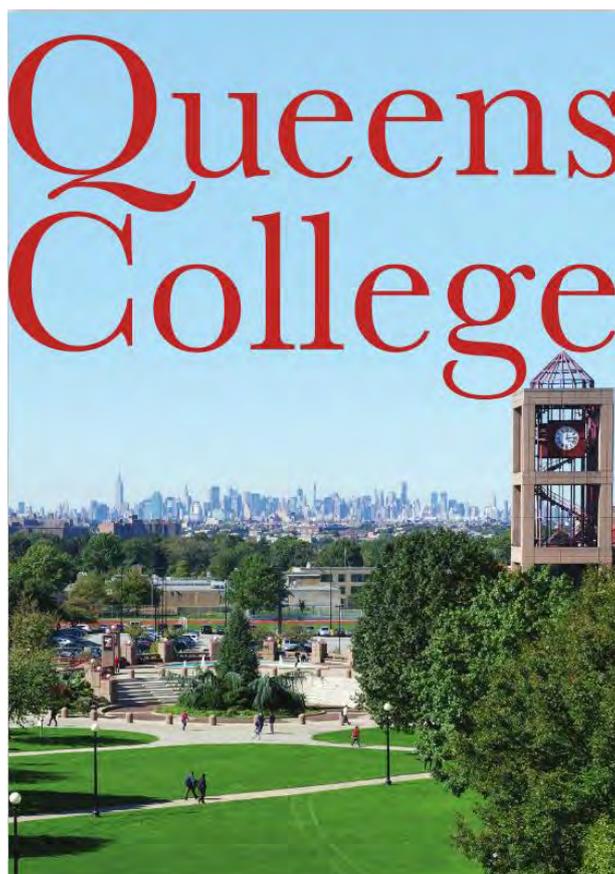


**Toyohashi University of Technology,
Institute for Global Network Innovation in Technology**

Education

News from QC

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■ Reports

Activity Report vol. 5

–Teaching in English & Academic English Supporting Class–

Junji Sasano, Toyohashi University of Technology

In the fall semester, we took special courses aiming at improving skills of teaching in English, which were named Teaching in English (TiE) & Academic Language Support Course (ALS). These courses were specially designed for this program. Since this was the first attempt not only for us but also for the teachers of QC, the contents and effects of the course were unpredictable at the beginning. Both courses were conducted on Friday: ALS ran from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm (including half-hour lunch break) and TiE ran from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

At first, I'd like to explain the activity we did in ALS. This course had started on Oct. 10th, and consisted of five Communication Workshops and two Reading/Writing Workshops.

In the Communication Workshops, we practiced the basics of pronunciation such as distinguishing R and L sounds, which is difficult for Japanese, and schwa sounds. The teacher told that there are 17 vowel sounds. Although the practice was quite basic, I learned a lot from this course. This is because I had experienced many times in the past few months that I was not able to make myself understood or understand what someone were talking due to my incorrect understanding of pronunciations. Therefore, practicing correct pronunciations in this course seemed to improve not only my speaking skills but also listening skills. Moreover, we gave 15-minute presentations about our specialized fields; then, the teacher corrected our pronunciations of technical terms and grammatical errors. In addition, we learned idioms and basics of prepositions.

In Reading/Writing Workshops, we mainly practiced reading and summarizing some articles, and finding grammatical errors from some sentences, training difficult vocabularies. Though I didn't know more than half of the words in the materials on vocabulary, they were at a high school level according to the teacher; therefore, I realized that I had a long way to go for building strong vocabulary.

