

COIL Institute for Globally Networked Learning in the Humanities Course Development and Implementation Case Study

12. Japan-USA: Global Studies and English as a Foreign Language

Abstract

The course conducted through collaboration between UWM and Osaka University within the context of the COIL framework was a successful experience upon which the team is eager to further build. The technologies used provided a solid platform for the conducting of module activities and movement toward goals of enhanced communicative ability and critical thought concerning the role of culture in our communications.

In any future iteration of the course, the reduction of technologies used might help students overcome any feelings of technological overload. Greater instructor familiarity with case studies on Facebook and Twitter usage may go far in overcoming or avoiding some of the problems inherent in Facebook and Twitter usage, including ingrained usage patterns. Offering the course to a different student demographic may work well to quickly congeal the community through perception of having mutual aims and interests as opposed to proximity. The Living Learning Community environment for the UWM students proved an asset in terms of meeting the students on their own territory, thus allowing the students to incorporate the course into their daily lives; however, because the students were freshmen and thus with differing interests and without majors, establishing a setting in which students are absolutely certain why they are together took valuable time. In the future, second-year or above Japanese language learners would be a fantastic target group, also allowing for further specification of goals in addition to an enhanced language aspect and shared linguistic pressures and responsibilities.

Contents

Section 1: General Course Information	2
Section 2: Issues of Language	4
Section 3: Curricular Information	5
Section 4: Asynchronous Technologies Used	6
Section 5: Synchronous Technologies Used	7
Section 6: Assessment Information	8
Section 7: Institutional Support	10
Section 8: Reflections.....	13

Section 1: General Course Information

1. Courses

Course Title	Institution(s)	Discipline	Academic Level
Collaborative Online International Learning Course in UWM Living Learning Community: Confronting Cultural Stereotypes (Global Studies 192)	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Osaka University	Global Studies (UWM) English (Osaka U.)	1st Year (UWM) 4th Year (Osaka U.)

2. The team

Team Member #1	
Name:	Jason Christopher Jones
Role on Team:	Faculty
Institution:	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Position at Institution:	Assistant Professor of Japanese
Department and/or Program:	Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Japanese Program
Team Member #2	
Name:	Jennifer Watson
Role on Team:	Administrative Support and International Programs
Institution:	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Position at Institution:	Associate Professor of German and Scandinavian Literature Associate Dean of the Humanities, College of Letters and Science Associate Director, Center for International Education
Department and/or Program:	College of Letters and Science
Team Member #3	
Name:	Matthew Russell
Role on Team:	Instructional Designer
Institution:	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Position at Institution:	Instructional Design Specialist
Department and/or Program:	Learning Technology Center
Team Member #4	
Name:	Sara Tully
Role on Team:	International Programs

Institution:	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Position at Institution:	Administrative Director
Department and/or Program:	Center for International Education
Team Member #5	
Name:	Junko Takefuta
Role on Team:	Faculty
Institution:	Osaka University
Position at Institution:	Associate Professor
Department and/or Program:	Osaka University Cybermedia Center, Multimedia Language Education Research Division
3. When?	
Fall 2012	
4. Number of students enrolled from each institution	
UWM=10; Osaka U=5	
5. Is this typical for classes of this type?	
<p>UWM: Although the course number has been used before, the format and content of the course were new. Thus a comparison cannot be conducted.</p> <p>Osaka: The class size was smaller. This is due to: 1) The conducting of the course in English (intimidation factor) and 2) The use of technology (technological fear factor).</p>	

Section 2: Issues of Language

6. Language(s) of instruction at each institution
UWM=English Osaka U=English (for networked activities) and Japanese (for non-networked activities)
7. Primary language of most students in each class
UWM=English (Korean x 1, Japanese x 1) Osaka U=Japanese
8. Language of the course collaboration
English, though some UWM students had very limited Japanese knowledge.
9. Language fluency
Fluent enough to fully participate in scaffolded activities, but perhaps not enough to confidently participate in spontaneous activities.
10. Language proficiency difference
English language skills were a central consideration throughout course planning and throughout the actual course. Modules were, therefore, built with this consideration in mind.

