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Maximizing Student Learning through a Cyber Classroom

Lee FLAKE*

Abstract

This report is submitted in fulfillment of the lesson plan assessment request made by the Department of Environmental Studies, Nagasaki University. Lesson plan assessment is based on the lesson units designed by the author for Language Communication AI/AII courses in the Department of Environmental Studies. Instructional approach utilizing a Cyber Classroom created by online resources at TaskStream® is introduced by the author. A Cyber Classroom offers supplementary instruction that promotes self-study and maximizes classroom instruction while supporting student and task-based learning.

Key words: lesson plan, Nagasaki University, Cyber Classroom, TaskStream®

1. THE AUTHOR'S PHILOSOPHY

As an instructor, understanding of oneself is necessary in order to teach effectively. The concept of “knowing yourself” is a well indoctrinated phrase in many philosophies and religions especially in Asia. Confucius based much of his ideology upon this single concept. In a way, one cannot know others until one knows oneself. To have knowledge and understanding of oneself is not as simple as it sounds. Is one ever fully aware of their biases? Is one ever fully aware of how they may judge others? Likewise, educators are filled with personal biases, opinions and dispositions that affect how they perceive others and how they in turn are perceived. Thought has a direct influence upon behavior. Personal values and personal perceptions of the teacher are all manifested through the teacher’s philosophy. The standards one creates for others are first based upon the standards that one has made for oneself. How an instructor teaches therefore, is based upon standards that the instructor has made for themselves. A standardized Philosophy Preference Assessment (Jon W. et al, 2002) suggested the author to be a strict perennialist. The accuracy of the Philosophy Preference Assessment is potentially debatable yet profoundly accepted among academic professionals of the author’s alma mater. The author has often been called “old fashioned” in his beliefs and being labeled as a perennialist in some ways is fitting. Traditional and “perennial” beliefs are undoubtedly reflected by some instruction practices such as teaching specifically for a standardized exam. Perhaps one can find some comfort following the imposed time-tested curriculum based on the belief that basic knowledge and skills remain the most important aspect of school curriculum. However, the author does not share a perennial nor traditional mindset when it comes to technology and student-based learning tasks in the classroom.

The author believes that technology used with discernment serves to enhance instruction without diminishing basic skills. Technology captures student attention and engages student thinking. Technology-enhanced instruction; specifically, the use of a Cyber Classroom, will be introduced in this report.

The author finds prodigious personal value in being
an educator. By working as a teacher, one may come to understand one’s own potential. Enjoyment of the work and a sense of doing something intrinsically valuable is perhaps the author’s greatest motivation. Learning is valuable regardless of one’s age. Education is a treasure that neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Holy Bible, [Matthew 6:20]). Education is something that one can truly call their own possession. Once knowledge through education is received, it cannot be taken away. There is no end to education since there is no limit to what one is capable of learning.

Cross-cultural knowledge is the direction education is going to. Knowledge is necessary to preserve membership in the global community. English is taking dominance in the world. A study on ACII text on the Internet suggests that 80% of all information on the Internet is in English (Nunberg, 2010). Moreover, according to a study in 2005, over 80% of all websites on the Internet are written in the English language (Netglish, 2011). In order to have greater access to information, knowledge of the English language is important. English is recognized as an international language. English is an important tool to have access to the global community. Knowledge of English will enable one to be understood in most industrialized nations and in the international business world. Cross-cultural knowledge helps break down cultural barriers. Stereotypes and discrimination are results of lack of knowledge.

Knowledge, wisdom, and common sense are different. Differences exist in how each are learned. Instructors should acknowledge that “knowledge” can be fallible. New discoveries alter the sciences. What was once held as truth may be fiction in the future. The world was once thought of as flat, potatoes and tomatoes were once considered poisonous, heliocentric theories have been proven to be incorrect. As specific events and facts concerning history and war fade from the minds of the public, a form of selective amnesia takes place (Dower, 1999, p. 29) and the aggressor that started a conflict views itself as being the victim and not the cause (Ienaga, 1994). Stronger nations continue to re-write the history of weaker nations. Cultural biases are sometimes used to alter and manipulate knowledge and information. Certainly even with the modern knowledge that exists, people are still the same capricious variable that prevents a system or standard from being an absolute. People are complicated with variables that are difficult to single out (Carey, 2006). All people are essentially superstitious and paranoid about what we hold to be “knowledge.”

