

FD Newsletter

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Teaching Large Classes

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Editor's Note**Richard L. Wilson / FD Director**

At ICU we take pride in our small classes and intimate environment, but many if not all of us are called upon to teach large and sometimes overflowing classes. Most of these classes have students from a wide variety of academic backgrounds, so the challenge is not simply one of scale but of finding the appropriate level of instruction. As I have found in my role as FD Director, many of our colleagues manage these courses in a challenging and innovative manner. I would like to share a sampling of this expertise and enthusiasm with our readers. All of these examples are highly regarded by our students.

Prof. Yasuyo Moriya, writing about her course “Linguistics for Language Teaching,” suggests how a course with feedback mechanisms and ample chance for self-evaluation can become a “sustainable experience;” in other words, a course that provides a platform for students to see themselves as future teachers. Prof. Suzanne Quay, who teaches “The World of Sign Languages,” provides a diversity of tools, especially peer activities, to make a large class energized and effective. A proper knowledge of the background of linguistics is essential in Prof. Yoshida Tomoyuki’s “Introduction to Linguistics I”, and here careful review, interactivity among students, and feedback make the course work. In the natural sciences, Prof. Hideki Okamura has pioneered in requiring an independent research project of his introductory students, an endeavor without parallel in Japanese higher education. Prof. Anri Morimoto shares with us his time-tested techniques for a dialogical “Introduction to Christianity” course. “Sociology of Science and Technology”, taught by Prof. Tomiko Yamaguchi, attempts a fine balance between basic and specialized knowledge. Reading through these essays, I found a core approach: peer learning, interactivity, importance of building student self-awareness, and recognition of diversity in the student population. Binding them together was each instructor’s spirit of experimentation and willingness to change when necessary.

In the English version of her essay, Prof. Moriya uses the expression “Mere teaching is not enough...” I hope that our readers will be convinced that even in large classes, or in beginners’ classes, that ICU education rises above “mere teaching.”

On the cover:

This middle Jomon cooking pot (*fukabachi*) was excavated in our Autumn 2012 archaeology class here on the ICU campus. Most Jomon pots are found in a fragmentary or crushed condition, but this one is nearly intact and, even more remarkably, it is standing upright. It is known as the Kasori E3 type, and was made about 4,000 years ago. Our students were delighted!

Linguistics for Language Teaching

Yasuyo Moriya / Department of Language Education

The instructor of a language must know the characteristics of phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and difference of meanings concerning the target language by heart. The instructor must also be aware of the manner in which the language is used, and how the language reflects the culture of its speakers. This foundation course, entitled “Linguistics for Language Teaching”, provides crucial knowledge that is necessary to teach a language in various contexts of linguistics and language education. I am especially concerned with the aspects that I am going to discuss below.

Technical terms and methods of language education (applied linguistics) must be learned, together with practical approaches. Whether the language is Japanese, English, or any other particular language, is not an issue here. Also, any teaching method could be chosen. This is because, although language differs from one to another, the learning process of any language has a common core. Since language is what we all use every day, it is tempting to discuss language education through personal impression and opinion. However, as professionals of language education, we should not think in this way. We must be ready to unveil issues concerning the learner and educator through technical terms and approaches of applied linguistics.

The course must not be designed solely for students who are planning to acquire the teacher’s certificate, or students who wish to teach at universities, professional schools, or other special schools. The goal of the class must be to nurture professionals of language who are able to influence the society through language, and who can serve as a bridge between different views and standpoints. It is incorrect to surmise that a native speaker would make a good teacher. Students must understand that both theory and practice are essential in teaching others what one already knows. Therefore, it is necessary to learn how to objectify the learning processes of both native tongue and foreign languages, and to logically explain the mechanisms and usage of words.

Given that many students taking this course are

freshmen who are in the midst of the ELA program, who have no real experience of studying linguistics and English, I use a textbook that is written in simple English, which focuses on empirical aspects rather than specialized theories. I also utilize other supplementary materials such as worksheets, data, and samples from various textbooks, so as to practice critical reading that students are taught in ELA. I make sure the goals are clear, so each student can reach the sense of achievement through working as a class or as a smaller group.

I allocate three class periods to read through each chapter of the textbook that is six chapters long. The content of each chapter will be explained, and will be used as the topic of discussion during the first two class periods. In the third period, the students will complete an activity designed to coordinate with the chapter, which promotes their participation. For example, for chapter 3, the mission of the activity is to think about the ways to cope with learners who use words or phrases that are not deemed standard in the society, such as dialects, youth slang, or expressions that are frowned upon.

Learners of a language will make mistakes. There are “good” mistakes that come from misunderstanding of the mechanism, and “bad” mistakes that come from the influence of their native tongue, or a simple misconception. It is important for educators to see the difference between the two, so as to be able to discern the current progress of learners from their mistakes. The students can look back on their own learning experiences and recognize the problems they have had. This will in turn become an opportunity to improve their English and Japanese skills.

All students in this class have experience in learning a second language, through their English classes in high school or ELP/JLP at ICU. But through the activities in class, they must become aware of the fact that such experience is not sufficient if they are to instruct others. As a practical method, I make students to correct and evaluate Japanese essays written by university students who are learning Japanese as a foreign language. The students must point out the difficulties these learners are facing,

and how instructors may support them to overcome those difficulties. In the next step, the students are asked to correct and evaluate English essays written by Japanese middle school students, in order to discover difficulties and proper teaching techniques when learning English is concerned. The students will get their own hands “dirty” by learning how it is troublesome to objectify one’s own knowledge and pass it on to someone who does not possess the same knowledge, or to those who have difficulties learning it.