Section 3: Curricular Information

11. Online or blended?
The course was blended, with the interactive parts between students of course occurring online. Scaffolding for the modules took place face-to-face.
12. Duration
Approximately 10 weeks.
13. Class work or discussion related to their collaboration before and/or after the actual collaboration period
Because of the timing of the Japanese academic year, Junko was able to use the spring semester as a primer for the Osaka U students. Collaboration before the course at UWM was not possible because the course was open only to 1st year students just entering the university in the Fall semester. Junko and I have had some time for discussion after the course and are collaboratively working on a paper.

Section 4: Asynchronous Technologies Used

14. Tools
Desire2Learn Facebook We focused on Facebook usage for communicative and coordination tasks because of its hooks into mobile technology with notifications.
15. Server location
UWM provided D2L.
16. Technical problems
There were a few technical problems with Facebook converting video uploads to Flash (yuck) and then those videos not actually showing up on the group page. This was solved by using Vimeo or YouTube.
17. Frequency of use
Interaction took place at least once per week. Once students got the hang of the technologies being used (Facebook, Twitter, Springpad, Vimeo, Pathbrite), we promoted the completion of activities outside class time.
18. Informal communication
One of the reasons we used Facebook was to allow students to engage on an informal level and to be certain that the students could maintain their connections even after completion of the course.
19. Re-use
I would use Facebook for informal communication perhaps. However, I am interested in other tools with the ubiquitous notification capability of Facebook, but without the short memory span of Facebook. Facebook posts begin to feel lost and irrelevant with the addition of new posts, and this is not always appropriate.

Section 5: Synchronous Technologies Used

20. Tools
We primarily used Skype for synchronous activities.
21. Server location
Cloud-based. The institution, however, made certain that we had access to the proper hardware, including speakers, webcams, and a conferencing camera.
22. Technical problems
The worst problem was one of bandwidth. Despite both networks being advanced, the UWM network could not handle the simultaneous Skype video conversations. Also, Skype for Windows was quirky during our class-to-class conference call.
23. Frequency of use
Students engaged each other about five times over ten weeks, with most of the synchronous activities occurring in the latter half of the course. Outside of class, students were expected to contact each other synchronously at least three times throughout the course.
24. Informal communication
Students were encouraged to use Skype outside the context of the course and to communicate with each other on an informal level. Because the modules are task-based, however, students primarily communicated when they needed to complete some objective.
25. Re-use
I would use Skype again. Though quirky at times, it is convenient because of its ubiquitous presence on multiple devices.

Section 6: Assessment Information

26. How?
Course assessment took place through five methods. Three of them were course surveys: One was the COIL survey (the results of which we are looking forward to); another was a technology survey; the last was a general course survey. The fourth survey method was extremely informal, but offered what I thought were the best responses and most candid feedback--in class discussions on what students felt were going right, what they felt could be made better, and how they thought we should proceed with certain activities. This placed the students in a position of responsibility and they reacted well. The fifth survey consisted of having the students post videos of what they have done with their overseas partners, and what they feel they have learned.
27. Common assessment rubric
As the courses have slightly different goals, the assessment criteria do not completely overlap. This is something that we would like to address in a future iteration of the course.
28. Assessment outcomes
Most students saw the course favorably. Some felt that some of the uses of technology were superfluous. Assessment method #4 above helped us adjust throughout the period of the course.
29. Peer assessment
Peer assessment was a constant at UWM because of the nature of the course--a Living Learning Community taking place in one of the student housing residences. The students lived together and worked together in an environment of constant cooperation in terms of the production of content, the overcoming of technological or technical hurdles, and the overcoming of interpersonal disagreements related to how a certain task should be completed. Osaka U had a dedicated Teaching Assistant to provide feedback for the course, while UWM had a dedicated Residence Assistant to provide feedback and to keep things running smoothly.
30. Charter or guidelines for student interaction
We did not have any shared guidelines, perse. Instead of using written guidelines, Junko spent the spring semester providing scaffolding for the Osaka University students in terms of how to communicate, while I spent the beginning of the fall semester discussing issues of cross-cultural communication with speakers of English as a second (or sometimes third) language. Having led the course once, I would probably develop written documentation concerning expectations for student interaction as an additional means of scaffolding for the students.
31. Attrition
UWM had one student drop out in the beginning of the semester. We also gained a student in the beginning of the semester.

32. Is this typical for similar classes at your institution?

This is fairly typical at UWM. Though most students complete the courses for which they have registered, some do leave the course for various reasons.

