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Developing Faculty Development Programmes for Teaching in English

— English as a tool to enhance the international presence of Hokkaido University
and educate students to meet the global standard —

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英語による授業に関するFDプログラムの開発

— 北大の国際的な存在感を高め、国際水準の学生を教育するためのツールとしての英語 —

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Abstract — Amidst the rapid progression of various aspects of internationalisation, having adequate English-language skills is becoming a must rather than a merit, and more and more universities are now offering courses in English. This report traces the development of three faculty development (FD) Programmes for teaching in English at Hokkaido University (HU), and focuses on the characteristics of each programme.⁽¹⁾ It aims to demonstrate the necessity to shift the discussion from the recurring question of “Why encourage offering classes in English at HU located in a non-English speaking country in the first place?” to “How can HU offer more classes in English?” and, furthermore, “What can we do to make it possible?”

(Revised on 26 August, 2010)

1. Introduction

The International Education Collaboration Support Team (Support Team) was established within the International Affairs Division⁽²⁾ in October 2008 as a two-and-a-half year project to administer the “Programme to Accelerate Internationalisation: Comprehensive Support to Accelerate International Education Collaboration” funded by MEXT⁽³⁾. The Support Team’s mission is to assist

faculties in developing a base for international education collaboration with universities overseas, mainly focusing on double degree programmes and credit transfer systems, with the aim to improve international compatibility of HU’s educational system and enhance the mobility of students and researchers.

While many professors stated that providing classes taught in English is vital to achieve the aforesaid mission, they also expressed serious concern over the extra

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workload placed on the limited number of professors teaching in English, mainly on a voluntary basis. Hiring foreign professors who can offer classes in English could be a quick solution, but it is not realistic to solely rely on it, therefore an alternative approach with a long-term vision is also essential. Additional aggravation resulted from other administrative matters that require multifaceted solutions. One of the key factors behind all these issues seemed to be the fact that anything to do with internationalisation can no longer be treated as something special concerning only a group of people specialized in it, and there was pressing necessity to expand the number of people involved.

In cooperation with the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education,⁽⁴⁾ the Support Team worked on the “FD Project for Classes Taught in English” in the academic year 2009 to have breakthroughs. The project consisted of development of three FD programmes on a trial basis: “FD Programme for Teaching in English for the Graduate School of Letters,” “Leiden University FD Programme,” and “FD to Accelerate Internationalisation – Toward a Bilingual University –.”⁽⁵⁾ This report traces the development of these programmes, focusing on the characteristics of each programme. It aims to demonstrate what HU can do to promote the use of English as a tool to enhance HU’s international presence and educate students to meet the global standard.

2. FD Programme for Teaching in English for the Graduate School of Letters

The aim for this programme was to develop a pilot FD programme that effectively utilizes resources available on campus and is therefore economical and easy to continuously offer. This pilot programme was developed for the Graduate School of Letters with a certain degree of versatility, so that it can be used for other faculties later with minimum customization. Six faculty members volunteered to participate.

2.1 Workshops

Six workshops were held from June 2009 till February 2010. The workshops focused on professors who were to start teaching in English for the first time. The goal was to brush up practical skills needed to offer classes using

English effectively as a tool. Two books on classroom English⁽⁶⁾ were distributed to participants as reference. The programme coordinator of the Support Team acted as facilitator.

In the first workshop, participants discussed the minimum and essential criteria when offering courses in English, and were encouraged to give constructive feedback to each other based on these criteria for demo lessons starting from the second workshop. Associate Professor Philip Seaton (Research Faculty of Media and Communication) gave a sample lesson in English, and opinions were exchanged on the effective usage of activities and the difference between an English class (to improve English abilities) and a class in English (where English is merely a communication tool).

The next five workshops consisted of discussions and demo lessons. In discussions, participants bounced ideas off each other on expected problems and teaching ideas to overcome them under three themes: (1) Non-English native professors teaching in English, (2) Teaching non-native students in English, (3) Teaching students with different levels of English abilities. Teaching tips collected by the Support Team from academic staff who are already teaching in English were also shared.

Each participant had the opportunity to do a demo lesson twice. The demo lessons and feedback were conducted following the Microteaching method by Professor Nyquist (described in 2.2).

2.2 Special Session: Microteaching Workshop

In July 2009, a Microteaching workshop was held for the first time at HU, facilitated by Professor Jody D. Nyquist (Director Emeritus, Center for Instructional Development and Research, University of Washington). In a four-minute-demo lesson, participants were encouraged to experiment on issues that they have difficulty teaching with, instead of trying to do their best teaching. Demo lessons were videotaped and played on site, so that presenters had opportunities to see their own lessons as well. Then constructive feedback was given in supportive group atmosphere.

Professor Nyquist ended the workshop stating that microteaching is most effective if done frequently and encouraging participants to facilitate the workshops among colleagues because facilitators always learn the most.