Towards the end of the course, students work on the topic of evaluation. Without proper evaluation, learners will lose their motivation. Perhaps telling the learners that there will be a test, or threatening the learners that they will not get into a decent university would pep them up for a short while. But could this be a source of true motivation? The students will try to define what “good language teachers” should be, through their experiences as learners and part-time language instructors. It is easy to promise the learners that all homework assignments will be corrected thoroughly and commented upon. But will this sustain their motivation? First of all, is it possible to do so if there are many learners and so little time? What methods should be given priority to positively stimulate the learners? As the proverb says, you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink.

I give a quiz and assign worksheets after each chapter, and give three tests during the course. I always explain what the assignments are for, because I would like the students to recognize that they are learners themselves. I give feedback to all assignments during class except for the final exam, and introduce exemplary answers from peers to motivate the students. I design the course so that this course itself would serve as an example of motivating and sustainable experience, from which students may deduce crucial factors to improve the motivation of

learners.

The students and I thoroughly debate various matters from both the viewpoint of learner and instructor, so that the students would recognize that language are directly connected with one’s identity. If one is unaware of the values and views connoted in each language, one can confuse others by choosing the words that are too direct or offensive. It is important to learn how to cope with such situations, and think about possibilities that could arise if the instructor should deem some expressions simply as “bad”.

The goal of this course is achieved if more students become eager to serve in the community of Japanese and English education both in and outside of Japan, or if the students will be interested in further pursuing language education in some form, even if they do not choose to acquire a teacher’s certificate. Mere teaching is not enough if one is to teach language. One must strive to become a role model who understands what it is like to be a learner, and a researcher who tirelessly pursues studying, and an entertainer who keeps trying harder to do better. To make students become aware of this, I keep trying harder myself. I want my students to think of their students’ present and future. I want them to make much effort as possible to keep the motivation up. I want them to keep asking themselves what a “good language teacher” is all about, to keep themselves motivated. Once they are able to become aware of these qualities through this course, then they are already on their way to become professionals of language. If I could motivate my students to a point where they would think “one day I will become a language teacher who is even better than Profs. Netsu and Tomiyama,” then this course will be a unique one; one that is becoming to ICU, which has served as a pioneer in both Japanese and English education for the past 60 years.

(English translation provided by the FD office)

Making the Connection: Engaging Students in Large Classes

Suzanne Quay / Department of Language Education

Teaching large classes for me is about connecting with students, despite difficulties in remembering everyone's names. I will share what I have done in eighteen years of coping with such a situation in ICU's general education and foundation courses. Since students in their first to their final year can take such courses, we are faced with much diversity in students' background knowledge, academic experience, and English proficiency. While conveying specialized content, I also try to pay attention to ICU's bilingual educational philosophy to help those who are developing their English language skills, while at the same time catering to those who are already dominant in the classroom language. Meeting individual student's needs is difficult in large classes and may perhaps even be impossible.

However, I have found that certain procedures and techniques taken with various aspects of a course—from the syllabus and lectures to the assignments—can ensure some sort of connection with the students.

The Syllabus

I try to make it worthwhile for students to attend every class by building into the syllabus my expectation for their participation and its importance to learning. I collect something from students in every class (homework, in-class assignments, comment sheets, etc.) that count towards a participation grade (TAs can help to record attendance based on such collected items). I also return all assignments periodically in order to learn names (class time is not wasted as assignments are returned when students are in the process of doing some other in-class task). This has helped me to master 90% of the names of students by the end of the term, even in classes of 80 to 100. Students seem to become more motivated to work harder when they know that I know who they are among the masses. I make this task less daunting for myself by approaching it as a memory game, but I admit that amnesia always sets in once the term ends and I no longer see the students regularly.

To avoid typical problems that can be worsened by the size of a class, I communicate on my syllabus policies for late assignments, missed in-class activities and tests, and acceptable conditions for retakes and extensions.

Feedback

I make students aware from the outset that feedback is not a one-way street. I give them feedback on assignments, but I also need to see what learning has taken place from class to class in order to adjust how I teach. One way is to have students take a minute or two to write down their reflections during a lecture, as once written, it seems easier to engage them to respond aloud. At the end of a class, I may ask students to state on their comment sheets a key point they have learnt that day that they did not know about previously and any questions they have. Comments and questions are addressed in the next class. This is another way to learn names, as students have to identify themselves before I read out their comments or questions, so that I can ensure that questions have been answered satisfactorily.

Lectures

At the beginning of lectures, I tend to project something like an image, key words, or outline to get students thinking about what is ahead. To keep everyone's attention, I try not to lecture for long spans of time without relating issues or learning materials to events outside the academic setting through short clips from videos, or other forms of examples, which may or may not involve some sort of physical action on their part (where they need to read, write, draw, or do something beyond just listening to the lecture). Important points in the lecture are highlighted on overheads or the blackboard with the use of many supplementary examples and illustrations.

Varying class activities:

I often ask students to get into small, medium or large-sized groups or pairs to work on a focused

question, problem or exercise, which gives them a break from the lecture as well as engaging them with the material. Techniques such as the one-minute paper, debate, or pair or group discussions can shake up a sleepy crowd, but also encourage student interaction and peer learning as they practice applying new material together. Jigsaw tasks are also assigned where they must share information with different groups to complete an exercise. Similar to clicker technology used at universities that can afford such tools, I do surveys where I call for a vote by a show of hands to questions like, 'How many of you think this is true or agree with this?' These quick class surveys are followed by informal debate where they need to justify their answers, or by my showing research results or similar surveys from mass media sources.

