International Collaborative Learning, focusing on Asian English

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Through involvement in various international collaborative projects, such as the World Youth Meeting (WYM) and the Asian Student Exchange Program (ASEP), with students participating at both university and high school level, it has become apparent that the use of movie clips and the collaborative development of English materials is one of the most efficient methods for the younger generation living in the Asian region to acquire competencies – both with their English ability and their use of technology. In an authentic setting, directly related to what they have been learning, they have been strongly expected to acquire the sense and ability to overcome cultural gaps caused by differences in communication strategies. Students are trained to cultivate their English communication skills while attempting to deliver collaborative presentations, performed in front of large audiences in the WYM , ASEP and other international events. When we consider English acquisition for English as a foreign language (EFL) in Asia, the English materials used to help enhance communication are a crucial factor. So, we are now making courses on Learning Management Systems (LMS) using model presentations conducted by Asian students from the Philippines or Cambodia. This is attractive for students, since the presenters are the same ages, and the contents are strongly related to their interests and events in which they are involved. We believe it is time that educational materials should be developed internationally.

Keywords: *Asian English, E-learning , Learning Cycle, international collaborative project*

Introduction

It is an indispensable skill for students in Asian countries to be able to communicate and share their opinions among their generational peers, as they aim to shoulder the challenges of the 21st century. In order to come to terms with globalism, it is crucial for the younger generation to consider global issues such as global warming, world peace, education, human rights and gender issues. They need to have an opportunity to meet directly and talk about these kinds of issues. For this purpose, the need for skills in "World Englishes" (e.g., Kachru et al., 2009) spoken by people in different countries is increasing. This is because it is easier for young Asians to communicate in English, rather than learning the languages of multiple other countries. The English used by the Asian younger generations is what we call "Asian English."

Until they reach university, Japanese students will have studied English for more than 6 years - 3 years in junior high school, and 3 years at senior high school. While in secondary school, they are trained to only think and study towards the entrance examinations for university. To this end, students rush into their English grammar studies with a focus on attaining high scores on university entrance examinations and not necessarily to master English communication.

For the international collaborative project, students need to be able to express themselves and communicate with the participants dealing with the challenge of English conversation and nonverbal communication, not limited to an understanding of English grammar.

Kageto (2010) pointed out that English should be taught using audio recording functions and video clips to enhance language acquisition. But English acquisition needs time. This should be part of students' life-

long education. Being properly able to use audio files with ICT equipment keeps students motivated when studying autonomously; if they could learn the way of repeating, shadowing, etc. it is a kind of reflective learning. Moon(2004) categorized the layer of "reflective learning." Common-sense View; remembering one's knowledge. Reflective Learning; clarifying the process how they created active knowledge. Meta-Reflection; describe relevancies between learning outcomes and related factors.

In Japan, 98.2% of the population are Japanese Nationals who talk in Japanese in their daily lives. So more attention should be directed towards authentic settings where students could learn how English works. Considering recent studies on global education and some international collaborative projects conducted in the Asia region, we aimed to develop a case model of project-based learning (PBL) collaboration among Asian university students in countries such as Korea, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, China and Taiwan. The project was designed to help students develop a way of collaboration, global competencies, their academic skills and cross-cultural understanding and to give them practical opportunities to use English. The Ministry of Education in Singapore also suggested the keyword regarding the 21st century skill. That is "Communication, Collaboration, Computer, Continuous learning, Critical thinking, Creativity, and Cross-cultural understanding" (MOE in Singapore, 2012).

Earlier studies lead us to an insight into the achievement of collaborative learning. Kageto et al. (2012) pointed out the importance of facing conflicts, which are inevitable in any collaboration, especially international collaboration. Kageto (2007) proposed an instructional design for international collaboration focusing on communication, and insisted on the importance of both face-to-face and online communication as well as of setting a definite goal for the collaboration. This collaboration needs Asian English when overcoming conflict caused by different levels of English communication. English training and authentic settings are needed to motivate learners to be the kind of person who can work locally and think globally.

When focusing on English education, we referred to CLIL. That stands for "Content and language Integrated Learning." Its most popular definition is "a dual -focused educational approach" in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both contents and language (Coyle, Hood and Marsh, 2010). It contains 4 C's - Community, Cognition, Communication and Contents. In international collaborative projects such as the WYM and ASEP.