2.3 Suggestions

While some points for improvement were proposed at the end of the programme to meet the different needs of participants in the future, participants stated that they felt better equipped to teach in English and saw the merit of offering this type of FD programme extensively on campus due to its practical and hands-on approach. They requested continuation of FD programmes for teaching in English.

Using this programme as a base, it is possible to conduct similar programmes with small initial cost. If the degree of professionalism required of facilitators is set too high, however, it will be unrealistically difficult to find well-qualified persons. As Professor Nyquist suggested, if participants start facilitating among their colleagues later, it will be easier to meet different needs of each faculty and provide support to many faculty members. In order to promote the programme widely on campus under the current circumstances, it seems most appropriate to take a flexible approach and first start programmes on a trial basis and adjust if necessary along the way.

3. Leiden University FD Programme

The aim was to develop a pilot FD programme effectively using an external resource. Leiden University (LU) in the Netherlands was chosen as the programme content provider. LU decided to conduct a part of the five-day-programme at Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) located in the vicinity to demonstrate how two universities with different organisational structures worked on internationalisation. In August 2009, 15 professors from 9 faculties participated from HU, accompanied by a programme coordinator of the Support Team.

The programme consisted mainly of two parts. The first part was to gain information on how each university changed from a monolingual university to a bilingual university. Affected by the increasing mobility of students in Europe due to the Bologna Process, universities in the Netherlands lost students to universities offering courses in English in other countries, and had to change most of their graduate level courses to be taught in English in around 2005 in order to attract students. This also required language policies as the university wide decision and

strategic plans to implement them with a phased approach. It included conducting English language assessment and providing necessary training not only for academic staff but also students, administrative staff, technical staff, and service staff in canteens. The consequences of internationalisation and lessons learned were presented to HU participants, and advice was given to prevent same mistakes as them.

The second part was to receive practical training on English as a medium of instruction in non-English speaking countries. It was emphasized that the acquisition of practical tips for non-English-native teachers and other didactics to improve teaching will equip one with the optimal repertoire to deal with various classroom settings. It was also reminded that teaching students with limited domain knowledge is completely different from giving presentations to researchers, regardless of teachers' high abilities of English. This was supported by comments from students stating that it was easier to understand Dutch teachers using simple English than native English teachers.

Things noteworthy about each university are summarized in the following sections.

3.1 Leiden University

LU buildings are scattered all over the mid sized city, and each faculty is quite independent and has enormous power. This makes the relationship between faculties and the university central executive complex, and it was one of the most difficult universities to implement internationalisation in the Netherlands. Dr. Coelen, Vice President International and Head of the newly established International Office, was hired from outside because of his extensive international experience with re-organization, and LU started their five-year-internationalisation project in 2005.

Dr. Coelen shared his strong view on internationalisation with the HU participants — for a research intensive university to play a role in the global scene, internationalisation that inevitably necessitates the use of English language is essential to make the university and programmes accessible. Also, it will equip students with intercultural skills necessary to cope with any cultural environment. Despite issues yet to be solved, he has a fairly optimistic view as it will take time for a university to become truly bilingual and the process has

started quite recently.

3.2 Technical University of Delft

TU Delft is a campus university where top-down decisions are made at the university level and therefore difference among faculties is kept minimal, with no exceptions to the rule. The experience of the Faculty of Architecture where there was most resistance to change was shared with the HU participants. There were three steps to implement the change from teaching in Dutch to English from 2005 to 2009: assessing, transforming, and operating. Meanwhile, the English language assessment was conducted, and faculty members, even excellent researchers, who did not reach the sufficient level of English were fired after the grace period of about three years given to take training courses to improve their English.

From their experience, it was stated that a clear vision and strong leadership are indispensable to successful reform, and that with regard to internationalisation it is first necessary to define the educational mission of HU and what HU has to offer to the international market.

3.3 Suggestions

The programme provided 15 participants from 9 faculties with opportunities to actively exchange their different opinions on internationalisation and on this FD programme beyond the bounds of faculties. Despite the different circumstances of each faculty and also of each participant, it surely promoted mutual understanding and common awareness of the issues. For this reason, offering this type of FD continuously is highly recommended.

As Japan is not directly affected by the external pressure like the Bologna Process which requires specific reform with deadline, HU is free to decide on its internationalisation strategies, but with this freedom comes a need for greater strategic planning abilities. The strategies of two Dutch universities can be used as great resources and serve as bases for discussion to create a plan more suitable for HU, instead of trying to plan everything from scratch.

4. FD to Accelerate Internationalisation – Toward a Bilingual University –

In order to increase the total number of faculty members at HU who teach in English, it became evident that solely providing practical skills workshops was not enough, as hesitation to teach in English was also caused by lack of knowledge of HU's international strategies, motivational incentive and administrative support.

The two-day FD program was held on December 1 and 2, 2009. The first day focused on policy and strategy issues with 208 participants (160 academic staff and 48 administrative staff), while the second day focused on more practical approach concerning teaching in English with 174 participants (164 academic staff and 10 administrative staff).

