

Summer Session 2019 : Innovation

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This paper goes over the innovations that took place for Summer Session 2019, a two-week intensive program for first-year students in the Department of International Liberal Arts. After a brief discussion of the changes in learning environment created by a new BYOD program, modifications to the program utilizing concepts of Blended Learning are described. The results of a student survey are also presented and discussed. This paper concludes with thoughts on what contributed to the success of this Summer Session.

Introduction

Beginning with the start of the 2017 school year, the Department of International Liberal Arts at Otemon Gakuin University implemented a new curriculum for its incoming first-year students. With the goal of developing global citizens with not only foreign-language skills, but also a deep understanding of the role culture plays in communication, the first year of this curriculum is heavily focused on English language learning. At the conclusion their first year, all students in the department are expected to participate in one of two study abroad options: a four-week program in Australia or a two-week/four-week program held on the island of Cebu in the Philippines.

In an effort to capitalize on the English lessons taught in their first semester (Spring) and to give students a taste of what study abroad might be like; the new curriculum provides for an opportunity to “study abroad” in Japan. This opportunity takes the form of an intensive two-week Summer Session course that is taught in late August/early September. Over 10 teaching days, students experience 45 hours of instruction, which is double the number of contact hours for most classes taught in a 15-week semester.

In the summer of 2019, the third iteration of this program was taught. The background, general design and delivery of this course over the first two years has been discussed elsewhere (see papers by Hara and Thornton in this volume). This paper looks at the changes made in 2019 and goes over the results of a survey completed by students at the conclusion of this course.

This paper concludes with a concept for facilitating innovation in teaching.

Summer Session 2019

As explained in other papers in this volume, from its onset, Summer Session was intended to somewhat mimic the experiences students could expect to have when they study abroad. Therefore, a conscious effort was made to have diversity in teaching staff. For 2019, most obvious were the individual differences in varieties of English: North American, Australian, and non-native varieties taught by Japanese instructors fluent in English. Other differences included educational background, experience, and familiarity with using technology in teaching. Four out of the five teachers had experience teaching at least one previous Summer Session. Table 1 lists some of the characteristics of the five people who taught Summer Session 2019.

Table 1 . Variables among teaching staff for Summer Session 2019.

	Full-Time or Part-Time	Prior Summer Sessions Taught	Participation in Planning Sessions for 2019	Experience teaching these students	Native Language
Teacher 1	FT	2	Yes	No	North American English
Teacher 2	FT	2	Yes	Yes	Japanese
Teacher 3	FT	1	Yes	Yes	Japanese
Teacher 4	PT	1	No	No	North American English
Teacher 5	PT	0	No	No	Australian English

BYOD

The biggest change for Summer Session 2019 over previous years was a change in environment. For 2019, this program was to be taught at the new campus in Sojiji. Another environmental change was one of computer access. In previous years, there had been no access to computer classrooms, so technology use by students could not be expected. However, beginning with the 2019 school year, all incoming first-year students were expected to have their own computers as part of a newly implemented “bring your own device” (BYOD) program. If they didn’t already own one, students were required to purchase laptop computers upon their

matriculation to the university and they were expected to have those devices charged and ready to use in their classes. This was a program we wished to capitalize upon as we began to prepare for the 2019 Summer Session program Innovation

Innovation

In 2019, Summer Session was redesigned to take advantage of the BYOD program that the students had grown used to during their first semester classes. The end result was a blend of in-class interaction and online engagement. “Blended Learning” is a relatively new term that has been described as “a coherent design approach that openly assesses and integrates the strengths of face-to-face and online learning to address worthwhile educational goals” (Garrison & Vughan, 2008, p. x). More generally, blended learning refers to a learning environment where students have opportunities for both face-to-face (F2F) and computer mediated interactions. However, while there is no commonly agreed upon definition as to what it means for the practitioner (Riley et al., 2014; Tshabalala, Ndeya-Ndereya, & Merwe, 2014), there is acceptance that blended learning comes in many forms (Picciano, 2009).

Blend for Summer Session 2019

Our goal in taking advantage of the BYOD program was to create a learning environment where students could not only access information anytime/anywhere, but also actively use their devices in active collaboration in and creation of projects. This was accomplished through a change in the way material was presented to students and a change in the project-work that students spent a third of their class-time on.