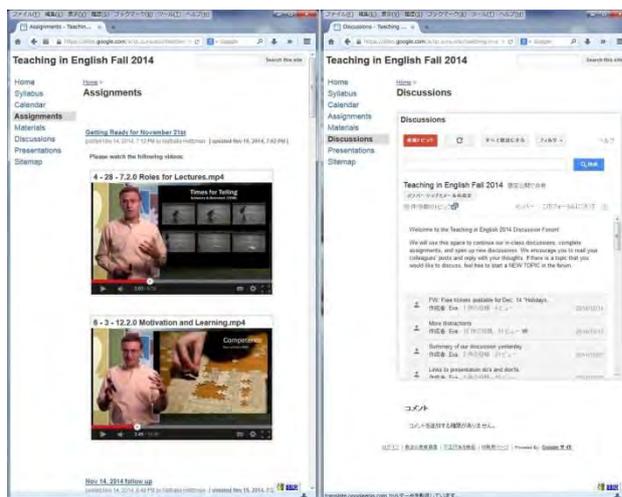
On the other hand, TiE was conducted by five teachers. Some of them belonged to Center for Teaching & Learning, and their specialized fields covered broad area such as psychology, linguistics, biology, instruction technology and physics. All information concerning this course, including the syllabus, assignments, opinion exchange using discussion board, etc., was integrated on its web site created using Google Sites. Before starting this course a survey on our



A picture of myself giving a presentation in the class of ALS.

interests was performed.

The 1st class of TiE began by making the introductions of the teachers and ourselves, and then the results of the survey were shared and we discussed what to do in the course. Since I had expected from the name of this course, Teaching in English, that it would be some kinds of training on presentation skills, I had almost no idea to discuss; therefore, the 1st class was finished without contributing so much. Later I heard that the teachers were also upset because the discussion didn't become lively.



Screenshots of the web site of TiE: assignments (left) and discussion board (right).

Before the 2nd class, we got two assignments. One was reading an article about the discussion whether English is a Lingua Franca or not and considering our opinions about it, and the other was watching a movie on how to set the learning goals and considering the learning goals of our own courses. Actually, I had no doubt that English is a Lingua Franca, so I didn't know what to discuss about it.

In the 3rd to 5th classes we learned and practiced in-class technology using the Internet. Especially, I thought collaboration work by sharing Google Apps, which allows simultaneous editing by multiple users, was quite useful if we use it adequately. Moreover, an web-based learning management system (LMS) named Blackboard is used in QC. It is really powerful system if we make full use of it because it is equipped with results management function and plagiarism checker as well as giving and receiving assignments. Actually we had an assignment to make web sites assuming our own courses; then, we showed them in the class.

In the 6th class a lecturer invited from Department of Drama, Theatre & Dance taught us the presence in class and she thoroughly checked our behaviors during presentation. After checking the important points for in-class presence such as voice projection, eye contact and avoiding distractive gestures, she gave us very critical and strict comments; however, I seemed to become her favorite student, and she praised me for my presentation and even my voice. The class matched what I had expected as a course for training presentation skills, so I thought it was quite an effective class.

In the 7th class three teachers who had experiences of working abroad were invited and show their cross-cultural experiences.

In the 8th class Prof. Steven Schwarz explained the Writing-Intensive Courses in QC. In the curriculum all courses are designed to improve the skills of writing scientific documents since lacking in writing ability of students in proper English is increasing problem even in U.S. nowadays. Moreover, we learned several tips for academic writing.

In the 9th to 11th classes we learned methods and examples to enhance study efficiency of students. Firstly, we learned causes of misconception which often arises when students are exposed to new

scientific concepts.

Secondly, after watching a movie on active learning, which enhances profound understandings, we discussed about that. The movie showed some groups of students cooperating to solve a problem in physics. The instructor in the movie was able to know the percentage of the groups answering correctly in real-time through the network, and he shared the information to the students. We could see that the percentage increased quickly. This is because some students in each group who had understood well were explaining to the other students, leading to the increase in the depth of understanding. It was described in the movie that smart students who had understood the concept recently could be better instructors than the professors who perfectly mastered it long ago because those students knew also the difficult points of the problem to learn.

