

# Casebook of International Activities @ Kansai University

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Joint Student Seminar between the Hideyuki Shiroshita Seminar at Kansai University and the Shyh-Yuan Maa Seminar at Ming Chuan University

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## Outline

- Main activity / Joint student activity with an overseas university
- Partner organization / Ming Chuan University (Taiwan)
- Date / July 7, 2017 (continued from 2015)
- Attendees / 23 people from Kansai University; 9 people from Ming Chuan University



>> PARTICIPANTS IN THE JOINT STUDENT SEMINAR HELD ON THE KANSAI UNIVERSITY MUSE CAMPUS

—Please describe how you launched this initiative.

Shiroshita: For about two months in the summer of 2008, while still a student, I received internship-like training at the National Science and Technology Center for Disaster Reduction (NCDR) in Taiwan.

“All students who have experienced failure in effectively communicating at a joint seminar with an overseas university agree that they fervently hope to be able to communicate better at the next similar opportunity.”

NCDR is housed in a building that serves as the Taiwanese core of national-level crisis management, where a disaster response headquarters will be set up with the presence of the President in case of a possible or actual large-scale disaster. Downstairs from NCDR, located on the ninth floor of the building, is the National Fire Agency (NFA) of the Ministry of the Interior, which is the Taiwanese equivalent to the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in Japan. I happened to

become acquainted with a staff member of the NFA, who worked in the same building as I, leading me to know Associate Professor Maa at Ming Chuan University, who participated in a joint project with the NFA at that time. This means that the relationship between Professor Maa and me has continued for nearly 10 years. I asked Professor Maa to join us in holding joint seminars, and the one was held at Ming Chuan University in 2015.



>> STUDENTS MAKING A PRESENTATION IN ENGLISH

—What do you do specifically at the joint seminars?

Shiroshita: Basically, students make presentations in English on their research results, and each party visits the partner university. When we visit the Taiwanese party, we have the partner university introduced to us, and both parties make seminar-style presentations on the content of everyday studies. I hope we will be able to conduct field studies or the like, such as a study tour of a disaster management center, in the future.

—What achievements has your initiative accomplished?

Shiroshita: I believe the greatest achievement is students' higher motivation to study English. Japan

has an established translation culture, doesn't it? That is why we can easily read translated materials instead of translating original materials written in a foreign language to Japanese ourselves. I think the reality is that we have few opportunities to use English even though we have long been taught English since junior high school, and we may even be happy to go through our entire life without using English. In such a situation, all students who have experienced a failure in effectively communicating at a joint seminar with an overseas university agree that they hope to be able to communicate better at the next similar opportunity. This is the first point that comes to mind as our joint seminars' main advantage.

## Voices of participating students



YUTA ADACHI, 3RD-YEAR STUDENT IN THE FACULTY OF SOCIETAL SAFETY SCIENCES

—What are you studying now?

Adachi: Since I'm studying disaster education, I challenge myself to read medical literature for that purpose. In this study process, I aim to find features that medical care and disaster education have in common, and further deepen my learning of disaster education.

—Did you face any difficulties when making your presentation at this joint seminar?

Adachi: Since I don't have many opportunities to make a presentation in English, the presentation session in English itself was very hard for me. I personally felt listening to presentations in English was more difficult than making a presentation. I keenly acknowledged the broad differences in English proficiency between me and my seniors in the same seminar.

—How do you think your experience at this joint seminar will help you in the future?

Adachi: I believe that communicating with other people in English by itself had immense importance. It was a good experience, and made me notice that I need to broaden my experience. While I believe the ability to deal with questions and answers will be necessary for me to work in society, I was very surprised that dealing with questions and answers in English was quite difficult, though it's difficult in Japanese as well.



Another advantage is that they enable participating students to notice, from a global perspective, that there are many people who share an interest in disaster management and study it at various higher-education institutions, though disaster management may be a minor academic discipline in Japan.

— I'm impressed with your students' high English proficiency.

Shiroshita: When recruiting new students to my seminar, I always say, "Since there will be many opportunities to use English in my seminar, I hope that students who are interested in international exchanges will readily apply to be a seminar member." That's why none of my students are bewildered when participating in joint seminars with an overseas university, including this

joint seminar. Instead, I guess they might think, "It figures. Such an opportunity has come." I think my students must like English, though they may be shy about it.

— What would you like your students to learn in addition to what's mentioned above?

