

Curricular Development for Global Education

Mark TAYLOR

Institute for General Education, University of Hyogo

Abstract

This paper reports on curricular development of the Global Leader Education Unit (GLEU), a pilot course for freshmen at the University of Hyogo. The course was begun on a trial basis at the university's East campus in Kobe in the fall term of 2012. It is divided into two classes: Seminar I, an e-learning class, and Seminar II, a somewhat unique lecture environment. The course was charged with meeting the academic needs of its students from three different schools: the schools of Economics, Business, and Nursing. The program has since expanded and the course is now offered at the West campus, Shosha, in Himeji. Here too the course must fit the needs of a diverse student population of twenty from three different schools: the schools of Engineering, Science, and Environment & Human Science. Two key features of the curriculum stand out even as we continue its development in GLEU's Seminar II at the Shosha campus, namely the guest speaker visit and the use of protocols for engaging students in activities of inquiry. We suppose these two components might help reframe our thinking about the university English curriculum in this age of globalization.

1. Key questions

The public education sector at all levels in Japan, from elementary schools to university is responding to the phenomena of globalization in one form or another. The University of Hyogo's new Global Leader Education Unit (GLEU) is one such response. At a meeting on the Kobe campus last summer, the GLEU planning committee sat down to work out the details for the coming term. The course at the Kobe campus would begin its second year. At the Shosha campus, with a different student body and entirely different course of studies, it would be a new start. Over the course of the summer's discussions, three key questions, among others, were put on the table.

1. How can the GLEU English curriculum support education reform initiatives *across the disciplines*?
2. How can the university make its appeal as an international hub of activity?
3. What is the scope of the long-term GLEU program? That is, how will it continue to engage participants after the first year?

Surprisingly, to consider curricular questions of class content and activity for a global education from this administrative perspective, outside the classroom, sheds light on what the university has at stake in the program and also reveals what in the university system might tend to resist or impede the very changes called for. To cut to the chase, the culprit here is specialization, the tendency for schools and departments to go about their work in relative isolation. Specialization has seen the creation of boundaries which in turn restrict the flow of information across the disciplines. The GLEU program then must be an interdisciplinary pro-

ject, one that invigorates the flow of information between and among schools and departments (Taylor 2012). Furthermore, if the program is to be global in scope, it must connect students with real-world events. Although the university, through its research activity, is itself connected to this outside world, students in the classroom remain for the most part isolated from it, attending rather to the information on the pages of their textbooks, the blackboard, the powerpoint slide. Granted, the information might be new, even relevant, but will remain as inert knowledge unless acted upon.

The curriculum must engage the student. Rather than learn *about*, the student must learn *to do*. On this point, the university with its technical and research engagement in community and industry at local, national, and international levels, would seem ideally situated to offer apprenticeship opportunities to the student in these very activities of research. Thus framed, GLEU course content and activity will necessarily depart from that of the traditional lecture class in the sciences which tends to be information-heavy and directed one-way via the lecturer, with students at the receiving end. The GLEU class will more resemble a seminar where teacher and students discuss key ideas and matters of mutual importance. At other times it will resemble a workshop where participants learn from one another's experience and know-how while sharing ideas and information for purposes of accomplishing a shared goal.

With such considerations in mind, GLEU at the Shosha campus has been organized to offer the student a range of learning experiences combined in one course consisting of two 90-minute seminars held back-to-back. Following is from the syllabus to appear in the university's 2015-16 course catalog.

Seminar I

- *An e-learning component for developing TOEIC test-taking skills.
- *A talk forum with invited community and industry leaders.
- *Online investigation and collaborative activity relevant to coursework.
- *Individual and group work in preparation for Seminar II or class projects.

Seminar II Conducted in 3-week cycles with each cycle including the following:

- *Talk, interview, and discussion with a university researcher, hosted by students.
- *Group work simulating real-world communication among colleagues in multi-cultural settings (collaborative conversation, discussion, presentation).
- *Individual work on an inquiry theme of your choice.
- *Ongoing project work linking your inquiry interest with that of other students in the class in preparation for the public presentation series at the end of the term.

Note: The course name has been changed to Introduction to Global Communication.

Two instructors each teach one seminar. One research assistant (RA) assists in both.