4.1 <Day 1> Learning from Dutch Universities: Internationalisation Strategies of HU

In the first half, participants of the LU FD Programme presented on the internationalisation strategies and the English language assessment of LU and TU Delft.

In the latter half, the panel discussion was held regarding goals and challenges of the internationalisation strategies of HU. First, Professor Takeo Hondoh, Executive and Vice-President (International Affairs) presented how HU will work towards internationalisation in terms of "Global Perspectives" that is one of the basic philosophies of HU, university management threatened by the low birth rate, and different approaches at undergraduate and graduate levels of studies. Professor Minoru Wakita, Executive and Vice-President (Education) proposed how HU will implement bilingualism and suggested making concerted efforts together to take a step in that direction. Then opinions were exchanged actively concerning strategic plans and academic/administrative support needed in promoting internationalisation.

The day was closed by President Hiroshi Saeki, listing important keywords in "next mid-term objectives and plans" such as 'university open to the world' and 'education system as close to the global standard as possible', and hoping to provide human and financial support to attain those goals.

4.2 <Day 2> Lessons Taught in English: Let's Give it a Try!

Professor Wakita opened the day by interpreting the

‘university open to the world’ mentioned by President Saeki on the first day as the university where people from any part of the world can communicate freely, and the common language on such occasions will inevitably be English.

In the first half, courses taught in English at the Graduate School of Engineering and feedback from students were introduced. It was concluded that students appreciate the instructor’s enthusiasm more than English fluency, Japanese students wish to improve their English and English language classes are not sufficient, and teachers who teach well in Japanese can also teach well in English, as many elements that make lectures good are common regardless of the language of instruction.

Then the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education presented on their projects concerning internationalisation. In doing research on faculty development at advanced centers in U.S., Canada, Korea and China, it became clear that effective methods and the kind of objections raised are almost common.

The latter half was entitled “Lessons Taught in English: Let’s Give it a Try!”. The objective was to show five different types of demo lessons given by five professors including participants of “FD Programme for Teaching in English for Graduate School of Letters” and “LU FD Programme”, so that participants can develop an image of lessons appropriate to their respective circumstances by incorporating advantages of each type.

The day was closed by President Saeki, stating that the first day started with the discussion of why classes in English are necessary, and on the second day actual examples from the classes taught in English were introduced, and that the important thing is to first give it a try. As it takes time for the whole organisation to be fully prepared, he sought cooperation of faculty members to make an individual effort in the meanwhile.

4.3 Suggestions

The questionnaire results collected at the end of each day showed that many faculty members found demo lessons informative and helped break down a barrier to classes taught in English. Also, the pros and cons on various matters concerning internationalisation were expressed.

The two-day-programme provided a valuable opportunity for both academic and administrative staff

of HU to gather and think about issues concerning internationalisation together with university executives. In order to disseminate the new plan of action within a large organisation, the internal marketing to raise awareness among staff is crucial to success. Therefore, it is important to continuously provide this kind of opportunities to reach a common goal.

5. Conclusion

As one of the leading universities in Japan, it is HU’s mission to foster internationally adaptable students, and it seems self-explanatory by now that communication skills using English have to be added to the conventional educational outcomes. It is time to start constructive discussion based on the premises that HU will increase the number of courses offered in English.

It is important to clarify that English used as the international communication tool should be treated differently from English used by native speakers. A realistic and practical approach is required: What kind of minimum English skills are necessary to function in the global setting? I have once heard an encouraging comment from a professor saying that the language most widely used in the world is broken English. If such anecdotes can be shared openly, it can be a first big step to reduce a feeling of rejection toward the English language of many people.

It is a challenging mission. Efficiency is the key to success, making maximum use of limited budget and personnel available. Fortunately, HU is a university with excellent internal resources. I hope that experts of various fields beyond the bounds of academic and administrative sections make concerted efforts together to plan and implement the most effective strategies suitable for HU.

Notes

1. The details of each programme are described in the serial report entitled “Toward a Bilingual University Series Vol. 1-3” that can be seen on HU’s website.

<http://www.hokudai.ac.jp/bureau/e/wabun/kokusaika/eigo.html> (campus access only)

2. The International Affairs Division has changed to the Division of International Relations as of July 2010.

3. Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology - Japan

4. The Center for Research and Development for Higher Education has changed to the Institute for the Advancement of Higher Education as of October 2010.

5. The details of each programme are described in the serial report entitled “Toward a Bilingual University Series Vol. 1-3” that can be seen on HU’s website.

<http://www.hokudai.ac.jp/bureau/e/wabun/kokusaika/eigo.html> (campus access only)

6. Nakai, T. (2008), *Faculty Guide to Classroom English*. Tokyo: ALC, and Nakai, T. (2009), *College*

Students’ Guide to Classroom English. Tokyo: ALC

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