Truth is debated as being different from knowledge. To have knowledge of truth should be the pursuit of both the teacher and the student. It is important for the teacher to nurture the students to discover truths for themselves. The author encourages students to think critically and study to discover knowledge of truth for themselves. Language Communication AI/II students are encouraged to be critical thinkers concerning environmental issues presented by the media and the scientific community. Students are encouraged to study the scientific, economic and political mindset behind environmental issues. As an example, students study the cost of energy consumption for recycling containers compared to creating containers from raw materials.

Students are exposed to various viewpoints and opinions concerning global warming, acid rain, desertification, ozone depletion, fossil fuels, waste disposal, contaminated water, etc. Students form their own opinions and make presentations as groups—as “Learning Teams.” Each Learning Team is to research and propose a logical solution to their selected environmental issue.

Teaching is a noble profession. Teachers have the future in their hands (James, 1899). Those who desire to become teachers and who make the effort to become affective teachers have a deep concern for those they teach. Instructors have the responsibility to care for the students being taught. Teachers have a profound influence on those they teach.

Education is always faced with challenges such as governmental and social issues, contract issues and lack of support for part-time teachers, student drop-out, and teacher burnout (Parkay et al, 2002). Teaching is a challenging profession—this challenge is what enables the student and teacher alike to improve. The author believes that education is a chance for both the student and teacher to be enlightened and find self-worth in the pursuit of the knowledge of truth.
2. STUDENT INFORMATION

The current class instructed by the author is composed of third year students of the Department of Environmental Studies at Nagasaki University. Students are all ESL learners. Most students are enrolled in the course for credit requirements and in preparation for grade advancement. The author’s current class is composed of 26 students. Future semester classes are anticipated to share similar demographics. Students have studied English through compulsory and secondary education in an effort to satisfy education requirements and to prepare for further testing that might have an effect on their career choices and professional and personal development.

In two decades of teaching, the author has learned firsthand that reaching all the students all the time is the mindset of an idealist. An instructor might have impeccable teaching skills, knowledge of material, a persona that touches the hearts of the class and still not be able to reach every student. The author believes that although instruction and providing a learning environment is the responsibility of the teacher, effective learning is a shared responsibility. Both the instructor and student must endeavor to meet on middle ground in the classroom as both teacher and student have a role in the learning process (de Kock et al, 2004). Students are encouraged to be active in their studies. Attitude is important for the learning environment. Students who lack vision of their future often take their education lightly. A balance of passion, vision, and action are elements for superior academic performance.

3. COURSE OVERVIEW

Environmental issues presented through various English language media are used for the lesson topic. Media articles, essays and documentaries concerning environmental issues provide an opportunity for students to reflect on what environmental issues are dominant on the global stage. Lesson topic also includes an overview of presentation skills based on material included in *English for Presentations®* text (Compass Publishing, 2003).

3.1 Goals and Objectives:

This course is designed to provide students an opportunity to assess environmental issues presented in the English language. Focus throughout this course will be maintained on building English oral presentation skills. Through class discussions, assessments and reflection papers, and presentations, students will be able to develop skills necessary to present information on the environment in the English language. Overt curriculum goal is to improve English language and expression skills while fostering the environmental consciousness of the students.

Goals for the course conform to needs assessments. Qualitative need concerns improving student attitudes toward language learning. Data to assess qualitative need formulated through course reflection papers and input by the students. Quantitative need is based on improving student academic performance. Specifically, Nagasaki University has a goal of an overall increase on student TOEIC exam performance. The quantitative need is identified by comparing the students to a graded score or standard while a qualitative need is identified by comparing the students to an established expectation (Morrison, 2007).

