

## **Research Forum**

### **Evaluation of an English Language Day**

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#### **1. Introduction**

Osaka Jogakuin Junior College (OJJC) is a small two-year college with one major, English. From May 1972 to May 1991, the college conducted an off-campus overnight Spring English Seminar for incoming first-year students. During the seminar, students and teachers were to use only English. Activities included songs, games, small group discussions, skits, hiking, group story telling, in addition to breakfast and dinner with teachers. Over the years, a number of students commented in graduation questionnaires that the Spring Seminar was one of the highlights of their school life.

However, after 1991, the decision was made to cancel the seminar the following spring and establish a new on-campus English program, an English language day. Inspiration for a revised program come from a number of language fair events held in the United States. These programs varied from a single day to an entire summer and included "festive" activities designed to promote enthusiastic target language study and use (Conner, 1977; Ervin, 1976; Griswold, 1983; Schrum, 1983; Schrum 1985). Review of these programs led to a decision to create a modified language fair at OJJC with the following goals: (a) to increase the use and enjoyment of English; (b) to introduce students to the campus and its learning resources; (c) to introduce students to each other and to teachers; (d) to prepare students for English study at the college; (e) to reduce teacher fatigue.

Months of planning and material development went into the English language day, which was named "Passport to English." During each of three days, approximately 120 students participated in the program. Students were divided into eight groups, with about 15 students in each group for the day. Seven activities were arranged so that the incoming students would begin by getting acquainted and progress to more challenging English use. Groups moved around the campus and met different teachers for each activity during the 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. program.

## 2. The Program

Activities were designed to correspond to the program goals. The linguistic demands were considered appropriate for the general level of first year students. The following is a brief summary of the activities used. In some cases, more than one task was available, allowing teachers to select those of interest to them.

### *Activity 1: Getting to Know You*

1. Handshakes: Students and teachers mixed to shake hands and introduce themselves, formally and informally (Frank & Rinvoluceri, 1983).
2. Line-up Game: Students lined up according to their birth dates and other criteria.
3. Find Someone Who: Students searched for someone who met the criteria for various questions.

### *Activity 2: Getting Directions*

1. Rhythm in English: Students practiced getting and giving directions (Molinsky, Bliss, & Graham, 1989) and completed an information gap map.
2. Sim-Town: Students formed a simulated town and gave directions.

### *Activity 3: Getting to Know You Better*

1. Forced Choices: Students were given two alternatives, such as "cat—dog," moved to a group with others who made the same choice, and explained their choice (Frank & Rinvoluceri, 1983).
2. Opinions: Students completed a values questionnaire and gave opinions.
3. Complete the Statement: Students finished a series of open-ended statements (Richard-Amato, 1988).

### *Activity 4: Treasure Hunt*

Students followed clues posted around the campus to find information needed to complete an answer sheet. Students were given 70 minutes to visit areas such as: the computer lab, to get information from computers; the learning resource center, to get information from audio and video tapes; and the library, to gather information from various sections. Prizes were awarded for speed and accuracy.

*Activity 5: Picture Stories*

1. Jigsaw Pictures: Students reassembled pieces of two pictures.
2. Story Telling: Students selected one of the jigsaw pictures, made up a story, and told it to other students (Ur, 1988).

*Activity 6: Puzzle Stories*

1. Scrambled Words: Students assembled scrambled words to make sentences which were shared.
2. Scrambled Sentences: Students assembled scrambled sentences to make stories (Yorkey, 1985).

*Activity 7: Acting it Out*

1. Again with Feeling: Students repeated a sentence to express different feelings.
2. Across the Room: Pairs simultaneously shouted across the room to get information from their partners.
3. Role Play: Students were given a scene to act out (Sadow, 1982).

These activities helped students to become acquainted, familiarized them with the campus, and gave them chances to use English for fun.

Finally, a unifying aspect for the program was the use of a **passport**, carried by all students, which included the schedule. After completing each activity, students received a flag sticker in their passports showing that they had participated. This was similar to the “*Schlumpf*stamp in their passports” given students in one language fair, a New Jersey German immersion weekend (Oberding & Magee-Onofrietto, 1982, p 357).