Collaborative learning and teamwork:

For student-led discussion groups, I always request that a leader/speaker be chosen who can direct the discussions as well as represent the consensus reached to the rest of the class. In pair work, students are told that 'two heads are better than one' and are encouraged to reflect together more deeply, in case they are randomly chosen to provide answers. Although I would like to give everyone a chance to speak, this is very difficult in a large class. Having students discuss with each other gives everyone the opportunity to speak in class. I think it is important to have collaborative learning in large classes, so that students can learn from each other, as something I have explained may make more sense when explained again by a peer. Small group and class discussions also expose students to different world-views and different perspectives. Many discover, to their surprise, that their peers do not all think in the same way.

In-class and homework assignments and projects

Grading assignments can be very time-consuming in large classes, so I use peer evaluation and a points system for assignments that are a part of the participation grade. TAs can be recruited to evaluate small in-class exercises if a simple-to-follow point system is explained to them.

To ensure that students do not fall asleep when I turn off the lights to show video documentaries, I create worksheets that must be completed while

watching the documentary and submitted at the end of the class for attendance/participation points. The worksheets also serve as a preview of what they will be watching. Before showing such documentaries, I usually offer transcripts (when available) to students who feel they have poor English listening comprehension, so that they can read the transcripts before viewing the documentaries and feel less anxious or at a disadvantage with such in-class tasks. Worksheets are usually returned in the next class for group or class discussion, again so that students who are weaker in English can get peer support in understanding the material covered.

Every time I ask students to do any substantial reading at home, I require them to complete Reading Responses that are brought to class and shared with other students in group or class discussions before being submitted for grading.

Research projects are usually done in groups for my large classes. Topics are selected from the ones that I do not have time to cover in class. In this way, students can learn extra material from each other. What works well with large classes is poster presentations (like in a conference) where each member of a group must take turns to stand in front of their poster to present at least once for five minutes as they all move around the classroom to read and listen to other posters. This involves using a stopwatch to time precise movements of groups of students from one poster to the next until everyone has had an opportunity to visit all posters other than their own. Even with a class of about 90 students, it was possible to carry this out by using two periods of class time for two poster sessions. Similar to the poster project, newspapers have also been created by individual groups to post on the classroom walls for other students to read. Each newspaper would focus on one theme with articles written by different members of that group. Peer evaluation is used, as it requires attention to be paid to posters and newspapers, and such evaluations also become a part of participation points.

In closing...

The selected teaching techniques I have shared for large classes are based on my belief that a connection between instructors, peers and one's own motivation can engage learning. Because diversity is the outcome of large classes, scaffolding is important. That is, we

need to provide contextual support for conveying meaning (especially when meaning is being conveyed through many students' L2). I do this through using videos and various illustrations, cooperative learning, and hands-on learning while I

lecture. Because of the variety of techniques used to convey content and the different tasks to change the pace and energy volume of the class, most students become engaged because they do not know what I will do next...

LNG101 Introduction to Linguistics I

Tomoyuki Yoshida / Department of Language Sciences

Course Outline and Goals

Although I was asked to write about “teaching large classes”, “Introduction to Linguistics I (LNG101)”, for the past few years, is a middle-sized class with about 80 students. This course is designed for students who have not studied linguistics before, and it is required for those students who major in linguistics. Most students in this course are freshmen and sophomores, with a relatively small number of juniors and seniors. The aim of this course is to learn basic thinking and skills to analyze natural language in modern linguistics.

The standard definition of modern linguistics is “the scientific study of natural language”. In LNG 101, we focus on the following subfields of linguistics to discuss how the linguistic systems are incorporated into our brain/mind:

1. Phonetic properties of language (phonetics)
2. Structure of linguistic sounds and phonological systems (phonology)
3. Composition and the internal structure of words (morphology)
4. Composition and the internal structure of phrases and sentences (syntax)
5. Meaning and usage of utterances (semantics).

Generally speaking, it is rare that what is going on in modern linguistics and what students imagine what modern linguistics would be dealing with. Earlier in the course, many students appear to be puzzled with the content of LNG101. For those who would rather want to stay out of natural sciences, this course “smells” like natural science. In fact, I feel that

more science-oriented students take this course than before ever since we shifted to the major system. In a situation like this, it is important to accept confusion among students and turn them into pleasant surprises that would encourage them to learn more. In class lectures, I try to let students realize that native language, which we often use effortlessly, is organized in our brain/mind as a complex and elaborate system, much more so than people normally think.

Students in LNG101 tend to be highly motivated, and their grades reflect this fact. General grade distribution shows a similar unusual pattern every year. About a half of students get either an A or B, and sometimes the number of As becomes twice as many as Bs. The number of Cs is about the same as Bs, and Ds and Es together outnumber Cs. The final grade is calculated based on two exams (mid-term and final) and five sets of assignments. No points are given for attendance. The fact that students seriously participate in this course encourages me to make efforts to improve the course quality.

Materials

Lectures are based on a set of handouts which I prepare. They are designed to be somewhat incomplete so that students can complete them to make their own study materials, based on what they learn in class and from working on assignments. Standard textbooks on linguistics are reserved in the library, and, of course, students can purchase their

own copies. Textbooks, however, do not help students much. Making their own study materials by completing the handouts is much more important to deal with assignments and the two exams. For this course, I find the handouts more helpful for students' deeper understanding than PowerPoint presentations. They seem especially effective when students are asked to analyze linguistic data because they can allocate more time with the handouts. Although I make use of OHP and other instruments from time to time, the handouts are by far the most important.