Expressed need concerns teacher training in response to changes in class performance. The expressed need might be the *home* behind the Department’s request for this lesson plan assessment paper. The expressed need may reflect a need of improving conditions put to action (Morrison, 2007). Selected need is based on a normative need to increase Nagasaki University student academic performance documented through TOEIC English proficiency exams. Normative need is further based on the need for improving student attendance.

Instructional goal also includes encouraging the students to display good work ethics and personal motivation in order to individualize their English language studies. Students are to improve comprehension of the English language through research writing, dictation and comprehension quizzes, and oral presentation practice. The author encourages students to individualize their study, expand their knowledge of English and have the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to effectively communicate in the English language.
3.2 Instructional Material:

Students are not required to purchase a textbook for this course. Students study and discuss environmental issues as presented through international media. Media articles, essays, and documentaries are available in the Cyber Classroom. The online Cyber Classroom is an essential component for this class. Topic source material, assignment rubrics, and course details are also available to the students in the Cyber Classroom.

Students are to complete one topic on an environmental issue each class period. Teaching strategy is based on media-assisted instruction and prepared printed material for assessment. Auxiliary instruction material includes materials found in English for Presentations® text (Compass Publishing, 2003). Text material on making English oral presentations is used to supplement each lesson and prepare the students for their final presentation task.

English Presentation Text unit topics include a comprehensive study of the essential skills needed to make an oral presentation in English. Text unit topics include discerning what makes a good presentation, gaining attention, starting, signaling and linking parts of the presentation, highlighting and emphasizing, engaging the audience, communicating styles and closing the presentation. Also, the text provides a comprehensive study of the vocabulary needed to describe visual aids such as graphs and charts. Non-verbal communication and body language are also topics covered by the English for Presentations® text.

Selected environmental issues for the current class include recycling, contaminated water, waste disposal, global warming, acid rain, deforestation, ozone depletion, fossil fuels and pollution in space. Endangered species, nuclear energy and desertification will be included in the next semester. Topics are selected according to current media coverage. This coverage provides the students with abundant material to research and formulate an opinion on the issue and offer a suggestion solution.

4. INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

Collaborative learning is endorsed by the author as students work together in “Learning Teams,” which is a major criterion for the instructional approach. Although differences in educational philosophies and teaching practices pose potential issues between stakeholders, this author maintains a student-oriented method of instruction. Students are expected to have personal motivation to complete out-of-class tasks and actively collaborate on the research papers and presentations. The author uses an indirect instruction approach during Learning Team project preparation time and when presentations are being conducted. Direct instruction is used to explain media material, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice.

4.1 Technology and Education

Technology is changing rapidly. The world has changed from analog to digital over the last two decades. Ever since the lantern slide projector was introduced to classrooms in the late 1800’s, technology has continued through the last century with inventions such as the overhead projector, 16 mm film projector, television, and recently PDAs and computerized OHPs. Congress in the United States supported technology in education as a reaction to Sputnik in 1957 and has since continues to be endorsed as part of the National Defense Education Act (Morrison, 2007). Public scrutiny and school accountability movements for improving instruction has created a newfound interest to look at the condition of classrooms and assess how technology is being used to improve the quality of education. Classrooms at Nagasaki University are certainly no exception. Instructional technology might be viewed as marketing strategy by some academic institutes. Technology is used to boast school image and curriculum and to promote enrolment. However, cosmetic use of technology by schools is not productive unless improvement in student performance and instructional value has merit (Coppola, 2005).

Keeping up with the technology can prove a tedious task as the latest developments are introduced to replace the older technologies. Modern computers manifest how technology has rapidly advanced. Data storage is an example of how technology has quickly changed as the world has switched from analog to digital. No doubt, keeping up on advances in technology is merciless on the finances of institutes of
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education. Technology of the future is predicted to become increasingly user-friendly requiring less technological ability and will take advantages of more senses, not only in a textual mode, but in auditory, tactile as well as visual modes conforming to various learners (Ouellette, 2005).