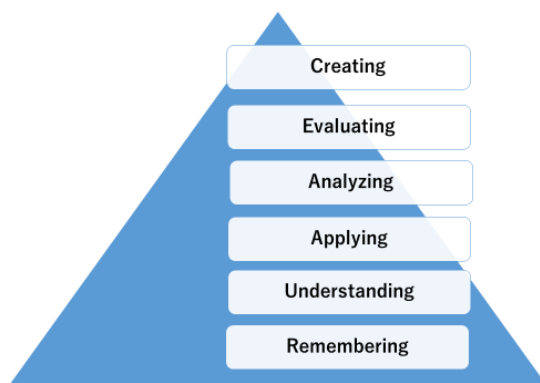In the process of formalizing international collaborative projects, students autonomously engage in inquiry based learning that points out the cognitive procedure within the six keywords showed in the figure. In accordance with Bloom's Taxonomy as shown in figure1, we always must pay attention to the process of "Inquiry based Learning" (*Anderson and Krathwohl,2001*).

Figure1*Inquiry based Learning*

The Ministry of Education in Japan set the criteria for English learners to acquire the competencies of "globally minded human resources," gaining ability in:

1 Travel English
2 Ordinary conversation
3 English for conflict resolution (among two countries)
4 English for conflict resolution (among several countries)

Thus, focusing on the English education, the learning cycle should be imbedded in the students' daily lives.

Purposes of the study
The study reported here aimed to reveal strategies for becoming a globally minded-human resource, with rich English ability that enhances communication among Asian countries. To be a good English speaker,

more attention should be focused on exposure to English, since 98percent of Japanese always use their mother language for their daily lives. In this regard, we set the following purposes:

·To clarify the effective self-directed leaning through E-learning, that makes the learner get used to English sounds and basic phrases referring to "Reflective Learning".

·To investigate learning opportunities and practices of students in authentic settings; in the last 18years since 1999the WYM and ASEP have been based on Kolb's Learning Cycle and Inquiry Based Learning.

·To find out the role model to lead Asian Students to the enhancement of classroom activities and global education.

Design and Methodology

We set two kinds of learning environment for learners to cultivate Asian English and competencies for becoming "Globally minded human resources." In the combination of classroom activity, E-learning and international presentation occasion , synergic effects occur repeatedly.
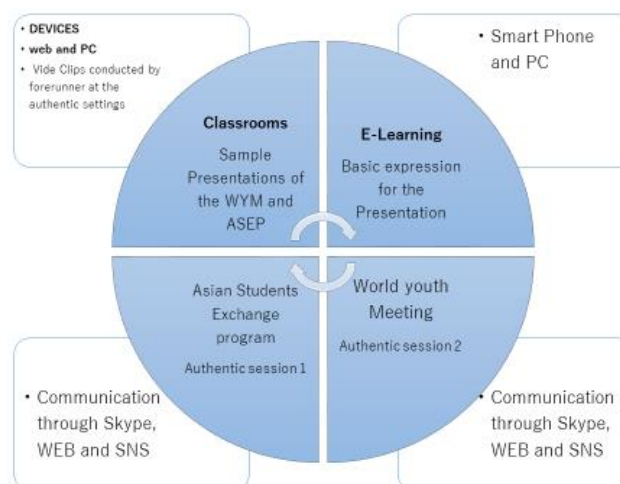
Classroom activity and E-Leaning

Figure2_Leaning environments for Asian English_

In the English Presentation class ,in preparing for the WYM or ASEP, younger students could enjoy video clips conducted by their seniors that mainly indicate tips for making better presentations. These work on the tool developing cognitive presence(Garrison, 2011).

In these events, more than 50 school teachers and their students strive to make effective presentations based on the criteria developed along with their near two decades history. In classes, they were motivated to reach the same level achieved by their forerunners. On the other hand, we have set up an E-learning course named "Basic English Communication" since 2007(Kageto, 2007). This is E-learning that encourages and helps students to get Asian English acquisition, and the skills to use networks or PCs for their better practices toward the presentation on stage, on a designated day. EFL has been taught in their daily life, providing the opportunities to brush up their communicative skills. As for before the WYM, students focus on Asian English while training in the English Presentation class and online courses, always thinking of perfecting ways to express themselves in English. After practicing making pertinent presentations in class, students check their performance on the Learning Management System with some effective audio files.