Materials

In previous years, materials to be used in class that had been prepared by teachers were collected and printed into a notebook that was distributed to students in the first class period of Summer Session. With this year, in an effort to give students anytime/anywhere access to all materials related to Summer Session, a website, which had been created for previous iterations of this program, was enhanced using the new [Google Sites](#). Through the use of [tinyurl.com](#), a simple web address was created for easy access: [tinyurl.com/oguss2019](#). In 2019, the notebook was digitized, modified, and placed online.

The homepage to the Summer Session website contained an orientation video, links to Week1/Week2 classes, a link to the homework page, and a link to pages containing project information. The website itself contained pages individualized for each teacher's learning materials under headings for Week 1 and Week 2 classes. There was also a navigation bar at the top of each screen that allowed for students/faculty to easily navigate to their desired page. Instructions for major parts of the program were all online, presented in the form of text/screencasts/screenshots. Presenting information in this way served two purposes: it provided all students with the same messaging and it provided the teaching faculty with a common reference to use as they worked with their students on their individual lessons and program-wide project work. Figure 1 shows the Program's homepage.



Figure 1 . Summer Session Homepage: tinyurl.com/oguss2019. Screenshot courtesy of the author.

Projects

As with previous Summer Sessions, third period was set aside for project work. On the surface projects were designed to foster collaborative and communicative skills in addition to developing computer related skills. Individually, task completion also required some reflection on Japan and Japanese culture, especially that which might be of interest to non-Japanese.

Project 1 : Create a theme-based trip through Japan

This project, which had previously been completed as a poster presentation was changed to one using PowerPoint. In it, student groups had to decide on a theme-based trip through Japan. The “theme” was up to the student groups to decide, but by pursuing a theme, students were required evaluate possible destinations critically as they sought to include appropriate stops that were truly representative of their chosen themes. For communication, collaboration, and the facilitation of group-work, students were shown how they could use one of the affordances of Office 365 and create one PowerPoint file that could be shared among all group members. Through this feature, all members of the group could work on actively building the presentation at the same time, with other members’ changes/additions showing up in real time on each individual’s screen. On the fifth day (Friday), groups made presentations to the rest of the class where they received comments and feedback.

Project 2 : Create a video highlighting “Cool Kansai”

For the last several years, “Cool Japan” has been an advertising catchphrase for commercials promoting Japan to inbound tourism. Even OGU’s Department of Global Japanese Studies has a “Cool Japan” program of study. Capitalizing on students’ familiarity with this phrasing, the second project asked students to create their own videos, only they had to narrow their focus to Cool Kansai. Parameters for the videos were as follows:

- Length between 90 and 120 seconds
- Contents include 8 or more scenes
- Videos must be captured by students’ own devices
- Final videos must include a voice track, background music, and text or subtitles.

This project work was scheduled for the second week of instruction, but students were informed of the required contents during the first week so that they would have more time to record their own videos.

From the planning stage all the way through to implementation, there was some faculty concern about not being able to suitably instruct students in the creation of a video. There was also the realization that as students were coming to classes with a variety of devices, there could be no expectation that they all had familiarity with (or even possessed) video editing software. To facilitate this project for both faculty and students, a free video editor, Open Shot, which is available for both the Windows and Macintosh computer platforms, was recommended as a possible software tool to use for the creation of this video. A total of six screencasts were created

to provide a visual example of how to complete the project. These were uploaded to the Summer Session website. They covered transferring video/audio files from smartphones to the cloud or a computer, adding files to Open Shot, adding text and captions, and editing in Open Shot.

All students were required to submit a video in order to make sure that all students actively participated in the content creation. However, a group aspect was also added to this project. Groups were composed of up to 4 students and each student had to upload at least 4 mini-videos to a shared folder for the group. Students were free to use any videos from that shared folder in their final project. By being able to draw from the same pool of video resources, it was hoped that individuals would focus less on any perceived (lack of) quality of their own videos and more on the creative process of making the best possible video using the same resources as the other students in the group. On the day of submission, the best video from each group was chosen by the groups and that information was relayed to their teacher.