Knowledge of different learning styles makes one more conscious of the differences there are in learning. By understanding that there are different learning styles an educator can be more patient and sympathetic toward his or her students. Students might excel when a subject and instructor conform to their individual learning style (Caridas & Hammer, 2006). Creating an instruction strategy that caters to the various learning styles would enable teachers to reach the students more effectively. Technology provides a platform for educators to effectively reach students of differing learning styles.

The author is avid about using technology in the classroom. At the beginning of the current semester, Nagasaki University updated the author’s classroom with a computer-enhanced overhead monitor with multi-media capabilities. The author has hence designed lesson units to be presented through available classroom technology. Lesson units are presented in Microsoft PowerPoint® and audio tasks are presented in Windows MediaPlayer® or Flash RealPlayer® format. CD editing program SonicStage® and the PCM editing program such as SoundIt® are also heavily used by the author to create listening tasks. Student reports are graded and checked for plagiarism with advanced programs provided by CWE®, WritePoint®, and Turnitin®. Students are likewise required to use classroom technology for their Learning Team presentations.

Various forms of technology have created a need to maintain a level of technical proficiency of standard skills. The author, as part of his professional development goal continues to study new technology and its potential applications to education. For students and educators alike, a functional knowledge of computer applications are essential for membership in the modern world. The Internet provides a valuable source of information for creating lesson plans and designing lessons as well as for supplementary lesson material.

Technology has provided for the most valuable commodity—time. The benefits that electronic communication provides are just beginning to be realized as technology can improve communication between students and educators (Ouellette, 2005). Students are encouraged to communicate via e-mail. Student tasks such as the student bio, mid-term paper and the Learning Team presentation are to be submitted to the author by e-mail for grading. The author envisions supplementary Web-Cam conferencing as an alternative method of instruction outside of the classroom environment. Quality of the student’s education experience can be increased and instruction can be maximized with the proper use of technology (Coppola, 2005).

Having an understanding of technology and a variety of technical skills are the attributes of an effective educator. Adept teachers should have a goal of improving their technology literacy. Teaching does require the “human touch” of the instructor and overuse of technology can isolate the student. However, when technology is effectively used in conjunction to the teacher’s lesson, technology can enhance the material being learned. A variety of skills besides technical skills are important for one to be an effective educator. The most effective teachers are those who truly enjoy the work and have deep concern for their students. Highly skilled instructors often possess an innate aptitude for teaching. These are characteristics to foster as one continues to study and work as an educator.

4.2 Cyber Classroom:

Technology enhanced instruction enables the teacher to maximize student learning. With the Internet and the availability of information, teachers no longer have a monopoly on skills and knowledge. The author believes that blackboards and lecture-style instruction is outdated and based on post-industrial ideologies with the hidden curriculum of creating disciplined vessels of regurgitated knowledge. Learning theories are a topic of debate and directly influences curriculum design. Modern, student-oriented discovery-based learning is endorsed by the author.

The Cyber Classroom is designed to supplement
instruction and maximize student learning. Cyber Classroom tabs open pages designated for learning tasks, assignment rubrics, student bios, class album, etc. Vocabulary lists included in the Cyber Classroom are part of the student’s self-study regiment. The Cyber Classroom encourages students to personalize their education and continue their studies outside of the classroom. Scholastic learning is not limited to the classroom. With an online classroom, the classroom literally becomes the world (O’ Lawrence, 2006). Education becomes active and mobile.

Having class only once a week is a limited learning schedule that is potentially ineffective for advancing ESL learners—the Cyber Classroom enables the student to effectively use time between classroom meetings. Moreover, since vocabulary lists, articles, and assignment rubrics can be downloaded, this eliminates the need to make unnecessary prints promoting an environmental consciousness. Students are required to submit learning tasks via e-mail to the instructor in order to further eliminate the need to make prints and leave an unnecessary carbon footprint on the environment.