The two back-to-back seminars, though intensive, provided a sense of cohesion to the work in the course, as did the 3-week cycle of Seminar II. It will be argued below that this structuring, in operation with two key curricular elements of Seminar II, a guest speaker system and use of protocols, each with supporting activities relevant to one another, contributed to students' sustained efforts in their individual inquiry activity.

2. The guest speaker class

Seminar II begins with a two-week introduction. This includes, in the second week, pair and group work utilizing an interview protocol on the topic of personal research interest. This

protocol will be used in the guest speaker class. The guest speaker class initiates a three-week cycle to be repeated twice with two invited speakers.

In the first week of the cycle, students host discussion with a visiting professor. As a homework assignment given the previous week, a group of students from the invited professor's school have investigated and prepared questions about his or her research interest and activity. With the interview protocol as a guide, the group has decided among themselves who will ask what questions. The interview is followed by the professor's talk, given informally with slides prepared by the professor. The professor shares with us his or her experience and thoughts on research, giving us the 'inside story'. This story, spoken from personal experience with a passion for the subject, provides a human and social context to the topic of research, engaging students cognitively and affectively with it. At the conclusion of the talk, the host students conduct a question and answer session with the rest of the class participating as audience. Both students acting as hosts and those acting as audience are encouraged to use a Q&A Session protocol in their respective roles.

The entire class is conducted in English, the L2 or second language, of both the professor and students. There are moments when communication breaks down, followed by some form of on-the-spot repair. Such impromptu negotiation is a fundamental and natural interactional achievement in conversation, especially important in conversation at international gatherings among people for whom English is a second or foreign language (Gardner & Wagner, 2004).

On the whole, talk in the guest speaker class, is conducted in English. The interactional demands of the situation (as two-way communication in a second language) for professor and the students, plus a commitment and enthusiasm on the part of the professor for both teaching

and the subject of research was seen to secure a level of energy that challenged and invited student response.

3. Protocols

The guest speaker class begins a conversation about research which is to be extended the following two weeks among the students themselves. Each student pursues an individual line of inquiry on a self-selected topic outside of class and brings his or her findings to class for discussion, reflection, and development through role-play activity. We've partially scripted various real-world communication events such as the Interview and Q&A Session seen previously in the guest speaker class. This script plus the event's rules of engagement are what we refer to as the 'protocol'. The protocol serves as a guide through the communication event, providing language and a means to initiate, redirect, and terminate talk, three key actions available in any open, two-way dialogue. With script in hand, plus a general understanding of what is to transpire in talk, students are otherwise left to their own devices to enact a particular communication event with one another.

Communication events from the research world we include are Elevator Talk and Poster Presentation. In the Elevator Talk scenario, the student is attending an international conference and is in the elevator on the way to the venue to make a presentation when a colleague attending the same conference steps in the elevator. The student has only a brief time to explain the presentation. "Here it is in a nutshell...!" In the Poster Presentation scenario, again the student must be succinct in his or her talk and ready to field any question directed to any part of the research, including questions that come out of left field! Other students in the role of interested colleagues viewing the posters ask questions of the presenters. These questions

can be self-selected or drawn randomly from the Poster Presentation protocol.

Much of what protocols do, as we've designed them for our purposes, is index a situation, mapping possible directions that talk might take. It is up to the student to become familiar and ready to navigate this terrain, that is, to engage with others in this conversation about research. We suppose that through iterative, somewhat chance dialogue with others on key questions and ideas, that the student will begin to establish his or her own thinking around those questions and ideas and be ready to join in on the conversation about research.

4. Making connections

Two more three-week cycles help students develop their inquiry theme. Each cycle begins with a guest speaker class and concludes with students sharing their inquiry findings to-date in an informal presentation format, again utilizing the protocols. This cyclical iteration builds to the final presentation, a symposia series hosted by the students, an event open to the public. Classes now proceed in two threads: one of talk around the larger themes of inquiry and the other concerned with practicalities of the final presentation such as preparing slides and writing a script.

Individual inquiries begin to take shape as students engage with one another in a discursive process of discussion and reflection on them. Questions in this discussion explore connections of large themes of self, society, and university. These broader inquiry questions include:

1. Where does my interest lie?
2. What is a social, economic, or environmental implication (of the inquiry) that strikes me as especially critical?
3. How does this connect with my studies here at university?