Thirdly, a lecture style which is effective not only for active learning but also for normal lectures was introduced. Traditional approach was transferring scientific concepts in class and revising with homework after class. However, the new approach shown here consisted of transferring scientific concepts before class, practicing and feedback of the knowledge in class by dialogue between the teacher and the students, and further exploration after class. Since most of the courses in QC are conducted twice a week, some teachers think that repeating this learning cycle leads to effective learning of students.

Fourthly, we learned importance of encouraging students' motivation. Motivation can be categorized into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. The former is the motivation that students are holding in their minds, such as the interest in mastering the subjects, and the latter is that caused from external effects such as desire for good grades or good jobs, and parental pressures. Teachers could control the extrinsic motivations fairly well; however, it is important to enhance the intrinsic motivations for deeper understanding. We learned that there are four important points to enhance intrinsic motivations: problems should be hard but not too hard (Competent); students want to have some choice, and then they are willing to do that (Autonomy); students want to know what the subjects are good for (Purpose); students are strongly motivated by being part of a community and contributing and sharing with the community (Community). Related to the fourth point, it was impressive that a teacher said that she used the word "team" instead of "group" since students of U.S. tends to dislike this word.

Finally, we learned about Formative Assessment and Summative Assessment. Both are assessments to figure out students' levels of understanding. The former is assessments to monitor students' learning by such as simple questions or quizzes during classes, and the latter is assessments to evaluate their comprehension such as midterm or final exams. Especially, we learned about Rubrics as the tools to monitor students' understanding and to increase the



A picture of the class of TiE.

transparency of teachers' evaluation. Rubrics are the evaluation tools in which criteria of evaluation for assignments are explicitly described. Teachers can make objective and quantitative evaluation easily using rubrics. Moreover, returning rubrics to students after evaluation is known to lead to good effects on students' learning because they can understand why they got the grades or what to do for further



Discussion during my final presentation.

improvement. In the class, the teachers showed us some rubrics actually used in their courses and explained how to use them; then, we discussed about that.

In the 12th class, as a summary of the course we did an activity that we considered our recommendation for the participants of the program next year and shared the ideas. Moreover, we posted our opinions and ideas for improvement of this program on the discussion board on the web-site, and we conducted opinion exchange with QC teachers.

In the final class we gave 20-minute presentations accompanied with QC teachers related to this program and teachers from Toyohashi Tech (Prof. Inoue, Prof. Shibata, Dr. Takagi and Dr. Sasao). We were allowed to choose any topics we wanted, so I decided to introduce my research which had been progressed based on the discussion with my students in Japan using Skype. The title of my talk was "Photo-assisted anodic electrodeposition of tungsten oxide films for electrochromic applications." I was able to give my presentation in a more relaxed state of mind than I did in Japan half a year ago. I'd like to think this was because I gained confidence in my speaking skills in English by the half-year experiences in U.S.

I have been described the detail of the special courses aiming at improving skills of teaching in English. All the teachers of QC were very kind and supportive. Especially, the teachers of TiE occasionally invited us for lunch or dinner and to go see plays or sports games, etc. Therefore, I appreciate them all giving us chances to build personal relationships. Since this time was the first attempt of the program and the contents was developed by trial and error, I felt the course of TiE was different from what I had expected in the beginning. However, after taking the whole course, I felt that the course encompassed a lot of useful information for education not only in English but also in Japanese. Based on the opinions of the participants of this time, the course will be improved to be more useful one.

Origami Event at the Summit

Tsutomu Iwashita, National Institute of Technology, Ariake College

Because I organized “Origami Event” at the Summit, which is a resident hall in QC, on December 3rd, I’m writing about activities in the Summit.