As the first task for the class, students post a self introduction “student bio” to the Cyber Classroom. This task enables the students to learn more about each other and serves to promote class unity. As the students are delegated into Learning Teams for their mid-term paper and final presentation task, the Cyber Classroom is also a platform to promote communication. The Cyber Classroom can be designed to meet the purpose and needs of the facilitator and students. Although the common template is an upload-download platform, the webpage can be reformatted into an inter-active forum. The author has opted to remove such functions out of an ethical commitment to edit comments or posts that could be potentially harmful to the student. Although TaskStream® and its server are password protected, the password being published in the course syllabus means that access has been disclosed to other students and educators. The author is responsible for the information uploaded and published. Personal information such as student numbers and birthdays (which students are often liberal about mentioning in their bio task) should be edited before being uploaded.

With TaskStream® the educator is also introduced to online programs such as WritePoint® which checks student papers for plagiarism and originality.

The Cyber Classroom can be accessed at the following URL or QR Code (the current password for the Cyber Classroom is: nagasaki):

http://www.taskstream.com/ts/flake1/NagasakiUniversityLanguageCommunicationsAL.html

4.3 Learning Teams

As a graduate student, the author was introduced to several collaborative task-based methods of learning, specifically the concept of “Team Learning.” The author did not anticipate the possibility of inactivity among the Learning Team members. As in sports, a team is only as strong as its weakest member. By working in a team, the author had a chance to learn stress management strategies such as running marathons. This was an opportunity to understand ways of dealing with conflict. Working with other students as a group has many “real life” applications such as to prepare for working in an office environment or as a member of research project as a graduate student. Not all people share the same ideals or work ethics. Students have a chance to learn this by experiencing it. Fairness is maintained since team members will assess each other’s performance.

The author has learned from personal experience that Learning Teams work best when the teams consist of members who share the same ideals and work ethics. Such teams communicate well and are efficient and prompt at accomplishing the group work tasks.

Difficulties arise when team members do not properly communicate expectations nor actively contribute to the learning task. Students are being tested on how they perform as a group—how well they cooperate, communicate, and manage conflicts.

The learning team experience is a highlight of this course. The author also learned many things through
such collaborative learning. Through this course, students will also understand some of the advantages and disadvantages of both individual and team learning. Teams offer security and strength. The diversity of a group also gives information a new perspective. Such diversity provides new dimension to understanding and processing information. Opportunity for growth includes learning how to become a better team player and learning how to work with others. However, individuals make decisions faster and are therefore able to move faster than a group. It is this mobility that might need to be surrendered as a member of the Learning Team. Students will also learn the value of compromise. Compromise is one of the key factors for preserving group unity. Individual efforts are based upon concepts of competition whereas groups work in unity for a single goal. Having vision and an understanding of this goal is essential for the group to have passion for the work (Mulrooney & Snow, 2006).

Learning to work in Learning Teams is an essential component and goal that emphasizes best practices when having students actively involved in “owning” their education. In this course the author has introduced several different models of cooperative and collaborative learning activities.

Students are expected to work effectively in diverse groups and teams to achieve tasks. They must collaborate and function well in team settings as both leaders and followers. They should respect human diversity and behave in a tolerant manner toward colleagues and peers.

Some assignments in this class are completed in Learning Teams composed of three to four students—based on class enrolment. As soon as the students receive their assignment tasks, they are required to work with their appropriate Learning Team members.

In order to create structure for each Learning Team, respective Teams will each complete a Learning Team Charter after membership is assigned. This form can also be found in the course materials section of the Cyber Classroom. Each person in the team must work together to complete the charter and submit the charter to the author’s e-address.

After the final team project is completed, members of each team will be asked to complete a “Peer Evaluation” to assess the contributions of each member of the Learning Team (including oneself). The author will take these Peer Evaluations into account when assessing individual contributions to the Learning Team projects.

Students should actively review task requirements for Learning Team activities and the final project as described in class and the Cyber Classroom. To receive credit for learning team assignments, students must actively participate with their Learning Team and contribute to the project.