We suppose that with experience in dialogue with others on such questions

that the student will be able to sit confidently with peers in the public, global arena and speak from his or her person on such matters. It is from this place that communication is most effective: Speaking from the heart, speaks to the heart.

We turned to the literature on public speaking for practical matters of organizing presentation content (e.g. Donovan 2013; Karia 2012). Two tips were especially helpful: 1. Limit the story to three points. 2. Use a ‘power phrase’ or slogan to communicate a message succinctly and with impact. These two tips helped students reduce information and foreground their message. The 3-point format let students tell their story simply and coherently. It was easy to spot the message in their scripts and offer help with a power phrase that might clinch the argument they were trying to make.

5. Going public

The course concludes in the final three weeks with a public symposia series hosted by the students. Three to four students with similar inquiry themes are grouped together and asked to organize their own panel discussion. Two panel discussions are held in one 90-minute symposium. Group members confer with one another on the content and determine the order of presentation. Each group also writes a brief ‘Greetings’ in Japanese and English to be printed up in a program of their design.

We consider going public with research, or other such participation in the public domain, to be crucial for global researchers, particularly as science becomes ever more integrated with community life and scientists themselves are active in local communities at home and abroad. We hope the experience of hosting a public event will not only be personally satisfying but

also help the student continue making meaningful connections with his or her academic ambitions and university coursework. We've encouraged the student to look for such connections throughout their inquiry process and provided opportunities for dialoguing with researchers and peers on just what is involved in this process.

6. The way forward

This paper began with three questions put forth at meetings last summer prior to the start of the course. Have we answered those questions? We've at least made a start on the first two which were: 1) How can the GLEU English curriculum support education reform initiatives *across the disciplines*? 2) How can the university make its appeal as an international hub of activity?

We structured the class as *simulation* of international research events bringing people with diverse interests and experience together in conversation on a common theme. The activities were conducted recursively in cycles and with frequent shifting of groups, in effect immersing the student in familiar but always somewhat new communication throughout the course, again *simulating* real-world forms of talk, while contracting the frequency of chance for engagement in genuine two-way communication.

In future coursework, not necessarily limited to GLEU, the guest speaker class cycle and its suite of activities might be leveraged by inviting graduate students, exchange students from abroad, or alumni of the GLEU course itself to participate in apprenticeship learning situations.

This brings us to the third question: 3) What is the scope of the long-term GLEU program?

That is, how will it continue to engage participants after the first year? Short-term aims of providing the student with conditions for a sustained engagement with personally meaningful questions of inquiry through dialogue with others should reach beyond the classroom and into possible futures. This can be accomplished by integrating coursework with ongoing university research activity through mentoring relationships. The course in this view becomes a point of departure, a preparatory stage for internship, study abroad and related programs.

Last fall I had the opportunity to report on the GLEU project at Shosha to the Japan-Korea Symposium, a bi-annual event held at the Shosha campus which brings together faculty and students from Dong-A University and the University of Hyogo (See Taylor 2014). A delegate from the Dong-A University had been told that approximately half of the undergraduates at the University of Hyogo go on to graduate school. She asked then if the University of Hyogo has a technical writing course as part of its English curriculum. I had to answer ‘No’, but certainly, even in this freshman course, steps could be taken, protocols could be developed that apprentice students for participation in such a discourse. One outstanding opportunity in this regard is “Tobitate! Ryugaku Japan” (“Go abroad! Study Overseas, Japan”) a grant program sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). Students must write up their own research plan and proposal. Here, the collaborative support of their school’s faculty along with that of the English department could go a long way in realising such an opportunity.

References

- Donovan, J. (2013). *How to Deliver a TED Talk. Secrets of the World's Most Inspiring Presentations*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Gardner, R. & Wagner, J. (eds.) (2004). *Second Language Conversations*. London: Continuum.
- Karia, A. (2012). *How to Deliver a Great TED Talk: Presentation Secrets of the World's Best Speakers*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Taylor, M. (2012). *Innovate locally, contribute globally: Engineering foreign language pedagogy for the international liberal arts*. Proceedings of JAILA, the Japan Association of International Liberal Arts, Mar 17, 2012.
- Taylor, M. (2014). *English Curriculum Development for Global Education at the University of Hyogo*. Proceedings of the 22nd International Joint Seminar Between University of Hyogo & Dong-A University, Oct. 10, 2014.