### **3. Participants' Evaluation of the Program**

*Method:* Evaluation of the Passport to English program was accomplished in two ways. Students were asked to complete a questionnaire which evaluated how the program met its goals and recorded their attitudes toward the individual activities. In addition, teachers were asked to respond to a questionnaire evaluating the effectiveness of activities which they had taught. The student questionnaire was administered in Japanese, while the questionnaire to the teachers was in English.

*The Student Questionnaire:* A total of 248 of the 360 students completed and returned the questionnaire—67 of the first-day students, 63 of the second-day students, and 118 of the third-day students. Responses were tabulated separately, allowing evaluation of the effectiveness of each day's program, as well as the effectiveness of the entire program. In addition, students evaluated

the individual Passport to English activities on a five-point scale, answering "How useful was each of the activities?" and "How enjoyable was each of the activities?" Translation difficulties prevented the questionnaire from being ready in time for immediate administration to students on days one and two. These two groups answered the questionnaire on the day following the program's completion. Students who participated in day three answered the questionnaire immediately after the close of the program.

*The Teacher Questionnaire:* Fourteen teachers taught during the program, with some teachers covering only one or two activities, while others taught up to six. The ten questions which teachers answered dealt with the effectiveness and interest of the various activities and the program itself.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

*Student Questionnaire Results:* Students responded to the following general "yes-no" questions (percentage of positive responses are given in parentheses):

1. Did you become more familiar with the OJJC teaching staff? (77%)
2. Did you become more familiar with other students? (88%)
3. Did you become more familiar with the campus and classrooms at OJJC? (67%)
4. Did you become more familiar with using English? (40%)

Students rated each of the seven activities according to usefulness or enjoyment on a six-point scale. Ratings 1, 2, and 3 were considered positive, while 4, 5, and 6 were considered negative. "How useful was each activity?" elicited 81-85% positive responses for the various activities. "How enjoyable was each activity?" elicited 78-85% positive responses.

Space was also provided for student comments. Students reported that they had generally enjoyed the program (14), but had found it very tiring (19). In other comments, students reported feeling nervous about their ability to speak (22), feeling that they wanted to try harder to speak English (12), and feeling that they could speak better because of the program (4). Students also suggested creating smaller groups (2), making the program more individual (1), having two days instead of one (1), and giving pre-practice activities (1). All student comments were made in Japanese.

*Student Questionnaire Discussion:* Student response to the day-long program can be seen as broadly positive in terms of "how useful" and "how enjoyable" each of the activities was. Considering the "usefulness" of activities, the majority of the students found them either extremely useful or very useful.

When the “useful” ratings are included with the first two responses, the approval rating rises to more than 80 percent for each of the activities. Similar results were obtained regarding the enjoyability of each activity. More than 50 percent found the activities either “very enjoyable” or “extremely enjoyable.” When these figures are combined with the third category, “enjoyable,” the approval rating again reaches more than 80 percent for all but two activities.

However, the responses to the “yes/no” questions indicate that there was a slightly negative perception of how well the program met the goal of helping students become more familiar with English. This was especially true for students who did not answer the questionnaire immediately after the program, strongly indicating that while some level of success was initially perceived, it was not maintained. Results recorded after a period of reflection may indicate more realistically the program’s effectiveness.

In response to the “yes/no” question, “Did you become more familiar with the OJJC teaching staff?” most students (77%) answered “yes.” However, a day-by-day breakdown indicated that students who completed the questionnaire at a later date did not feel as strongly that they were more familiar with the teachers. This can also be seen in the response to the question “Did you become more familiar with other students?” Overall more than 80 percent responded positively or neutrally. However, there was a larger number of “no” responses among those who had a waiting period—14.3 and 13.4 percent, as opposed to 7.6 percent for those given the questionnaire immediately following the program.