Encouraging Students' Participation

Although I try to encourage students to actively participate class discussions, the results of Teaching Evaluation Survey (TES) suggest that I am not all that successful. What is important for this particular course is that students cannot go on to higher level courses unless they understand the materials of LNG 101 and become able to use analytic skills. Having group discussions on linguistic data seems rather pointless if students do not have proper background knowledge in linguistics. So, I urge students to ask questions in class. Sometimes, the same students repeatedly ask questions and other students do not seem to care. But, I still emphasize the importance of asking questions. I often discuss questions sent to me by e-mail in class to encourage more students to ask.

It is often the case that students thought they understood the point in class but realize after class that they actually did not. This is why I stress the importance of reviewing. The content discussed in LNG101 is not something that students can understand by reading textbooks for themselves. Therefore, I advise them to review the class material with classmates while the memory is fresh. I make it a habit to review the previous class discussion at the beginning of each class and make sure that students have sufficient understanding. Students are more likely to come up with questions when they do the reviewing on their own. Highly motivated students tend to work in groups outside the class, and I believe that this induces their more active participation in class.

Exercises

In LNG101, I prepare exercises for all of the five subfields in linguistics listed above. The basic format of all exercises is to analyze the given linguistic data and answer questions. Students are asked to provide

answers as well as detailed explanations of how they reach their answers. I try to swiftly deal with students' questions by e-mail and/or appointment. I let students know that I even give out answers if students cannot reach them. What is important is how students explain their answers. If they know what is going on in the exercise, they should be able to explain it well. For one set of exercises, I expect students to submit their answers in 5-10 pages, but some serious students turn in more detailed answers that often exceed 20 pages.

Submission of the exercises is optional. That is, no points are deducted if students decide not to submit their answers and explanations. Usually, the submission rate is over 80% and 30-40% of the submitted exercises exceed my expectations. Those who do not turn in these exercises tend to be passive participants, and it is not rare for them to drop out. I only accept completed assignments with all the questions answered and detailed explanation properly given. All submitted assignments are assumed to have the expected answers with clear and logical explanations. I ask students to show me their perfect understanding of the material, not how much they understood.

Like reviewing, I advise students to work on the exercises together with classmates. It often happens that students come up with answers when working together to questions that appeared too difficult to them when working alone. Also, students sometimes recognize their lack of understanding or their proper understanding when they try to explain to someone else something that they thought they understood. I can imagine that students experience that they improve their understanding by trying to explain well to others what is really going on in the given linguistic data. So in LNG101, one might say that most of the group works are held outside the classroom.

Encouraging students to work with classmates does not mean that they can submit the same answers. Students must write their own answers and explanations by using their own examples and expressions. Since I made these assignments optional, no students submit their assignments by copying someone else's. Also, the quality of the submitted assignments has improved immensely, which means that grading them became easier. The whole point of these exercises is to let students spend some substantial time to write down their detailed logical

explanation. I do not accept partially answered incomplete exercises.

These exercises also serve as a tool of communication with students. I urge students to write down questions and comments on their assignments as well. Some students express uncertainty about their answers or other additional ideas they come up with, and so on. I try to reply to all these messages from students while I grade the exercises. By submitting these exercises, students can earn extra credits, which could make up mistakes on the mid-term and final exams. The final grade is calculated based on the performance on the two exams alone if no exercises are submitted. For each assignment, 3 extra points will be given if the submitted assignment shows sufficient and appropriate understanding of the material. For higher quality answers, more points will be given depending on how excellent they are. Students could get 5 or 6 extra points for each assignment (the total of five sets of assignments), and they could earn extra points by taking these assignments seriously.

Agreement with Students in LNG101

I ask students in LNG101 to agree on something. In this course, it is important for students to

participate eagerly, work hard on the exercises, and become able to analyze various languages on their own. Since the core materials are basically the same every year, it is possible for students to get information about answers to the assignments and exams from those who have already taken this course and try to earn a better grade. However, students do not become able to do linguistic analyses this way. It is important for students to think together, struggle together, and understand together. So, I ask students to promise me not to try to get information on the previous exercises and exams and not to share such information with those who have not taken this course. Although I have no clear proof, I feel that this agreement is effective, more effective than one might think. I do admire students' sense of pride and dignity.

By the end of LNG101, those successful students, who started with little knowledge of modern linguistics, become able to analyze data in any language if they are well organized. This is a pleasure to see. Putting aside the issue of how many of these students decide to major in linguistics, I am impressed by the fact that many students do get a proper understanding of the content of this course. It is encouraging.

(English translation provided by the FD office)

Conducting Student Research Projects in a General Education Course

Hideki Okamura / Department of Material Science

1. The Meaning of Independent Research

As I have written earlier on FD Newsletter ¹⁾, most students of ICU will graduate with three credits from Natural Science department, which is the minimum requirement. I have recommended physics and other courses to many students, telling them how science is an important portion of liberal arts. But most students will hesitate to join the course, because they have been avoiding science courses all the way long. However, I believe the opportunity of liberal arts is wasted if the students graduate with no knowledge about science. This is why I have been groping for a way to come up with a course that is so full of the essence of science, where students could really learn

something about science even if this is the only course they would attend during the four years. Yes, teaching them so much in one term seems impossible. But after a long process of trial and error, I have come up with an answer. I assign an independent research project to students.

Albert Einstein once said, "Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school." I could teach humanities students various physics formulas, but most of the students would forget them completely within the year. Moreover, it is pointless to teach the students something they could look up on the Internet so easily today. What I

have to teach them is the viewpoint and the spirit of science, and how scientists think.

