supplement their written exchanges with Skype sessions, which would enable the students to readily see the reaction of their comments on their team mate in order to ensure there were no misunderstandings. In addition, it would serve as a good ice-breaking activity so that students could get to know their partners in an unstructured and informal setting and, also, to strengthen their own self confidence with face-to-face interactions.

Armed with these skills in the first term, the first year N.F.U. students would have the confidence to consider the suggestions of overseas participants while sharing their own thoughts and ideas. The outcome would be more thoughtful presentations that explore issues and build good relations between all the W.Y.M. participants involved in the I.C.P.

The goal of the study is to assist both current and future students acquire the vocabulary and English skills to perform more successfully at an I.C.P. Additionally, the results would lay the groundwork for further studies to refine the English Lounge program, not only for this event but, also, for use in other faculties and events at Nihon Fukushi University.

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