

Superior International Active Learning Led by Taiwanese and Japanese Educators

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I have participated in the Asian Students Exchange Program (ASEP) more than 16 times. In 1997, Dr. Chen Nianshing (professor at National Sun Yat-sen University) and I met to design the Asian Students Exchange Program (ASEP), aiming to enhance ICT utilization and English education in the Asian region. We have been working, as the staff of an APEC-related organization, to narrow digital divides. This year, in 2015, we welcomed the 16th anniversary of the Asian Student Exchange project with the warm-hearted support of the Board Chair of Kaohsiung Bureau of Education, Director Fan, the Principal of Kaohsiung Senior High School, Dr. Hsieh and English Teacher Mr.Hugo. Without their observations and suggestions, we could not have completed ASEP 2015.



Figure 1 ASEP Site

Theoretical Background

ASEP and its sister project, World Youth Meeting (WYM), 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.

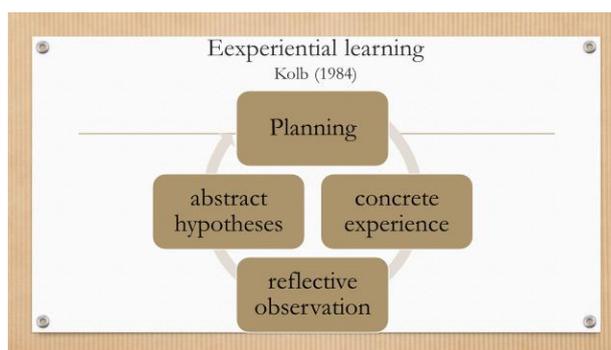


Figure 2 Kolb Experiential Learning

Recent Hypotheses (new solution) involve how to act interaction with audience. ASEP 2015 and WYM 2015 have addressed this issue.

Inquiry-based Learning

When students tackle this theme, they autonomously engage in **Inquiry-based Learning**, characterized by the following factors:

- ✚ Motivation based on a sense of purpose and authenticity, thanks to “real world” tasks and issues leading students on the stage of ASEP.
- ✚ Encouragement for students to become co-creators of their learning with Japanese students.
- ✚ 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 the topic of **Traveling and Learning**. Each item of the taxonomy illustrates how students can deepen their knowledge through collaborative work in each host school of Kaohsiung City.

Remembering: Referring to long-term memory, students show concrete images and compare them with foreign peers.

Understanding: Students come to know the differences between a “traveler” and a “tourist.”

Applying: In groups, students discuss how to clarify which is core message and supportive topics 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.

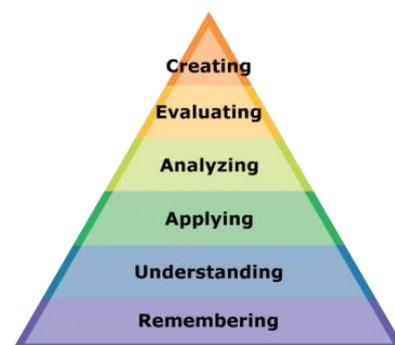


Figure 3 Bloom’s Taxonomy

(Fig.1 Based on Pohl, 2000, *Learning to Think, Thinking to Learn, p. 8*)

Methodology and Results

After gathering about 150 participants from Japan, we travel to the beautiful city of Kaohsiung. Students are assigned to partner schools and aim to complete the collaborative presentation by the designated day, Dec. 29, ASEP2015, at Kaohsiung Senior H.S.

We established three stages for this project:

Before the event: We primarily used Skype to share ideas and get acquainted with one another. To prepare for the presentation, we shared draft PPT files and practiced the delivery through occasional face-to-face meetings in Taiwan.

Event: A stage was prepared by the host school Kaohsiung Senior H.S. The event included an enjoyable dance group in the opening ceremony, presentation, and a farewell party.

Post event: Reports and preparation for WYM 2016.

Findings

After over 16 years of experience with this event, we've learned the following, and we continue to improve day by day.

How to make an effective presentation

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.

How to enhance relations between Taiwan and Japan

Respect each other and learn from each other.

Review the history of the past two hundred years, deepening relations now and tomorrow.

Remember the end of World War II: the Taiwanese have been calm and

peaceful toward the defeated Japan.

Remember the recent warm-hearted action and support after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Features of ASEP

After observing students' excellent presentations, I found some strong points.

Presentations

Speech rate. It was easy for the audience, even junior high school students, to follow the presentations.

File-making. Each presentation maintained a core message and several supporting topics; ultimately, the presentation contents inspired the audience to take action in the near future.

Teachers' collaboration. This was the first time some Taiwanese English teachers had led an international team in making a joint presentation and overcoming language barriers. They had to mentor students in the process of developing their English communication, and facilitate discussion in English. In this heterogeneous environment, it seemed difficult for the Japanese students to express differing opinions, but with the support of the Taiwanese and Japanese teachers, they gained the ability to create something new. The Taiwanese friends must have expended great effort to complete the final presentation and find ways to manage global, international classes.

Conclusion

We have been involved for nearly two decades in these two international collaborative projects. They have brought to light the criteria for effective presentation, particularly concerning Asian English. With respect to ICT education, despite rapid hardware developments, we have consistently and effectively used ICT by maintaining focus on its educational function, such as how to keep a “standby feeling” using SNS or the Internet.

The most important thing is human resources, namely teachers. Overcoming obstacles involving factors such as financial support and school curriculum, teachers remain involved in these two international learning environments, contributing to global education, tackling language barriers and English communication, and thinking about active learning internationally.

The Japanese government advocates a policy of “globally minded

human resources.” Without a doubt, the teachers here fit that description.

References

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