In Japan, universities such as Keio and Tamagawa assign students of humanities to conduct experiments. The assignments are the same with students of science, and in some cases, they are only assigned to students who show excellent effort. In my course, on the other hand, I assign every student to conduct independent research. This is a very different approach from other universities. As far as I am concerned, my course is the only case in Japan where humanities students are assigned to conduct independent “scientific” research. My course itself is a form of an experiment²⁾.

Students will go through every procedure: setting up the topic, planning of research method, and actual experiment and analysis of results. By experiencing such procedure, students will be able to treat information more scientifically, even when they are outside of the classroom. Students will ask themselves whether the information was gathered through a proper method, and how the information can be proved substantial. Even if it is impossible for the students to prove it themselves, they can at least answer they do not know.

Such an attitude is necessary in critical thinking. To make a decision concerning the information given, one must know how the decision is possible. It is impossible to ask someone who has never investigated certain matters to make a plausible decision. Such person would only resort to his/her feelings towards the information, and would easily be tricked by false information.

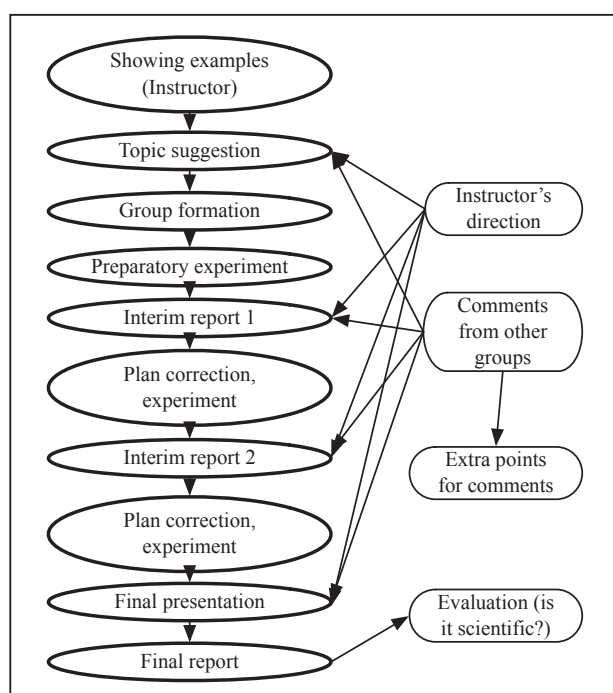
2. Actual Methods

During my course, lectures on physics are paralleled by the research project. In a general education course with large number of students, certain precautions must be taken to teach students without experience in research. Although independent research is literally conducted “independently”, I must give the students some directions to cover their lack of knowledge.

I have made a flowchart of how the project is conducted. As the first step, I will show number of examples of independent research. It is normal for the students at this point to doubt if they could conduct such thorough research on their own. In the next step, students are to come up with several ideas for their research. However, they would need some time to

come up with a realistic idea. The students will be grouped accordingly to their interests, and discuss each other’s ideas repeatedly. By letting them come up with the idea by a certain deadline, students will pay attention to their surroundings, and start asking questions about how various things happen the way they do.

The results of the research seem to be more plausible if I respect their autonomy and let them choose their own topics. The students will put in more effort if the topic concerns their own interest. Therefore, the topics do not always revolve around physics. The point of this research is to conduct a scientific research with a scientific framework rather than understanding physical phenomena. Typical experiments of physics with correct answers to discover are not suitable here. Students are to come up with an original experiment with no right answers. The originality of the topic must be checked by searching the web. The group discussion of the students must be conducted via Moodle, so the instructor may monitor the process, and make necessary suggestions. In the early stage, the students must make an interim report. A preparatory experiment must be conducted before the report, even if the students are not yet sure of the process. The interim report must include a research plan based on the preparatory experiment. The audience will make comments on the groups’ presentation, and the comment sheets will be handed over to the group at



the end of class. Through such exchanges, students will be able to clarify the issues that are to be addressed, and what sort of experiment must be conducted to reach a plausible result. By doing so, they will gradually become able to take a scientific approach towards the topic, which will lead to proper research planning, conducting of the experiment, and conclusion following the analysis.

The research topic and group members are not fixed. After the preparatory experiment, students may change the topic. By listening to the presentation of other groups, students could find clues for their own topic, while they exchange constructive comments with each other. The groups must cooperate with each other, but they are rivals at the same time. The existence of other groups should fuel their own researches. On Moodle, students may not only review the discussion of their own group, but also those of other groups, and may even make a comment on them. The instructor will reward such constructive commitment with extra points.

I let the students know that evaluation will be made upon the final report. This will let the students realize that their interim report does not have to be perfect. Students are aware that interim report is merely a chance to share with the class what their research is about, and an occasion to participate in profitable discussion.

It is more effective to have several interim reports as long as the schedule permits. In my course, the students will make two interim reports. By the second time, students are already familiar with each other's topic, and they are more interested to know how the experiments have played out. I believe this method is helping in improving the classroom's atmosphere.

Through these procedures, students will, for the first time in their lives, realize what it is like to get to the bottom of the problem. Students will also learn that experiments may be designed accordingly with what they would like to know, and that each phenomenon has various aspects to it. Students will know that experiments must be carefully crafted to yield a plausible result (humanities students without the experience tend to think results are instantly found through an experiment), and that conclusion may be reached through an experiment only in certain conditions. Moreover, they will learn that scientific discussion is totally different from the methods they

already know.