The teachers involved in the running of collaborative English learning in their course, continue to use input from the students to reshape the curriculum – including the relevant audio and visual files. They do this based on suggestions and requests from students' questionnaires. So requests from Asian students to spend more time with a study focus in a certain area – such as travel English - or produce presentations

on a particular topic, can be met. In this way, students learn the best communicative strategies to meet their requirements. Through this program, students could autonomously learn basic communication competency. They accumulate skills in small steps, moving toward the larger goal of partaking in the international annual conferences called the WYM and ASEP.

Authentic setting
Two kinds of international events are designed for students, to break through any initial insular spirit they have. This course in Asian English always keep in mind the 4C's - contents, communication, community, and cognition. Every year, we set international collaborative projects with 7 countries(and here is the 'community') that enhances Asian English. It is this collaboration that creates a space to know how English works effectively. This was designed based on three stages: preparatory online activities, the event itself, and post events. It has proven effective to set these three stages. This event is designed on a Constructivist Learning Environment base, which includes such elements as modeling, coaching and scaffolding(Jonassen, 2001).

Table 1.
The Procedure of the Event: WYM and ASEP

	Preparatory on line activities	**After Coming to Japan**	**Post event activities**
Task	Design questionnaires Collect information	Overcome cultural conflicts. Complete a collaborative presentation **(Coaching)**	Up loading the final collaborative product **(Modeling)**
Place	home country	Japan	home country
Product	- Concept map - Questionnaires	- Completing Final presentation **(Scaffolding)**	- Data on the website
Tools of the Internet	- Email - File exchanges - Movie files / Picture files	- video Shooting	Web

Skype session for Preparatory stages
One of the features of ICT utilization in the process of the preparatory stage, is the need to use Skype to achieve one of C's - cognition. While challenging authentic settings, recent technology, such as Skype, is a catalyst for the students to check how advanced their communication skills are. So we welcomed the online self-introductions of the attendees from the 6 participant countries. CLIL suggests to use such a function as the tool to understand other cultures, and to better international communication. The students involved in these initial Skype sessions were supposed to attend these international events, to try joint presentations with Japanese students. Every setting was intertwined with the aim of achieving mutual understanding through face to face meetings.

Results

Classroom Activities
Before the event, students used LMS and Online courses. We used MOODLE to give students the video clips performed by forerunners- juniors or seniors. As for freshmen, they could also get the model that

Figure 3. MOODLE

lead them to grasp which level of English is needed for effective Asian English, and also witness the basic skills of English presentation. They come to learn how to deliver their message effectively, with a focus on the importance of prosody, gestures, and eye-contact.

Online Course
As previously stated, we have been focusing on improving the contents of the course, according to feedback from students at the end of each semester. The design of one particular module is based on Travel English in accordance with the narrative of one nurse who goes to Hawaii to visit friends working at the hospital. A key dimension of the course is related to

the A.R.C.S. model. Countless numbers of students dream of traveling alone someday. Quizzes and model presentations are arranged at the end of each chapter. Through these contents, students came to get used to English sounds and the basic design of English Presentation. As for this presentation, we developed it using key words embedded in the phrases. This course comprises 15 chapters.
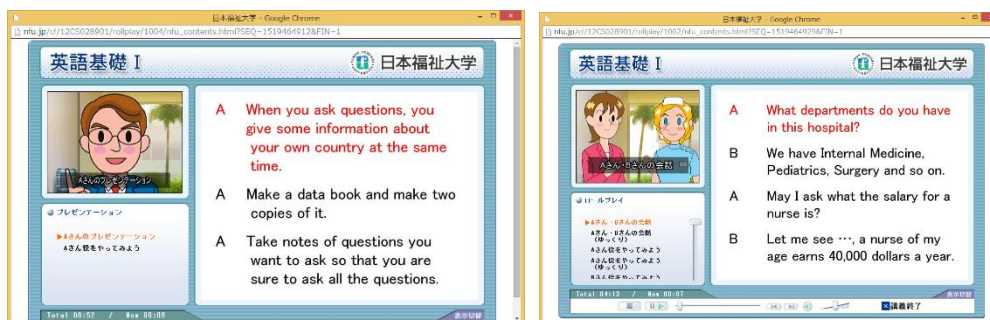

Figure4. Online Course "Basic English Communication"

At the end of school term, every year we got the feedback from the students. This showed us the positive aspects regarding the course. And what the students felt it had helped them to achieve.