Section 7: Institutional Support

33. Type of support

Grant Application Stage

- Financial: Little financial support necessary at this phase.
- Administrative: Great deal of support from the Center for International Education, Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, the Learning Technology Center, and the Office of the Provost at UWM.
- Pedagogical: Great deal of collaboration between Jason Jones and Jennifer Watson, and Jason Jones and Junko Takefuta.
- Technical: Great enthusiasm from the LTC and Matt Russell.

Institute Workshop Participation

- Financial: Fantastic financial support for the US teams through the COIL Fellowship. Junko used her own research travel stipend to attend the workshop.
- Administrative: Administrative support was full-on at this stage.
- Pedagogical: The pedagogical aspects were being covered primarily between Jason, Junko, and Matt at this time. Cooperation between these three was necessary throughout every period of the course and course development.
- Technical: Matt and the LTC gave their full support.

Course Development Phase

- Financial: Received a grant from the UWM Center for Instructional and Professional Development. This grant funded both a technological purchase that allowed for much easier course development as well as a graduate assistant. Osaka University funded a Teaching Assistant for the Osaka University course.
- Administrative: The Global Studies Program, Center for International Education, and Living Learning Community organizers lent full support to ensure that the backbone of the course was sturdy. It was through their work and diligence that the course was able to go on without a hitch.
- Pedagogical: Again, the pedagogical aspects were being covered primarily between Jason, Junko, and Matt at this time. Cooperation between these three was necessary throughout every period of the course and course development.
- Technical: Matt and the LTC gave their full support. Here as well, Matt, Junko, and Jason met online and in person periodically to discuss the technological aspects of the course. I was also fortunate enough to see Junko in Osaka over the summer of 2012.

Course Implementation Phase

- Financial: Financial support came in the form of additional computer equipment in addition.
- Administrative: Here too, The Global Studies Program, Center for International Education, and Living Learning Community organizers made certain that all administrative aspects of the course were handled thoroughly.
- Pedagogical: The course required constant adjustment based on student feedback and self-evaluations by faculty. Thus, the pedagogical aspects were handled primarily between Junko and Jason.
- Technical: Matt provided technical and technological support throughout the implementation phase. The Language Resource Center also provided technical and technological assistance with the hardware and software necessary for group-group synchronous activities.

Course Assessment Phase

- Financial: We saw little financial need for the completion of this phase.
- Administrative: The Global Studies Program conducted course surveys.
- Pedagogical: Surveys of pedagogical concerns were given throughout the course by faculty.
- Technical: The Learning Technology Center conducted course surveys.

Capstone Reporting Phase

- Financial: Again, fantastic financial support for the US teams through the COIL Fellowship.
- Administrative: Little administrative support need for this phase.
- Pedagogical: Cooperation between Jason, Junko, Matt, and Gerry of the LTC.
- Technical: Little technical support need for this phase.

34. Engagement with the international programs office

The UWM students were in contact with the Global Studied Program and its advisors throughout the course. There were also monthly meetings between Jason and Global Studies Program advisors to discuss course progress and student relations in the Living Learning Community.

35. Importance given to globally networked learning

The international programs office, including the Center for International Education and the Global Studies Program most certainly do see this initiative as relevant to the work that they are doing. We have begun discussing holding another iteration of the course in the near future.

36. Commitment

At Japanese institutions, inter-institutional relationships are usually concluded only after inter-departmental relations have been in place a certain number of years. Inter-departmental relations occur after inter-faculty relations have been in place for several years. Therefore, it was the faculty element of the course that was aligned for this, initial course.

37. Future iterations

N/A

38. New globally networked courses

Gerry Bergtrom in the UWM Learning Technology Center is already planning a course that would be heavily based on the COIL model and ideology.

39. Response of chairs, deans, provosts or other administrators to the possibility of expanding this pilot course(s) into a broader program of globally networked courses

Administrators have been extremely receptive to the expansion of such courses, though meeting will probably need to be held so as to assess the feelings of individual chairs, deans, provosts, etc.

40. Institutional commitment to further developing globally networked courses

UWM was greatly committed to the first course and I have received nothing but encouragement concerning the conducting of another course on this model.