For the final class period of Summer Session, all the students were gathered in WIL Hall. The videos chosen as best from all the groups from each class had been uploaded to a YouTube playlist. These 35 videos were played on the three giant screens located there. This gave students the opportunity to view videos from groups in other classes in addition to those they had already seen. Based on students' audible reactions to the various videos, it was apparent that they were interested in watching the videos that other students had made.

Student Survey

At the conclusion of Summer Session 2019, students were asked to complete a 10-item survey related to their participation in this program. The survey was conducted through Microsoft Forms. Students accessed the survey on their smart phones through a QR code projected on the big screens. The survey was not anonymous as identifying information was used to confirm attendance in this final session. Responses were collected from 143 students.

Results

Tables 1 through 4 show results students' self-perceptions regarding their effort and enjoyment throughout the program in general and about the two projects specifically. The scale for these items ranged from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest. Group names indicate the different classes the students were assigned to throughout the session.

Table 1. How much did you enjoy/like Summer Session ?

Group (n)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Philippines (26)	8.30	1.61
Brazil (35)	8.22	2.14
Netherlands (27)	8.14	2.17
India (29)	8.06	1.85
Nigeria (26)	7.84	1.51

The mean average of all the groups was 8.12 with a standard deviation of 1.87. A one-way ANOVA found no statistically significant differences between groups ($F = .233$, $p = .919$).

Table 2. How much effort did you put into your classes for Summer Session ?

Group (n)	Mean	Std. Deviation
India (29)	8.51	1.30
Netherlands (27)	8.33	1.59
Philippines (26)	8.23	1.65
Brazil (35)	8.05	2.15
Nigeria (26)	7.96	1.77

The mean average of all the groups was 8.21 with a standard deviation of 1.72. A one-way ANOVA found no statistically significant differences between groups ($F = .459$, $p = .765$).

Table 3. How much did you like making the group PowerPoint for Project 1 ?

Group (n)	Mean	Std. Deviation
India (29)	8.24	1.68
Philippines (26)	7.50	1.84
Netherlands (27)	7.48	2.08
Brazil (35)	7.37	2.38
Nigeria (26)	7.08	2.31

The mean average of all the groups was 7.54 with a standard deviation of 2.10. A one-way ANOVA found no statistically significant differences between groups ($F = .1201$, $p = .313$).

Table 4. How much did you like making the 'Cool Kansai' video for Project 2 ?

Group (n)	Mean	Std. Deviation
India (29)	8.31	1.56
Brazil (35)	8.23	2.07
Nigeria (26)	7.42	2.39
Philippines (26)	7.31	2.75
Netherlands (27)	7.19	2.40

The mean average of all the groups was 7.73 with a standard deviation of 2.27. A one-way ANOVA found no statistically significant differences between groups ($F = 1.663$, $p = .162$).

Regarding these four items, additional statistical analyses were performed to see to what extent these responses correlated to each other. There was a relatively strong Pearson's correlation when looking at students' self-perceptions of effort spent during Summer Session 2019 and their enjoyment of the program, with r of .607 ($p < .0001$). In isolation, there were statistically significant Pearson's correlations between student effort and how much students enjoyed making the two different projects. For Project 1, the r was .325 ($p < .0001$) and for Project 2, it was .437 ($p < .0001$). Similar results were seen when looking at enjoyment, with Projects 1 and 2 showing moderate correlations of r at .428 and .439 respectively, also with $p < .0001$.

The first open-ended question on the survey to pretend that they were working at Open Campus and were asked by a visiting high school student, "What is Summer Session?". The following are a sampling of student responses:

- Summer session is a insensitive workshop in two weeks and we will learn English for preparing to go for overseas study abroad.
- It is most important thing in summer vacation.
- コミュニケーション能力が上がり、人とも話せる機会が増える。そうすると自分の英語力だけではなく、人間性としても成長できる。
- これから海外に行った時などに使える英語が楽しく学べる！
- I will answer that summer session is very fantastic!

A second open-ended question asked students what they thought was the most memorable part of Summer Session 2019. Out of 143 responses, 43 students (30%) specifically mentioned the Cool Kansai video and 18 (12.5%) mentioned group projects and the PowerPoint presentation (Project 1). All five teachers were mentioned by name for specific lessons they had taught during the session. Social skills such as talking with classmates and making new friends were also frequently mentioned. The following are three examples of this type of entry:

- The most memorial thing is communicate with classmates. I didn't have opportunities to talk with them in spring semester. I could enjoy classes with them!
- I remember that I was able to learn with students happily.
- I talked with my friends about Japanese society.