I was a little surprised to see a lot of group activities taking place at the Summit because I was under the impression that American students were individualistic and independent before arriving here. I think I had a little too much stereotyped image of them. The Summit was built in 2009. The reasons that QC has the residence hall are to develop the sense of community and social responsibility, relationships with a diverse population of people, leadership and so on. I think the concept is similar to that in our dormitories. There are 11 RAs (Resident Assistants) in the Summit and they have a lot of responsibilities. On the other hand, they are given a rent-free private room. That’s a great privilege here. That’s why there are around 100 applicants for 11 RAs every year. Consequently, the Summit can select RAs who are capable of handling the work with screening of four steps. In addition, selected RAs must have two weeks of intensive training. As a result, the system regarding RAs works well.

One of important works for RAs is planning activities, and then they organize activities. To organize Origami event, I asked Dina who is one of the RAs, and she immediately told me that she would be very happy to help me. We submitted our proposal to her supervisor with a flyer. She also explained our proposal in their meeting, which is held every week, and it was

accepted. After that, we bought needed materials and hung up flyers. She was very helpful, so I understood why she was a RA.

Actually, the number of the participants was only 6 QC students in total aside from Japanese teachers, but we enjoyed making Origami very much. Also, I was able to learn not only how RAs work on planning activities but also how the faculty and RAs manage the Summit. Finally, I’d like thank Dina, Junji and Toru for their help in organizing the Origami event.

Learn Japanese Origami!

Make your own Ornament!

Wednesday, December. 3rd at 7:30 pm
in the Flex Space



It could be an ornament for Christmas.

← It could be a snappy gift-wrap!

You don't need pens and scissors.
Just join the event!

Hosted by Tom and RA Dina

Flyer



Group photo

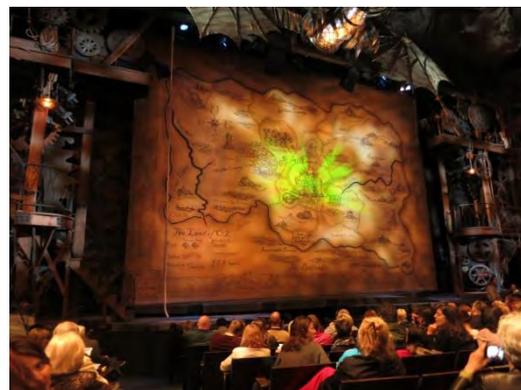
Looking at things another way

It is December; New York is in the winter. In contrast to I have used to saw tourist sites this summer, I went to Theaters, concerts and Museums lately. I think Broad way theaters are famous in Japan. The ticket is 40 to 250 dollars. I recommend a good seat since the impression of the play is depended by the seat position. Recently, I saw Wicked at the Gershwin Theater. Wicked is a popular musical that displays the unknown relationship between Elphaba the Wicked Witch and Glinda the Good Witch. In fact, Elphaba the “Wicked” Witch has good talent and sense of justice. She was persecuted because of her green skin. However, Fiyero the Winkie prince express his love to Elphaba at latter scene of the play. Elphaba is ashamed of her appearance though, Fiyero deny it and say “It’s not lying. It’s looking at things another way”.

I have appreciated the performance of Orpheus Chamber Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. This Orchestra performs great ensemble without conductor. According to the brochure, they think that “What is really essential, as in any great chamber group, is to maintain a balance between having sensitive listening antennae and adding our own personalities to the mix, responding spontaneously to each other’s energy, tonal color, and phrasing. We bring our individual varied experiences into play. These diverse perspectives keep us

invigorated, inspired, and endlessly fascinated.” They put importance on personality and diversity as well as cooperation while a ensemble without conductor, which is one of the ultimate teamwork.

At Metropolitan Museum of Art, we can learn the cultures all over the world. Arts are great evidences of a brilliant culture of other countries. These are the exhibitions on histories and cultures as well as art. People can understand without verbal and literal information, that other cultures are wonderful as own culture, Frankly speaking, I think key of Globalization is an ability to understand different cultures, have many points of view, utilize diversity and work with diverse people. New York is one of the best cities to learn cross-culture. It is not easy to accept different cultures. The line of the Fyero, “It’s looking at things another way”, might be an America’s know-how to struggle with the Globalization.



WICKED The Musical

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