All team members are responsible for the final results. Students are advised to work with enough time so all team members can agree on the final version of each task. Students are also advised to check for plagiarism to make sure another team member did not forget to include appropriate references.

If students experience difficulties working with their team, the student is expected to resolve issues within the team if possible; however, the instructor is available for guidance as a facilitator.

Because learning team projects are outcome-based, all members of the Learning Team will generally earn the same grade. However, the author does reserve the right to report different grades for different individuals if there is a substantial imbalance in the level of effort put forth. The author may also choose to use input from the individual evaluations and summaries when determining level of participation.

5. ASSESSMENTS

Summative assessments include daily performance evaluations, student surveys, pre and post quiz performance evaluations, research papers, student observations, and most importantly a final oral presentation. Quizzes and exercises should be completed by the students to at least 80% accuracy. Students are to complete homework in preparation for class. Each student must actively participate in class discussions and exercises. An alternative method of class performance evaluation includes the use of an English journal kept by the students to be corrected at the end of the semester—current strategy is not in use by the author.
Student surveys are essential. The author conducts his own survey in addition to the compulsory survey required by Nagasaki University. Support feedback from the students provides reflection and evaluation of program strengths and weaknesses. Students are encouraged to offer suggestions and freely express their opinions concerning course curriculum and issues presented.

Pre and post short quizzes are used to evaluate student performance. Evaluation exams include a diverse use of multiple-choice, matching and word-order exercises. Mid-term grade is determined by the Learning Team environmental issue research paper. Final presentation score is used for post evaluation. Active participation and citizenship scores are also calculated into the student’s final score. Individual and collaborative learning are represented in the final grading.

5.1 Grading Formula

There are 100 points that will be earned for the course. The scores on individual assignments are not converted to letter grades and final grades are not the average of the letter grades. When points are deducted from assignments, it will be for objective reasons (refer to the task rubrics). Deducted points are taken off the total of 100 for the entire course.

The standardized grading scale as determined by Nagasaki University distributes letter grades to set percentages. AA is awarded for grade points between 90.0 and 100.00. A is awarded for grade points between 80.0 and 89.99. B is awarded for grade points between 70.0 and 79.99. C is awarded for grade points between 60.0 and 69.99. D is awarded for points less than 59.99; however, a total score of 60% is required for passing. The author’s grading practices require students to be of good attendance in order to pass the course.

5.2 Distribution of Points

Individual assignments and team assignments are balanced in an effort to create fairness in grading. As stated in the course syllabus, distribution of points is as follows:

- Student bio, Team Charter, short tests (35%)
- Mid-Term Paper (Learning Team Paper) (15%)
- Final Exam (Learning Team Presentation) (20%)
- Class attendance and participation (30%)

In order to receive the points for the short tests, the student must be in attendance. The required 60% for passing the course is entirely based on student attendance and participation. The remaining 40% of the grade is based on core work that can be completed outside of class; however, completion would not guarantee the student passing the course without the proper attendance requirements fulfilled. The author feels that this assessment is fair since it awards students by effort as well as academic skill.

Thirty-five percent of the final score is based on Learning Team collaborative tasks. The greater portion of the scoring comes from individual learning tasks and student participation and attendance—this was deliberately weighed by the author to promote fairness in assessments.

6. CLASS POLICIES

6.1 Course Syllabus

Assignments in the syllabus take priority. While the assignments and learning objectives remain the same, the instructor reserves the right to change activities and assignments in this syllabus according to the needs of the class.

The author, as well as Nagasaki University trusts each student to maintain high standards of honesty and ethical behavior. All assignments except those designated as “group” are meant to be individual efforts. Learning Team work is meant to be equal efforts by all group members. It is assumed that students will perform professionally in preparing work required for this class.