41. How to nurture the development of globally networked learning

I would say that this requires an approach on two fronts. As long as internationalization and the development of global networks are seen as priorities of the upper echelons of the universities, such courses will receive attention and if not financial support outside of instructor salaries, at least administrative backing. Also, it is important for the faculty and instructional technology development side to push the envelope concerning what such courses have to offer, making them more appealing to students. Both the upper echelons and faculty need to have room to “play”, or in other words, to experiment with courses to see what works and what doesn’t.

It may also be a good idea to initiate transparent, meaningful reward structures, particularly for tenure-track faculty. Otherwise, some people may not see the merits of developing and offering such a course.

Section 8: Reflections

42. Goals set
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further develop critical thinking skills in terms of how you perceive culture and nationality.• Further develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills through performing interactive and intercultural tasks.• Develop enhanced oral communicative ability through working with international students who speak English as a second or third language.• Developed teamwork skills through completion of synchronous and asynchronous activities between team members at the home institution and international partner institution.• Further developed intercultural knowledge and competence.
43. Goals achieved
My personal feeling is that the first goal was moderately achieved, the next three greatly achieved, and the final goal moderately achieved.
44. Most unique aspect for students
I think that the connection with students at the partnering institution was the most unique experience for students in the course. The UWM students were also able to “live” the course, as it was given on their home territory in the residential housing. Also, I think that the variety of activities and the unique combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities always kept students on their feet.
45. Most successful aspect(s) from a pedagogical perspective
Junko and Matt are simply a pleasure to work with. It was this interpersonal connection <i>behind</i> the pedagogical development of the course that kept it going and that allowed us to adjust quickly. The variety of technologies used were tightly linked with pedagogical aims, which helped us rethink their use.
46. Most problematic aspects from a pedagogical perspective
Being able to see where you want to go, but being unable to get there because of road design was problematic. In other words, sometimes the technology gets you close to where you’d like to be, but because of issues of implementation or hardware limitations or inertia (i.e. People have become used to using a certain technology in one particular way and that usage has become ingrained), it could sometimes be difficult to arrive at the hoped for destination.
47. Changes for future iterations
I would: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin synchronous activities sooner.• Open the course to Japanese language learners to create a more even platform.• Conduct more activities with a “playful” structure. (For instance, the cooking activity was probably one of the best activities throughout which students were focusing more on the act of communicating than on the fact that they <i>had</i> to communicate for the course. The course and its

artificial confines faded into the background, as did the technology. We designed the course modules so as to increase the likelihood of this occurring from the beginning, but ironically, it was the production of something that had nothing to do with digital technologies that allowed the students to make best use of the digital technologies.)

48. Technical support

N/A

49. International programs person

N/A

50. Issues you did not foresee would be problematic

Oddly enough--or perhaps not oddly at all--for all of the attention that Junko and I paid to the matter of time and time zones, there were several instances in which we made errors in designating the time zones and days of the week. Our students were guilty of the same. However, I would argue that having students arrange to Skype one another and thus contemplate how time zones complicate international communication and develop strategies of communicating so that this does not happen, was one of the merits of the course.

I would also say that issues of technology were surprisingly always at the top of my mind. I live and breathe technology and am often the first to dive head-first into whatever technological sea lies before me. But using this technology for very specific goals was a challenge with which I still lack the confidence to say I have coped.

50. Time commitment

Unfortunately, I did not tally up the hours of planning, replanning, re-replanning, discussions between me, Matt, and Junko, meetings with Global Studies, time spent with students outside of the official course time, and everything else that went into the course. I'm certain that the same is true for Junko. I think we spent an excessive amount of time obsessing about the course and feeling tortured over the implementation and details--Are students getting anything from this activity? Is the module format moving us toward a tenable goal? etc.--particularly because this was our first time giving the course. I'm not sure if a properly done face-to-face course would be less work. But it would most certainly be work of a different sort, and would only become less work after many implementations.

51. Was it worth it?

The course was definitely worth it. Throughout the course, I found myself constantly thinking of ways that I could make the course better, so I think that it would be easier to implement another iteration of the course or even a slightly different one. I'm not certain how much I would enjoy developing the course with a different partner so soon. I would like to continue to work on another course with the same partners so that we can implement what we have learned about developing such courses, as well as what we have learned about working with one another. Again, I cannot sing enough praises for Junko and Matt.

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