

LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING IN A JAPANESE INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY: A QUALITATIVE CURRICULUM EVALUATION

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March 2015

Thesis Presented to the Higher Degree Committee of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Asia
Pacific Studies

Abstract

Moving from a macro overview of curriculum reform in Japan to a microanalysis of the language program in one institution, the main research question that drives the current study is *how does the English language curriculum in a Japanese international university function to prepare Japanese university students academically and linguistically?*. Specific research questions and objectives evaluating the curriculum components and their integration with outside-classroom language practice follow the general inquiry. Firstly, they aim at examining students' and teachers' critical responses to the implementation of the curriculum. Secondly, they examine the linguistic, academic, cultural gains and integration of outside- classroom language learning and practice.

The setting of the study is the Language Studies Department in University E (pseudonyms). Within the framework models of curriculum evaluation, I used the model proposed by Brown (1995). The methodology used is qualitative case study design. The inquiry included a total of 60 interviews from 45 respondents (teachers, students and program administrators). I conducted direct class observations to all English language

levels and study abroad pre-departure and post-return courses. Analysis of curriculum documents and outside-classroom language learning material served for program descriptions and data triangulation.

The main findings obtained showed that firstly, the writing skill and outside classroom extensive reading practice are meeting students' needs within the curriculum for English based subjects, especially for tasks such as writing reports and reading relevant literature related to their major. Students' listening and speaking skills proficiency remain weak despite being in an international campus. Secondly, outside classroom practice has been found to be most effective through study abroad and exchange programs. However, results showed that students' participation in the programs is still limited. Similarly, other existent on-campus opportunities for language practice such as the interaction with international students still lack effective organization for systematic language practice. Consequently, there is an increasing need to raise students' motivation to make the most of their outside classroom international environment on campus in order to practice more the language learned inside the classroom. Findings revealed that the Objectives, Materials and Teaching components of the curriculum are meeting students' academic needs more accurately.

Results in the current study imply that not only English Language Teaching will continue to play an essential role in Higher Education, but it will be increasingly characterized by individualized and self-learning. The analysis on the integration of inside and outside classroom services is expected to contribute to the theory of curriculum evaluation for the further development of evaluation models, as well as to a more needs-addressing-oriented design of English-medium instruction at any university where English as a Foreign Language is taught.