6.2 Attendance and Participation

Attendance and Participation are graded separately. In an intensive, collaborative learning environment such as that required for the Final Team Presentation, class attendance is perhaps the most obvious and objective starting point measuring for participation. If students are not in attendance, they miss out on many opportunities for learning. If students miss class, they will not receive an attendance grade or a participation grade for that week. Although attendance points are received for showing up in class, in order to receive
credit for participation, one must contribute to the class—not merely be in attendance. Attendance will be checked at the beginning of each class and points will be deducted for being late. Students should make an effort to be on time. Moreover, if students are more than 30 minutes late, they will not receive an attendance grade for that day.

Students are encouraged to be attentive by sitting at the front of the classroom. Students should not bring food or drink into the classroom. Cell phones should be in manner mode or turned off. The author prefers that hats are not worn in the classroom. To understand that classroom attitude is also part of the daily participation grade. To improve the target language, students are required to speak English at all times—both the instructor and student. Team discussions should also be conducted in English. The instructor will use Japanese in the classroom as a support language only and for reconfirmation of important tasks.

6.3 Late Assignments

It is assumed that students will perform professionally in preparing work required for this class and will submit all assignments by their due date. Students should be aware of course assignments and due dates. All documents are to be spell-checked and grammar-checked, and follow general format requirements. However, since this class is for undergraduate studies, the author will grade on content over format. The author expects all work to be submitted on time; however, flexible if a student alerts ahead of time that an assignment will be late for a very good reason. Work submitted late without proper authorization from the author will be marked down one letter grade. No assignments will be accepted after the last week.

All assignments must be either given directly to the instructor in class the day the assignment is due or posted to the author’s e-mail (leehflake@yahoo.com) as a text message in the body of an e-mail or as an attached file by midnight Japan Standard Time on their due day. Assignments will be accepted within 24 hours of due date with a 10% penalty. After 24 hours, assignments will only be accepted with prior approval. Students are highly encouraged to contact the author if experiencing any problems with sending assignments through e-mail. As explained on the class webpage, the less printing required for assignments, the better it is for the environment. The author encourages students to submit assignments via e-mail.

6.4 Feedback and Incompletes

The author will furnish feedback to students on all assignments within seven days after the due date. Students who fail to complete all course requirements on a timely basis, due to unanticipated and extreme critical circumstances, may request an incomplete grade if approved by the faculty and Nagasaki University. All assignments must be submitted within three weeks or less; the deadline date being set by the faculty. Failure to submit all assignments will result in not passing this course. Additionally, a student must be passing in order to request an incomplete grade and request it before the fourteenth week of the course.

6.5 Privacy

One of the highlights of the University academic experience is that students can draw on the wealth of examples from fellow classmates in class discussions and in their written work. However, it is imperative that students not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. Students must be mindful of privacy and respect for various opinions.

6.6 Assignments

Assignments that are papers, such as the Learning Team Issue Assessment / Presentation Paper and the Course Reflection Paper are not part of the classroom discussions or review quizzes. These assignments are preferred to be developed in MS Word® unless otherwise designated. Team Presentation is to be completed in MS PowerPoint®. The author will provide a template for format reference in the Cyber Classroom. It is assumed that all students have some technological proficiency and computer access. The Learning Team presentation PowerPoint® task is to be completed outside of the classroom in each student’s respective Learning Teams. Students have the entire semester to put the final project together and as students, access to the University computer lab(s) should not be an issue. Likewise, MS Word® paper assignments are to be completed as homework.
6.7 Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is highly valued as a higher education institute. Students must always submit work that represents original words or ideas. If any words or ideas used in an assignment submission do not represent original words or ideas, students must cite all relevant sources and make clear the extent to which such sources were used. Words or ideas that require citation include, but are not limited to, all hard copy or electronic publications, whether copyrighted or not, and all verbal or visual communication when the content of such communication clearly originates from an identifiable source.

If the author determines that students have copied or rephrased any information without giving proper citation and reference, author will report the infraction to the appropriate authorities from the University. All copyright and intellectual property must be acknowledged.

Copyright requirements must be adhered to at all times whether the source is the Internet or hardcopy media. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. When discussing anything from Internet sites, or any hardcopy resource, students are to always include reference information. Work submitted should consist of analysis of the materials and assignment and is not to exceed 25% of referenced or quoted material.