Student research project may not fulfill its purpose if the students are simply satisfied with the fact that they have conducted a research singlehandedly. The feedback from the instructor is crucial. Students must recognize how certain parts of their research are not conducted scientifically, and how certain logics are erroneous. Without this step, the class will not be effective enough. Such feedbacks made on interim reports and other occasions must be stressed as a "constructive opinion", because sometimes the students could take critical opinions personally. Some students will feel uncomfortable, but since interim reports are not graded, the students will understand in the end that feedbacks are only meant as suggestions in hope of better future results.

3. Closing Remark

I have shared above my method of letting the students conduct independent research in a general education course, a method I have been working on, and trying to make it better through the years. At the end of a course, a student of mine has written this on a comment sheet: "I have learned that this is a different method. Now I know it is not about finding useful materials just to prove my point." I believe this proves that the course have helped the students to some extent in understanding what scientific framework is all about.

Although the course lasts only for a term, I hope my students will acquire a new viewpoint, a viewpoint of science, through their experience of conducting a scientific research. This viewpoint should help them throughout their lives to make the right decisions. And if this is true, the goal of this course is reached, as in the words of Einstein. Most of the students will pursue their career outside of science. I hope they will make use of what they have learned through the research project in their respectable fields.

Number of experiments can be seen online:

<http://subsite.icu.ac.jp/people/okamura/education/ge/projects/>

Notes:

- 1) Hideki Okamura, FD Newsletter Vol. 15, No.2 (2011).
- 2) Hideki Okamura, "Experimental Introduction of Laboratory Work into a General Education Course", the Proceedings of the 69th Autumn Meeting of Japan Society of Applied Physics, 3a-P9-5 (2008).

(English translation provided by the FD office)

Why is “Introduction to Christianity” so Interesting, Even When the Class is Big and Mandatory?

Anri Morimoto / Department of Philosophy and Religion

Introduction

Attend all class meetings. Do not be late, because it would bother other students. I do not conduct a class that is unnecessary to attend. Now that you are ICU students, do not act like the students in other universities in Japan. Only Japanese students are spoiled enough to skip classes, for which they (their parents) have paid a large tuition. Well, you are not to compete with such people. During the course, you are going to face challenges from me and fellow students. So be ready for it.

I wrote this on the syllabus for “Introduction to Christianity” last year. It is the only mandatory course at ICU, where approximately 160 students attend each term. There are five or six classes offered each year; one of them is conducted in English. Although rare for a general education course, part-time lecturers from outside of ICU also teach the course. Of course, it is a very difficult task to choose the outside lecturers.

I can never emphasize enough that this is the only mandatory course at ICU. Students are not allowed to graduate without passing this course. And this calls for a great sense of responsibility on part of the lecturers, because this course is a signature of ICU.

For many students, naturally, this course is something they “have to go through”. Every term, however, there are ten or so auditors in my class. They have already earned the credit, but still sit in the class out of their free will. Some attend for the second or third time to see how much they have matured in the last couple of years, by comparing their own reactions towards the course.

There are no chatters in my class. Most students keep their eyes forward and think hard. Any teacher should recognize that earnest look on their face. It is the face that is intently looking for answers, in order to meet the intellectual challenge they are engaged in.

I would like to introduce some tools that help to manage such large course efficiently. These insights

come from 20 years of experience, and I sincerely hope that other instructors would find them useful to improve their teaching styles and mine as well.

1. Student Survey

I begin each course by conducting a survey. This helps me to learn about the students, and the students to learn about each other. Since I have done this for more than 10 years, this survey can also be seen as a fixed-point observation of ICU students. I ask them questions such as “Do you have any particular religious beliefs?” “Have you ever received any religious education?” and “What are your impressions on religion as a whole and Christianity in particular?” The answers to these questions are available on my website. I personally find the answers to the last question “Do you have anything else to say?” most interesting. Please take a moment to have a look at: <http://subsite.icu.ac.jp/people/morimoto/syllabi.html>

There are many “hidden Christians” at ICU. In my survey, approximately 10-15% of the students claim that they are Christians. This is more than tenfold of the average in Japanese population. For the 90% of the students who are not Christians, such fact is already stimulating.

I also ask the students to register a nickname in this survey, along with their class year and major. I only disclose their nicknames on my website to protect their privacy. Students often come up with such unique nicknames that I remember them not by their real names but by the nicknames long after their graduation.

2. Question Sheet

The students also use their nickname to ask questions during the class. Unlike the ICU’s standard “comment sheet”, I prefer my own “question sheet”. Because there is not enough time to address all the questions from so many students, I ask them to write down their questions. I usually get 30-50 of them after class, to which I write a response one by one and return at the next meeting. On the sheet are three

choices: 1. I am ready to be called with my nickname during the class to discuss further on this question; 2. I feel comfortable with sharing my question(s) in the classroom under my nickname; 3. I prefer my question(s) not to be mentioned during class. I find this method useful for encouraging students to participate actively in the classroom discussion, especially when they hesitate to stand up in class.

I begin each class session by introducing several questions from the students. If possible, I will ask some students to restate or elaborate the questions they have posed. Sometimes this will lead to other comments and questions from the classroom, which will give rise to an ad-hoc discussion on the spot. I find questions with doubts and criticisms particularly valuable for educational purposes, because these often result in rich discussion. If the question anticipates the content of my next lecture, this proves that class is running smooth, and students and I are on the same wavelength. These discussions may last 20 to 30 minutes. Such freedom could be a perquisite to this course that does not stress accumulation and communication of knowledge.

3. Attendance Sheet

I am aware of the fact that my class is called “An-Chri” (Anri-Chri) in the ICU jargon, instead of the usual “In-Chri”. Many students and alumni have told me that they never “got through the drawing process”. I myself wish I had a chance to spend the time with more students. However, this does not mean I am an easy grader (average GPA for my class is around 2.7). About 10% of the students will receive an E, which means they fail not by pre-registration drawing but by their own performance in the class.