Ratings for familiarity with the campus were also not as high as had been anticipated. Regardless of the day of attendance, more than 30 percent of the students responded negatively. Earlier orientation tours, taken by all students, may account for this.

The activities themselves generally received positive reviews from the participants. The approval rating for all activities, as measured by the number who selected “extremely useful/very useful” or “extremely enjoyable/very enjoyable,” was more than 50 percent. This increases to 80 percent when the number who viewed the activity as “useful/enjoyable” is taken into consideration. However, not all activities received uniformly high ratings; indeed, some activities received more than 15 percent disapproval, indicating need for further revision and improvement of the program.

*Teacher Questionnaire Results:* Teachers evaluated activities they taught on a five-point scale, from 1 (poor) to 5 (very good) for each of 10 questions. Ratings of 1 or 2 were considered as negative, 3 as neutral, and 4 or 5 as

positive. The questions follow. Average response rates for all of the activities—except 4, the Treasure Hunt—and the response rate for each activity are given in parentheses.

1. Did the activity prepare students for classes? (3.8)  
(1 = 3.9; 2 = 3.2; 3 = 4.0; 5 = 3.8; 6 = 3.4; 7 = 4.4)
2. Did students become better acquainted during the activity? (3.8)  
(1 = 4.5; 2 = 3.0; 3 = 4.4; 5 = 3.6; 6 = 3.1; 7 = 4.5)
3. Was the activity stimulating and enjoyable? (3.9)  
(1 = 4.1; 2 = 3.6; 3 = 4.3; 5 = 3.6; 6 = 3.3; 7 = 4.6)
4. Did the activity promote student cooperation? (4.0)  
(1 = 3.8; 2 = 3.6; 3 = 4.0; 5 = 4.2; 6 = 4.1; 7 = 4.1)
5. Did you as a teacher become better acquainted with students? (3.5)  
(1 = 3.1; 2 = 2.9; 3 = 4.8; 5 = 3.3; 6 = 2.8; 7 = 4.4)
6. Did the materials help promote English use by the students? (4.2)  
(1 = 4.2; 2 = 4.6; 3 = 4.4; 5 = 4.1; 6 = 3.4; 7 = 4.7)
7. Did the materials interest the students? (3.8)  
(1 = 4.0; 2 = 3.3; 3 = 3.8; 5 = 3.6; 6 = 3.3; 7 = 4.6)
8. Were the materials well prepared? (4.2)  
(1 = 4.8; 2 = 4.3; 3 = 3.9; 5 = 3.8; 6 = 3.6; 7 = 4.6)
9. Were the directions to the teacher easy to follow? (4.4)  
(1 = 4.4; 2 = 3.6; 3 = 4.6; 5 = 4.6; 6 = 4.6; 7 = 4.6)
10. Were the directions to the students easily understandable? (4.5)  
(1 = 4.6; 2 = 3.9; 3 = 4.6; 5 = 4.7; 6 = 4.6; 7 = 4.5)

The average rating for each activity on all 10 questions was 1 = 4.1; 2 = 3.6; 3 = 4.3; 5 = 3.9; 6 = 3.6; 7 = 4.5

*Teacher Questionnaire Discussion.* The teachers involved in the activities were generally positive about the program, but found some problems. These included difficulty in understanding the directions to teachers for some activities, the impression that it did not further acquaint students and teachers, and the sense that there was too much to do during the allotted time. Teacher concerns also need to be addressed in program revision. Most important is the need to clarify or replace some activities.

## 5. Conclusions

On-campus programs may indeed prove to be more useful for students than overnight English language camps. In an effective program, the activities need to be organized and sequenced in a way that encourages use of English, allows for student success, and increases enjoyment. While the program outlined here can not be considered an unqualified success, it can be used as

a model for similar programs at colleges—and perhaps even high schools—in Japan. With proper planning, careful implementation, and a mixture of enthusiastic teachers and students, the English language day can be a useful introduction to the use of English and to a campus. As well as being an alternative to an exhausting overnight program, the English language day provides a useful new program for any institution.

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