

The Advanced English course is an exceptional program in the stream of compulsory English subjects. Not only does the course consist of the highest-level students, but it is simple in design, with just the right balance of teacher and student autonomy to allow teachers to get the best out of their students, and for students also to get the most out of their classes. In short, it is a pleasure to teach. This short essay will detail the reasoning behind the creation of the Advanced course, the influences that inspired it, and an example of the course as it is applied.

Purpose

There are two main reasons behind the Advanced course being established. The first of these is to accommodate returnees and high achieving students. A considerable number of Rikkyo students have lived overseas and have returned to Japan with advanced levels of English as a result of their study abroad. Moreover, there are also a number of students who have also achieved high-level English skills here in Japan. The Advanced English course aims to accommodate all of these students in a course that continues to challenge and develop the English language ability of these two groups.

The second reason is to provide a course that will facilitate a transition into a foreign university course of study. Should students wish to continue their studies overseas in an English speaking country, they will need a range of skills and abilities at a level that the standard English courses do not provide. For example, they will need to know how to research and write lengthy essays with correct citations. They will need to be able to read a substantial amount of information in research, and will need to be able to assess a reading and find information efficiently. Most importantly, they will need to be able to interact openly in classes with both their teachers and their classmates. Furthermore, they will need well-developed collaboration skills to work, not only with Japanese people, but also with people from cultures that are foreign

to them.

Course Overview

This course aims to prepare students to be able to succeed in an international academic environment in which English is used. The course has been designed to integrate academic skills and academically oriented content. Students develop a range of skills, including reading, writing, presentation, and research skills. Spring Semester focuses on academic skills, especially reading and writing. In Fall Semester, the academic skills are reinforced, and the focus moves to combining those skills with the students' chosen content and helping them refine their language skills further.

Course Design Influences

With the above objectives in mind, it was deemed helpful to look to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Through its policy on education, MEXT wants to increase group learning in order to foster students that are autonomous, collaborative, and creative.

The Advanced English course is simple in design, but it allows teachers the freedom to make it as complex or as simple as is deemed necessary. To foster autonomy in students, it is important to also foster autonomy with teachers. One supports the other and it is unlikely that a teacher can teach students to be autonomous if they have no autonomy themselves. An added bonus of autonomy means that teachers and students can work together to create a course that directly relates to the students' needs. With students coming from a number of different departments, no one course would be able to satisfy their diverse needs. The beauty of teacher autonomy here is that teachers can fashion the course around content that is directly relevant to the students' field of studies. This brings learning efficiency and motivates the students because they are not wasting time learning something that holds little to no relevance to their lives or area of study.

Collaboration requires group work. Therefore, in order to develop collaboration skills, the students need to work in groups. Group projects provide a very good context in which students can learn to develop their collaboration skills. Additionally, group projects present teachers with many opportunities to help their students learn skills such as building interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, project management and organizational skills. The projects also provide an opportunity for students to take control of

their learning goals and the design of their projects, thus fostering autonomy and creativity.

An Example Project

The year-long Advanced English course is divided into two halves. In the Spring Semester, the focus is on academic skills. Here the students study the reading, writing and presentation skills that will form the basis of the course. Then, in the Fall Semester, these skills are recycled and reinforced as the course shifts its focus to project work where the students can better hone their collaborative and creative skills.

The value of having students work on projects in groups cannot be understated. A typical project will take around 4 weeks for a class meeting twice a week to complete from planning to assessment (about 8 classes). A project will allow the students to engage on a much deeper level in all aspects of the task. On an interpersonal level, they will have to organize and manage themselves throughout the course of the project, and also learn how to overcome various challenges together.

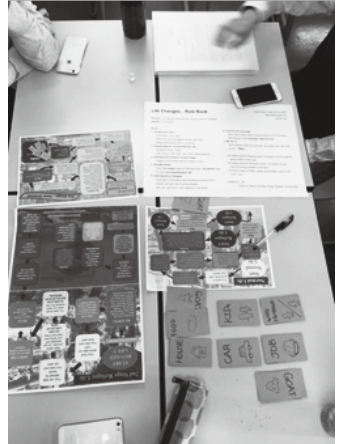
A project I have had great success with in terms of learning outcomes is the Educational Board Game project. This project is connected to the theme of global issues. The students first study about various global issues in the world, such as global warming, poverty, refugees, sustainable development, etc. The class then splits into workgroups, and each group chooses one issue