Some comments that reflected a possible impact Summer Session had on students' approach

to language learning in general are reflected by statements such as:

- I will remember to state my opinions.
- I will remember that motivation is the best important thing to learn English. Lisa taught us this.
- Importance to speak English from myself.

The third open-ended item asked students to write a final message to their primary teacher. This was a required item, but there were no requirements about comment length. Out of 143 responses, only 8 (5.6%) were general thank-yous. The remaining 135 (94.4%) students included specifics about their teacher, Summer Session, or their intention to continue studying English. As examples, one entry intended for each teacher has been included here:

- To Ayami, Thank you for teaching to me about Japanese culture and new vocabulary. I gained the new knowledges and passion because of your class! I'm looking forward to studying with you in the Autumn semester!
- Lisa! I like Lisa is the best teacher in summer session and My class teacher. Thank you! I try to studying English more.
- Megumi. Thank you for two weeks. I had a good time. I'm glad I did a presentation. It was difficult to speak using English. But this class was very fun! It was good in your class! Thank you!!
- Dear Ross, I could not only enjoy your class but also learn many important things. I'll try everything when I go abroad. I hope you to keep your health.
- Ms. Zoe, Thank you for teaching us English more deeply. Thanks to you, I felt that English was more interesting. And did you want to use English in the future.

Discussion

Results from the survey indicate that the innovations introduced in Summer Session 2019 were successful. It would be understandable if a 2-week intensive program taught in the middle of summer vacation might not be approached with much enthusiasm. However, when it came to enjoyment, a mean average of 8.12 out of 10 indicates that the teaching staff was successful in creating a unique learning environment that these students found enjoyable. A lack of statistically significant differences between groups means that individual differences of the five teachers did not supersede the intended impact of program-wide goals and objectives of Summer Session. This was seen as a positive result because it indicates a solidly designed program where success

resulted not only from the course content, but also from the five faculty members working together as a collaborative team. Similarly, a mean average of 8.21 out of 10 on effort spent completing the requirements of Summer Session, also without statistically significant differences between groups, indicates that we were successful in designing a program that challenged students without overwhelming them. As could be expected, there was a moderate positive correlation between effort and enjoyment.

While none of the students specifically commented on the use of their devices, 42.5% of the students did specifically reference the project-work as the most memorable part of Summer Session 2019. As both projects were implemented with the idea of utilizing the added potential of BYOD, it seems we were successful in creating a seamless blend of both F2F and computer-mediated interactions to achieve our educational goals.

For the most part, student responses on the open-ended questions were all positive and reflected a level of student satisfaction with and/or appreciation for the Summer Session program. While the student comments listed in this paper might seem overly positive, they reflected the overall theme of all of the responses. Only a few students offered any kind of criticism, but those were limited to comments like one student saying the classroom was too cold and another saying the homework was difficult. And while one student simply wrote 「めっちゃしんどいよ」 in the question asking what students would say if they were talking about Summer Session at Open Campus, another wrote, 「朝はやいししんどいけど終わった時の達成感はすごいです。」

Limitations

This survey was completed during the final class period of Summer Session 2019, just after students had finished watching the 35 Cool Kansai videos chosen as the best from each class. It is possible that the timing of the survey in relation to watching the videos inflated the memorability of the Cool Kansai project as compared to other activities students did in class. Also, a lack of anonymity on the surveys might have led students to input answers differently than they might have if they were anonymous.

Conclusion

Looking at the results from the student survey, Summer Session 2019 was a success. A change in campus and the introduction of a BYOD program allowed for a major redesign of

how Summer Session was presented to the students and the types of projects students could be reasonably expected to complete. While the innovations to the program described in this paper utilized technology, the focus of the design was in allowing students to work on tasks and collaborate in ways that are not possible without the technology. Success in this program was possible due in large part to the willingness of the teaching staff to work together, share ideas, discuss concerns, and trust each other. The mind is the greatest tool. Innovation in teaching comes only when students are allowed to perform beyond the limitations or expectations of their teachers.

References

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