> *This program has changed my image of English learning. It was so fun, when I found the time to study, I autonomously started the program. Length of each item is short enough to start anytime. As coordinator said, the more you use English, the more you could improve your English.*
>
> *After finished this program, I decided to continue English study by joining free program conducted by NHK(Japanese public broadcasting)*
>
> *This program is mainly comprised with audio and movie files by native speaker. These trained me to improve my listening comprehension.*
>
> *I could learn how keeping practice to listen to the audio files can help us better understanding English is stressed language compared to monotone language, Japanese.*

Audio files and video Clips
English should be a part of life-long Learning. English learner in Asia should focus on "Reflective Learning" (Moon, 2004). Not merely studying English, students should reflect their learning while not only studying English but also learning how to learn English.

Audio files or video clips are meaningful tools for improving their competency, but at the same time, students have to know how to use them autonomously as a self-directed learner. To grasp new vocabulary, learn correct pronunciation and mirror natural ways of speaking, reviewing audio and video files is of real benefit to students. But they must learn the effective way to use these as tools to review what they have learned, and as a way to self-study, to use it in the acquisition of new English phrases. Without audio files, it's difficult to master languages when attempting self-directed learning.

Authentic Settings : The WYM and the ASEP
The WYM and the ASEP are built on a foundation of experiential learning as advocated by Kolb, which follows the learning cycle of "planning, concrete example, reflective observation, and abstract hypothesis." Not only students, but teachers as well, have learned how to enhance the project, reflecting this model. Recent hypotheses (new solutions) involve how to get students to best interact and engage with the audience. By putting students in this authentic setting (where they have to use the English in their command to communicate a message to an audience) addresses the issue of mastering English communicative skills, and also the skills to direct a presentation to an audience.

Inquiry-based Learning

It is composed by encouragement for students to become co-creators of their learning with overseas students and steady development of students' skills in self-direction, research, critical thinking and problem solving, and disciplinary knowledge and skill.

Based on Bloom's Taxonomy, student teams strive to create a presentation on a set theme. Each item of the taxonomy illustrates how students can deepen their knowledge through collaborative work. And a following example of this is provided in a collaborative project.

Table 2.
Factors of Inquiry-Based Learning

Remembering	Referring to long-term memory, students show concrete images and compare them with their foreign peers.
Understanding	Students come to know the differences among keywords.
Applying	In groups, students discuss how to clarify what is the core message and supportive topics are provided by the group members.
Analyzing	Students break their past experiences into their component parts so that the structure may be understood.
Evaluating	Students judge the value of presentations, with respect to a given purpose, and how to illustrate their blueprint through the presentation's content.
Creating	Students gain the ability to incorporate opinions suggested by group members, thereby forming a novel viewpoint.

Skype session

After setting the theme of the event, students organized a student steering committee and started discussions with overseas students. First they invited presentations which talked about the culture or educational system in each country, to help students get to know each other and deepen the theme together.

Before the Skype session

Overseas participants were requested to send their presentation files of 7 minutes duration. Considering normal Japanese students' English ability, 7 minutes is a suitable listening time for them.

Students were also required to research the monthly income of teachers and policemen to compare the situation in each country.

On the session

We conducted the session with Cambodia, the Philippines and Malaysia. Each presentation was certainly interesting and extremely fruitful for the students involved. The presentation speech speed was controlled, since the coordinator took the Japanese students' English ability into consideration

After the session

One of the important objectives was to get students used to English communication. Most students could therefore understand the contents. These experiences became their motivation to continue studying useful English. These events have brought to light the criteria for effective presentation, particularly concerning Asian English.

The Result of Questionnaires

When focusing on students' mindset toward Asian English, formative evaluation was conducted to check the student feedback on the autonomous study. The participants consisted of 67 students who joined the WYM.

The questionnaire was given to them at the end of August. They used computers almost every day to communicate with peers, checking e-mails and web sites. The instrument comprised 6 items with a 4-point multi-choice Likert-type scale. (1. 'I strongly agree,' was given 4 points, 2. 'I agree,' was ranked as 3 point, 3. 'I disagree,' was scored as 4. 'I strongly disagree,' was scored as 1). As for the questionnaire item, "Did you come to know how to make an effective presentation?", the whole body's means were

