	Foreword (Joint Research Project : University Website : Development and Uses)
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Joint Research Project

University Website: Development and Uses

Foreword

The following joint papers present the results of the 2000 Faculty of Humanities' group research project, University Website: Development and Uses.

The pedagogical question of how to provide the most effective English education possible is central to the Faculty of Humanities. In order to find a contemporary solution to this problem, this joint research project focuses on one answer, the Internet.

The present research project involves researchers in diverse fields who are all deeply aware that communication itself has undergone a complete transformation regarding space and time. As the Internet expands by leaps and bounds, personal computers can access the world in an instantaneous and mutual give-and-take. The Internet is not only a refreshing medium for individual communication, but a major factor in all aspects of contemporary culture.

Although communication on the Internet is a two-way street, it is mainly through English that various homepages from all over the world can be accessed. It is, therefore, quite natural to use the Internet in foreign language teaching today, and its practical applications have been widely researched. But in precisely what form should the Internet be implemented in language teaching in our own Faculty?

First, we feel that language learning should pique students' interest and, moreover, should be student-centered. We felt that this could be accomplished through an Internet-based language course. Most stu-

dents today are comfortable with the Internet in their daily lives; even those who are not, are likely to be very interested in it.

Second, we feel that students must activate their own language learning. They need to become more self-motivated and more capable of developing their own potentiality. Unfortunately, it is difficult to guide students toward this goal because they have had an extraordinarily passive language learning experience in secondary schools. However, we believe that the Internet can help students become active language learners.

The present research focuses on an experimental Internet-based writing course. For this project, students interviewed all Faculty of Humanities teaching staff and wrote up faculty introductions in Japanese and in English. These introductions (not anonymous but signed by the students) are intended to be uploaded onto the Internet through the Faculty of Humanities' homepage. In this way, students undertook to create a bilingual (Japanese and English) homepage for the Faculty of Humanities.

The focus of having students create a homepage in this way was not so much to teach the English language as to entice them to actively involve themselves in their individual language learning. Our Internet-based language course differs from previous courses in that it attempts to help students become active learners. In order to create bilingual homepages, students who had only passively listened to lectures or read textbooks had to become actively involved in their own learning. It is here that this project differs from the students' previous writing courses, because through this public display of their writing, students become highly self-motivated.

A second goal for this writing project involved rhetorical style. As students make their debut in cyberspace, they practice using the

brief and straightforward English writing style of the Internet. Sentences must be as short as possible, yet must be written lucidly in a style that holds the interest of Internet users. To maintain their audience's interest, it is absolutely essential that the students be familiar with this style.

The final important point is that, because students must write in both Japanese and English, they become aware of critical underlying differences in style between the two languages. In English expository prose, the main idea appears at the beginning; however, in Japanese, the most important point appears toward the end. When students translate from Japanese into English, they must be aware of this. If the introductions which the students have written do not follow these discourse rules, English-speaking Internet users will become confused —or worse, will stop reading.

As we have seen, the above writing project has yielded positive results for language education in the Faculty of Humanities. On the whole, the students' introductions were well-written and followed English rhetorical style. Students involved in the present research project became self-motivated toward their language learning. We hope that further research will continue to explore how the Internet can implement learner awareness in language learning.

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