Some students fail for their attendance. I rely on my “attendance sheet” when teaching a large class. This is a simple list of student names that goes around the classroom. The students are required to sign their name on it. Naturally, they could cheat with help from their friends. But once I explain that “signature” is a sincere act of contract that takes their personal integrity, most students respect it. If not, 10% of the students would not fail the course.

The attendance sheet is used to promote attendance, so I sometimes warn the students that the sheet will circulate during the next class. But again, I sometimes don’t. I circulate the attendance sheet six times during the course. If a student fails to sign on it for

three occasions, that student will automatically receive an E (three-strike out). I explain this policy at the beginning of the course, and it is clearly stated on the syllabus. I make no exceptions to this policy, even if the student was ill, or had to attend job interviews or teaching practices. In such cases, the student should try to make full attendance for the rest of the course. Failing both, the student cannot fulfill the essential goal of the course, and he or she must re-register.

The crucial part of the class is to share the questions and answers that are communicated during the class. Therefore, making up for a class missed is virtually impossible. Different fields of study might have different conditions, but in my view, a class is unnecessary if reading books can substitute for it.

The bottom line, as I mentioned earlier, is to make the course intriguing. If the course is interesting enough, students will attend with or without the attendance sheet. And that is exactly why some students would eagerly audit the course for no credit.

4. Informed Discussion

ICU Students like to have discussions, but discussions must be more than casual chatting; they must be “informed discussions,” if they are to be part of the curriculum. Here is a way to urge students to do homework and to come to the class prepared. First, you ask students to read the material, and type up a comment on the upper half of an A4 sheet. During the discussion, students will manually add new discoveries on the bottom half of the sheet. Give grades only to the sheets with two sections. Use the last figure of their ID number to make 10 sub-groups of students, and spread them to different corners of the classroom. It would be necessary to reserve an extra classroom.

5. Class Content

Although this is not an occasion to share the actual content of my class, I would like to underscore that the course is not designed to teach the Bible or Christian doctrines. Some of the students who come from high schools affiliated with Christianity will quickly realize that this is a class radically different from their high school experience. “Introduction to Christianity” at ICU serves as an opportunity to pose questions to one’s own presuppositions and common sense. I never engage in proselytization, for this will have an adverse effect. Students will face the

challenge, both intellectual and essential. Religious beliefs and world-views are deeply connected with their identities, yet they seldom question these matters. I hope the students will become able to acquire versatile view towards them.

Strengthening the skills of critical thinking is crucial in doing so. Critical thinking is about being critical towards one's own thinking rather than that of others. So for Christians, this would mean re-examination of their own religious beliefs, while for the majority of students it would mean re-examining their own assumptions of being non-religious.

Some students are warned by their good-will church pastors back home to be "careful of ICU's Christianity". They think my understanding of Christianity is too liberal and potentially dangerous to the faith they have cultivated for long in their young members. But I sincerely hope that students will nurture a strong faith of their own that will help them survive the treacherous current of this world. They must be ready to encounter the criticisms towards their faith. Faith becomes stronger through grappling with skepticism and criticism.

Understanding other religions like Shinto,

Buddhism and Muslim is also important in knowing Christianity better. "One knows nothing of language if one knows only one language." Likewise, "one knows nothing of religion if one knows only one religion".

A Closing Remark

I welcome anybody who is interested in my class. You don't even have to make an appointment. Just hop in. Your comments during the class are even more welcome. One new faculty member has attended my course throughout the term.

Although I do not use it in "Introduction to Christianity", I find Moodle efficient in middle-sized classes. I have written a report with practical hints in using the various features of Moodle, such as distributing materials, group discussions, presentations, pop quiz, and evaluation process. You can read the whole paper online, which includes actual screenshots and student evaluations from my course.

森本あんり「ICT 活用による自発的学習者の育成」、私立大学情報教育協会『大学教育と情報』Vol.20, No.1 (June, 2011): 19-21.

http://www.juce.jp/LINK/journal/1103/03_02.html

(English translation provided by the FD office)

Issues in Teaching Specialized Courses with Students of Various Majors

Tomiko Yamaguchi / Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Introduction

This newsletter focuses on "teaching large classes". I will interpret this as "teaching specialized courses with comparatively large number of students who have different majors", and share the ideas from my experience. My interpretation above could be a slight departure from what was intended, but I believe the balance between teaching basic and specialized concepts in courses with comparatively large number of students is important in all kinds of courses, may it be general education, foundation, or specialized course. Also, many of the exchanges made between the instructor and the students during specialized courses are in various ways similar to those made during general education and foundation

courses with large number of students. For this reason, I think my interpretation above is of some value. I would like to discuss how we should explore the teaching of specialized courses in the context of liberal arts education.

Now that the topic has been justified, I would like to move on. Today I would like to share with you the example of "SOC309 Sociology of Science and Technology", which I am currently teaching. This course is offered every year for three units, and is conducted in Japanese. In the recent years 20 to 30 students register for this class, and most of them are juniors and seniors. Students are from various backgrounds. Some of them are sociology majors,

while others are interested in education, media and society, environmental studies, or biology. For some students, Japanese is not their native tongue. I usually allocate the course in three consecutive periods. In ten weeks, two examples will be studied, while two rounds of lectures, exercises, and presentations take place.