Shiroshita: To receive guests from abroad, my students cooperate with one another to make various preparations. I believe such an experience may teach them important lessons. I mean experience in the process of preparing, welcoming our guests, and ensuring they leave Japan with happy memories. Since we are in turn welcomed when visiting a university abroad, I hope that my students will learn such mutual relationships from their experience. In this sense, I'm really impressed how students these days so easily exchange contacts with students from abroad with LINE or a similar app. Although I challenge my students to communicate with other people in English, I understand that asking questions in English in public can be very difficult for them. But, I hope that their individual efforts to communicate with people from abroad and form friendships will give them a valuable lesson for the future in some ways.

— Have you ever faced any difficulties in this initiative?

Shiroshita: I haven't experienced any particular difficulties. Since our partner university is in Taiwan, there are few things students have to be concerned about when visiting the university there. Concerning travel expenses, with low-cost airlines, we can travel abroad relatively cheaply these days, so a trip to Taiwan and back is not so hard on students, I think.

If I have to dare mention a difficulty, it would be coordination between the conveniences of the Taiwanese side and the Japanese side. Because the

period of our joint seminar (in July) coincides with the final stage of writing graduation or master's theses at the university in Taiwan, the Taiwanese side has many materials to make presentations. By contrast, since our university in Japan is in the initial stage of an academic year in the joint seminar period, the presentations of my students in my seminar are not yet fully developed in their contents by any means. That's why many of the Japanese students present the content of their senior studies, with a small number of presentations on their own studies. A joint seminar in March would benefit us in the opposite way. It's difficult to coordinate between a university in a country with an academic year that begins in September and a university in a country with an academic year that begins in April.

— Tell me about the path forward for your initiative.

Shiroshita: We have an important plan to conclude an inter-faculty partnership agreement with Ming Chuan University. Since we have received a draft of the agreement from the other party, I believe the negotiations will be completed in the near future. We also previously had a plan to have the Dean at Ming Chuan University visit the Dean of the Faculty of Societal Safety Sciences at Kansai University, though circumstances surrounding the other side prevented the plan from being carried out.

Moreover, my students express their hope of visiting Ming Chuan University in turn, so I expect the next joint seminar will be held in Taiwan. When I consulted Associate Professor Maa, whom I mentioned earlier, he said he would welcome us. I believe this exchange activity will continue further.

## Voices of participating students



SHUICHIHRO NODA, 4TH-YEAR STUDENT IN THE FACULTY OF SOCIETAL SAFETY SCIENCES

— What are you studying now?

Noda: I have been aiming to be a teacher since before, and have been interested in disaster education. Especially, I have had a keen interest in disaster education using FM radio, in which my seniors were involved. Since I have been hoping to be a teacher, I have been very interested in places for learning. That's why I'm studying disaster management focusing on use of FM radio for that purpose, with the aim of using the radio to create places for learning about disaster management and to share heightened awareness of disaster management with everyone, as I mentioned in my presentation today. I'm studying with a strong interest in creating places for learning, in particular.

— Did you face any difficulties when making your presentation at this joint seminar?

Noda: I don't think disaster management studies are known widely yet. Nevertheless, I'm dealing with the much less common theme of use of mini FM radio in the less common discipline of disaster management. While seeing my seniors face difficulties putting into practice what they had studied, I thought their initiative was very difficult. It was very hard for me to use English to clearly explain the contents of my study, which would be difficult to explain otherwise.

— How do you think your experience at this joint seminar will help you in the future?

Noda: I believe this experience has enabled me to talk with people from abroad without fear.



>> A SCENE FROM THE ICEBREAKING SESSION

## Voices of participating students

— What are you studying now?

Aoki: I'm now studying by reading a book titled Manabi wo Manabu (Learning and Un-Learning, in a Workshop Environment), which argues that it is important for experts in disaster education to not only teach citizens but also learn together with them. While studying these things, I'm planning to conduct a practical study such as by doing tsunami evacuation drills with elementary school students, as I mentioned in my presentation just now at the joint seminar.

— Did you face any difficulties when making your presentation at this joint seminar?

Aoki: It was difficult for me to present in English, and I was worried that my pronunciation might not be correct enough to make me understood by other participants. Even in Japan, I have difficulty explain-

ing disaster education or convincing others in my faculty that not only science and technology but also places for learning are important. Explaining such things in English was even much harder for me, and I suffered severely.

— How do you think your experience at this joint seminar will help you in the future?

Aoki: I think that, since we were offered a rare opportunity to communicate with people from abroad in English, it was good for us. This experience has enhanced my motivation to study English even harder.



MAYA AOKI, 4TH-YEAR STUDENT IN THE FACULTY OF SOCIETAL SAFETY SCIENCES



Researcher's name/

Hideyuki Shiroshita

Faculty and department/

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Academic status (qualification)/

Associate Professor

Research field/

Disaster education; natural disaster science

Researcher information/

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