Syllabus Sample: Advanced English Course 1

Week	Topic	Content	Skills & Activities
Week 1	Project 1: Global Issues	Discussion on contemporary global issues. Group forming. Defining research topics.	Research into a global issue Group development Report writing
Week 2		Kinds of board games. PDCA cycles of continuous development	Making an educational board game that teaches a specific global issue. Research, planning, drafting, and development of board game.
Week 3		Designing and testing the board game.	Planning, drafting, and further development of board game.
Week 4		Assessing and reporting on how well the games achieve the aims.	Report writing (final drafts)

to study in depth. The next step is to study the elements of a board game,

The project then moves into a stage of research and development. Workgroups are required to research their issue and submit a report that outlines the causes, problems and solutions. The concept of a continuous cycle of development such as a PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle is then introduced, and groups must work together to draft their board game, trial it and improve it in three cycles: in-group feedback and assessment (their group), out-group (another group) and final assessment from the teacher.



Sample Educational Board Game

Not only do the students research one issue in depth, but through the process of the project, they also teach the rest of the class that one issue, and so five global issues are shared and learned in depth throughout the class.

Board games provide a good format for a project. In the planning and development stages of the project, the games engage the students and require them to think deeply about the different influences that cause a global issue. The games also provide a good challenge that they need to collaborate on in order to solve, and they further provide students with a multitude of skill areas to practice from research to design.

Moreover, the games themselves provide a kind of experiential learning as the play the game and interact with the other players. One of the design principles of the games is that players must interact with each other, and this forces the players into problem solving scenarios.

Conclusion

In summary, the Advanced English course is an outstanding course to teach. It takes the best of the best students, incorporates modern teaching methodology and combines these with current educational aims, while further providing both teachers and students with a context in which both parties can develop and grow. For an English language teacher, this kind of course is as good as it gets.

Syllabus

上級英語 1 (春学期)

授業の目標

Course Objectives

高度なリーディング力を身につけると同時に、情報収集に基づく本格的なリサーチペーパーを書く力を育成する。

授業の内容

Course Contents

週2回の集中クラスで、アカデミックなテーマを扱った難易度の高い英文を効率よく読むスキルを訓練しながら、文献読解や調査による情報収集に基づく、引用を含む本格的なリサーチペーパーの書き方やプレゼンテーションの基礎を学ぶ。

授業計画

Course Schedule

1. 授業概要説明、作文の書式とスタイル
2. 読解スキル (1) ・パラグラフの特徴
3. 読解スキル (2) ・パラグラフの種類 (1)
4. 読解スキル (3) ・パラグラフの種類 (2)
5. 読解スキル (4) ・エッセイの構造 (1)
6. 読解スキル (5) ・エッセイの種類 (1)
7. 情報収集の方法・中間課題
8. 読解スキル (6) ・エッセイの種類 (2)
9. 読解スキル (7) ・エッセイの種類 (3)
10. 読解スキル (8) ・引用の方法 (1)
11. 最終課題の準備 (1) 引用の方法 (2)
12. 最終課題の準備 (2)
13. 最終課題完成、発表、提出
14. 授業のまとめ

Syllabus

上級英語2 (秋学期)

授業の目標

Course Objectives

アカデミックなテーマで課題に取り組むことを通して、英語で学問領域を学ぶ基礎を築く。

授業の内容

Course Contents

週2回の集中クラスにおいて、グループで取り上げるテーマを決め、関連した資料を収集し、それに基づきディスカッションを行い、グループで協力しながらプレゼンテーションを行う。その上で、各自がリサーチペーパーを完成させる。

授業計画

Course Schedule

1. 授業概要説明、作文の書式とスタイル
2. プロジェクト (1) 導入、情報収集
3. プロジェクト (1) 構想、情報収集
4. プロジェクト (1) 発表準備
5. プロジェクト (1) 発表、レポート提出
6. プロジェクト (2) 導入、情報収集
7. プロジェクト (2) 構想、情報収集
8. プロジェクト (2) 発表準備
9. プロジェクト (2) 発表、レポート提出
10. プロジェクト (3) 導入、情報収集
11. プロジェクト (3) 構想、情報収集
12. プロジェクト (3) 発表準備
13. プロジェクト (3) 発表、レポート提出
14. 授業のまとめ