The goal of this course is to: 1. acquire an ability to understand scientific papers written on the topic of sociology of science and technology; 2. acquire an ability to discover scientific “truth” and its credibility; and 3. acquire an ability to reflect on one’s own value. The theme of the course is as follows:

In this course, we take examples from the debates concerning science and technology to discuss the relationship between the two within our society. We will look into topics such as “genetically modified food” and “nuclear power plants” to ponder on various issues lying on the border between science, technology, and society. The students are asked to collect data and organize the essential points accordingly to the role assigned (pro/con, a scientist/a citizen/an administrator, etc.). The progress of the discussion will be recorded throughout the class, in order for the students to be able to reflect upon the opinion of the others as well as those of themselves.

(From the syllabus of SOC309, 2012 winter term)

The students will face specialized concepts such as “governance”, “specialized and field knowledge”, “risk society”, “public participation”, and “asymmetric social relation”. At the same time, I try to help them acquire various abilities that are promoted through the liberal arts of ICU, such as “ability to find and solve the problem”, “ability to think critically in order to discover the truth”, and “flexible thinking that is free from the preconceived ideas”. I ask my students to discover the sociality of “scientific facts” that are accepted in our society, and how they are deemed “facts”.

Course Outline

To make those abstract goals into something more familiar, I focus on two examples every year. This year, my choices were “genetically modified food” and “nuclear power plant”. In the field of sociology of

science and technology, many studies have been done on topics such as BSE, foot-and-mouth disease, HIV-tainted blood scandal, and accidents during the space development. I am looking forward to use these topics in the near future as well. During the class, students will be divided into 5 or 6 groups, with certain identity assigned to them. For example, in the case of genetically modified food, some groups will take the position of “pro” while other groups will be on the side of “con”. In the case of nuclear power plant, on the other hand, some groups will state “we ought to buy and consume food products from the Tohoku region”, while other groups will state “we do not wish to eat such products, because it could be radioactive”. I don’t take into consideration the students’ personal beliefs when assigning them into groups, because I want them to realize that they are bound with their own identities all the time. From what I have seen thus far, I think the students become more aware of their identity when they are assigned with sets of values that contradict their own.

As I mentioned above, the class consists of lectures, exercises, and presentations. The students must read academic papers concerned with the current example they are working on, or other related materials prior to the lecture. With this as a premise, the lecture will propose an outline and issues of the examples. Sometimes a guest speaker is invited to provide key concepts. During the exercise, the students will gather ideas, information, and other data from the lecture as well as their own readings to come up with the necessary evidence that suits their assigned identity. The evidence will be shared with other members of the group to enrich the discussion between different groups. The group will suggest their views in connection with sociological theories, while presenting data to support their validity. After the group discussion, one member will be selected from each group to attend the panel discussion that will be held during the last period of exercise. Here, the facts discovered will be pointed out, and be designated from other factors that are not factual. By reflecting upon how certain facts would affect the discussion, and how that affect is shaped, the credibility of each “facts” is put to test.

To some, the exercise above could seem very similar to a debate. The difference between this exercise and debate is that, while debates focus on the examination of facts in order to prevail at the

discussion, our exercise focuses more on the building of an argument in connection to sociological theories. For example, we make use of concepts such as “an asymmetric social relationship” to interpret the standpoint and suggestion of each group, and a proper story must be structured within the framework of sociology. This story will be held accountable for other groups. The point of the exercise is not winning the discussion, but it is to recognize how facts and preconceived ideas that seemed so “obvious” could be doubted, and how one’s beliefs could be altered once doing so. This exercise, therefore, is quite different from an ordinary debate.

However, there are many issues to be addressed if I am to manage the class in this way. As I mentioned earlier, although this is a specialized course, many

students have different majors. This means the students have been educated in different foundation courses, and many of them are not ready to look at the matters from the scope of sociology. Of course, I am not saying that some students are better than others. What confuses me often is how far I should delve into specialized concepts, and how far should I try to break down these concepts so the students could understand them more easily. Although I have conducted this course for many years, I must confess that I am still not comfortable with this matter. The focus could be even more blurred if more students are to join the course. And I am sure that many instructors are experiencing a similar issue. I hope to find clues to solve this through discussing it with my colleagues.

(English translation provided by the FD office)

Report on the FD Seminar (December 18, 2012) : Support for Special Needs Students

Richard L. Wilson / FD Director

“I do hope this paper becomes a starting point to open up new ways to think of our embodiment.”

With these modest words, Prof. Minae INAHARA began one of the most informative and moving presentations in the recent history of our Seminar on Special Needs Students. Prof. Inahara, currently the Uehiro Research Fellow at The University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy, conjoined feminist theories of embodiment with physical disability. Feminist theories describe how female and homosexual bodies are considered as improper bodies and female and homosexual subjects are socio-culturally treated as improper subjects. Disability is a set of categories derived from a “medical model” which takes “normative ways of being” as an absolute. “Legal, medical, and governmental discourses pathologize both female and disabled bodies as something to be controlled.”

Prof. Inahara points out the fragility of this model (the normative is a form of anxiety over its very impossibility), and argues for an understanding of disability as a contestation of these “normative ways”. This is not simply an intellectual position. Inahara reminds us that “disability comes about not only to others, but in both the margins and at the center of ourselves.” “People need to understand that we are all vulnerable, because we all have our bodies which always have the possibility of being ill or disabled”. In other words, Inahara is asking us to interrogate what normal really is—to consider life through the multiple perspectives of disabled and abled.

Prof. Inahara has cerebral palsy. She has trouble holding herself steady and speech is an act of work and concentration. But her life and work merge into a message about creative difference and human possibility: “be a part of life because you are also life.” This has much to offer a community like ICU, which aspires to diversity in the best sense of the word.