All graded papers need to be written and cited in accordance to standards in academic writing—again, students must not plagiarize. Plagiarized papers will be automatically failed. Plagiarism will be checked through WritePoint®, TurnItIn® and Center for Writing Excellence® (CWE) programs. Students may not reference sites such as InfoSeek® or Wikipedia®.

Learning to work in Learning Teams is an essential component and goal that emphasizes best practices when having students actively involved in their education. In this course students will experience several different models of cooperative and collaborative learning activities. Students are expected to work effectively in diverse groups and teams to achieve tasks.

7. STANDARDS

Goals and classroom standards selected by the author includes standards relevant to the application of technology to enhance instruction. Lessons plans must meet with established standards and effectively utilize technology. Materials needed for instruction should be included with the lesson plan. Instruction through technology should be used as a tool for instructors to reach every student in the class. Pre and post assessments help the instructor learn about the individual differences in the class as well as provide a measure for teachers to rate their instruction. Analysis of pre and post assessments and a reflection essay provide teachers with a summary of their instruction as well as enable teachers to see results and know what points need improvement by appraising the outcomes and effects of instruction. Reflection on performance is important for teachers to improve future instruction.

While important to adhere to standards and have goals for improving, over-analyzing and focusing on too many teaching goals at once might go against the quality of instruction. Teaching is an art as well as a science. Knowledge and skills necessary for effective instruction make teaching a science. However, the human touch, the persona, humor, care, adaptability and spontaneity of an experienced instructor make teaching an art. Although goals and standards are necessary, the method of achieving an effective lesson plan might not entirely be based upon content standards. Moreover, the charge to reach all the students and raise the English level of all the students, although poetically expressed and noble in sound; somehow, this charge comes across to the author as the ranting of an idealist.

Standards were largely implemented to provide specific criteria to test student academic performance and to compare student ability. Although the effort to promote and assess student performance is noble, the standards applied to students potentially serve to generalize student ability and discriminate.

Criticism against high-stakes assessments includes that such evaluation maintains a focus on implementation of standards instead of the actual content of the standards (Miller, 2001). Creating tests
that are fair to all students becomes a concern. The TOEIC test, as a high-stakes test, is potentially limiting the student by labeling the student based on a one-time snapshot assessment of ability and knowledge.

7.1 State Standard

Although State and national standards required for instructors within the United States are not applicable in Japan—the author, as the instructor of this course prefers to follow his own native standards in lesson and curriculum design in order to maintain professionalism in instruction. The State standard is based on standards for the State of Utah. Utah State standards source link and education network URL is: http://www.uen.org/core/

Selected State Standard is as follows:

STANDARD 3.1 Students reinforce and expand their knowledge of other disciplines through the target language. GOAL THREE: Connect With Other Disciplines and Acquire Information. Rationale of this standard is to connect the target language curriculum with other parts of students' academic lives which serves to open doors to information and opportunities which enrich their entire school and life experience. A conscious effort to make these connections will create a flow of interaction between the target language classroom and other disciplines (in this case, language and environmental issues), enriching the curricula.

7.2 National Standard

National Standard is based on the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS-S) as found on the World Language Standards URL: http://www.uen.org/core/core.do?courseNum=4700.

Specific reference for the standards selected may be found as a pdf file at the following URL: http://www.iste.org/Content/NavigationMenu/NETS/ForTeachers/2008Standards/NETS_T_Standards_Final.pdf.

Selected National Standard is as follows:

STANDARD 1. Facilitate and Inspire Student Learning and Creativity. STANDARD 1.b Engage students in exploring real-world issues and solving authentic problems using digital tools and resources.

The author uses knowledge of subject matter, teaching and learning, and technology to facilitate experiences that advance student learning, creativity, and innovation in both face-to-face and virtual environments.

8. REFERENCES


James, W. (1899). Talks to Teachers on Psychology.