3.35. It indicated that most of them relatively appreciated the LMS, online course and presentation conducted by the group since the medial value is 2.5.(Figure5)
In the report after the events , they clarify the tips of effective presentations as following:
- Keep it simple and clear.
- The script should be composed of short sentences.
- Deliver the presentation in a loud, clear voice.
- Use a good combination of images and bullet points.
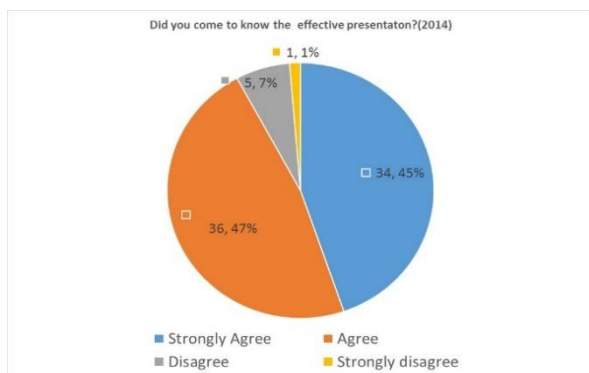- Use phrasing and a suitable level of English targeted toward the audience.

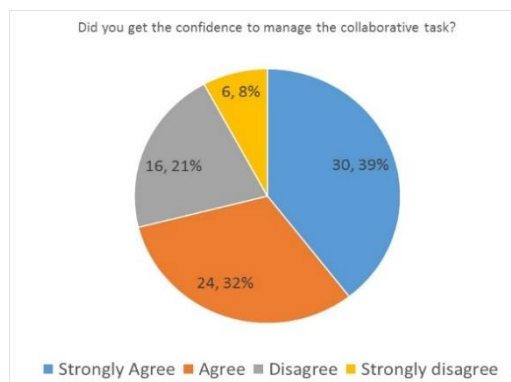*Figure 5.* Result of Questionnaire

Figure6. Result of Questionnaire

This result shows how they strived to complete their tasks, while gaining experience through making a joint presentation. As for Asian students, it was difficult to get the opportunity to work with students who had different cultures, this experience in a heterogeneous environment surely helped them develop their collaborative skills. The result of the question, "Did you get confidence to manage collaborative tasks?" shows how positive the feedback was. (Figure6) Judging from the results of a T-test between 2008 and 2014, this shows a significant difference – and improvement – in how students felt they were in acquiring English competency (t=2.9, df=150 P<.01).

Discussion and conclusion

All the students successfully attempted the LMS, classroom lessons, E-learning and authentic English speaking sessions. These students seemed to gain a sense of accomplishment from their activities. Even after the learning cycle was finished, they kept up their relationships using communication tools like LINE, studying English by ICT tools. Such proactive attitude shows their drive toward achieving life-long learning.

They came to overcome strains and divisive issues by using TV-conference style Skype sessions. The more goals they tried to achieve, the better their global competencies and Asian English became. Some students said in the process of completing the presentation, most participants faced conflict and hurdles they had to overcome, but found that they could break through those obstacles by following the suggestions of their professors. They also stated that "social presence" gave them a big push in motivation to overcome these conflicts.

Frequent exchange with overseas students and audio files on the web can help students be a life-long learner. Some of them already made an improvement in their TOEIC score - going up by 100-200 points in a year. If students conduct collaboration with group members from the same cultural and linguistic background only, they will tend to work and think about content in their own common language, and simply translate into English. Thus, international collaboration and preparatory small steps, such as classroom lessons and E-learning, for learning English, help students think about their ideas in English and integrate various points of view. This Asian English learning cycle is presumed to help students feel less pressure at the prospect of presenting their work in English.

After preparatory E-learning and classroom lessons, students still have to face the heterogeneously diverse environment, and it seemed difficult for the Japanese students to initially express differing

opinions. But with the support of their teachers, they gained the ability to think in new ways, handle challenges in a different manner, and to create something new. They must have expended a great deal of effort to complete the final presentation and find ways to manage global, international classes.

In conclusion, the ICT functions used in this learning cycle and the authentic settings to conduct their projects, motivated our students a great deal. Most of them felt a sense of fulfillment when they achieved their goal. They had precious opportunities to improve their academic and English communication skills, although these effects should be investigated further. However, the most precious benefit of this activity might be a determination to keep learning and the friendships that they built for the future. Getting coaching and scaffolding, they find the way of reflective learning. Mastery of English needs time ,they find the solution while autonomously using the audio and video clips on the web.

A project has a discrete goal, and in this case the students achieved it; however, future projects should be set for them and other students to help them further develop these crucial skills.

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