

Design and Construction of SNS Platform and "Working Room" for Making Community for Fostering Japanese Teachers

Masayuki Murakami¹, Naoki Nakamata²,
Kumiko Nakanishi³, and Kikuko Yui³

¹ Research Center for Multi-Media Education, Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Japan
masayuki@murakami-lab.org

² International Research Institute for Studies in Language and Peace,
Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Japan

³ Faculty of Foreign Studies, , Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Japan

Abstract. In this report, we introduce the Japanese teacher training program at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. We explain our SNS platform which contributes to the program's success and "Working Room" which support the communication among students and teachers. We think that the combination SNS with "Working Room" is very effective for making community. Students can post a variety of information on the SNS, such as self-descriptions, blogs, BBS entries, and reports of practice teaching. They can share information on Japanese teaching and communicate with teachers and other students. As an additional advantage, they can treat the SNS as a daily journal reflecting their teaching training progress. Students come to "Working Room" with some purposes such as preparing trial lessons. Some freshman can see work of senior students in the room, some changes happen gradually; senior students give advice to freshman students; freshman students read others' diary and write comment in SNS.

Keywords: SNS, Japanese Teaching, making community, reflection.

1 Introduction

In recent years, Social Networking Services (SNS) such as Facebook have gained popularity among the youth. Some universities have developed their own SNS for education and service for two primary reasons: One is that many students use SNS to communicate with friends and obtain a range of information. The other is that we can construct an SNS site to use OpenPNE, a free, SNS platform software. Tokushima University manages the "Shikoku Campus SNS," which supports collaboration among universities in Shikoku (Sagayama et al. 2008). Nihon Fukushi University conducts an international collaboration project, where students communicate with foreign students on an SNS (Sato et al. 2007). The alumni association of the university opens their SNS to communicate with alumni of several universities, such as the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University.

Japanese language education extends around the world; up to 135,000 students study Japanese in Japan, and there are another 2.98 million students in foreign countries. However, there is a shortage of Japanese teachers outside Japan. It is important to train Japanese teachers who operate in multicultural societies, thus, we should design effective Japanese teacher training courses. Kyoto University of Foreign Studies began its SNS in April 2007, based on OpenPNE (Murakami et al. 2008). In June 2008, some professors utilized the SNS for supporting eight courses and approximately 100 users consisting of professors, officers, and students. In this SNS, we tried to support communication between Japanese students who wish to be Japanese language teachers and Chinese students studying Japanese. This practice is extremely effective for both types of students, however, problems did exist.

In this paper, we introduce the Japanese teacher training program at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. We explain our SNS platform which contributes to the program's success and "Working Room" which support the communication among students and teachers. The aim of the program is developing Japanese language teachers who can teach in an increasingly multicultural world.

2 Japanese Teacher Training Project Corresponding to Multicultural World

In this chapter, we introduce our new project to train Japanese teachers in this multicultural society(Murakami et al. 2009). The Kyoto University of Foreign Studies (KUFS) aimed at fostering Japanese teachers and commenced their "Japanese teacher training program" in 2000. This program emphasizes educational experience in teaching Japanese by giving various opportunities to the students. They support non-native Japanese students to learn Japanese in a regional school, practice-teach Japanese with foreign students at KUFS, and teach Japanese in a foreign university for a month or a year.

However, some problems did arise through these practices. The main problem was insufficient communication among students and between students and their professors. They maintained a teaching diary that they gave to their professors after practicing, but they could not communicate during practice teaching and share their experiences. It is important for students to express their experiences, share their perceptions, and exchange their views. This process could calm their worries and allow them to compare their experiences with one another. Another problem was the lack of teaching material corresponding to various needs. We needed a space where students and professors could discuss teaching Japanese and share resources for making the materials that they required.

In order to solve these problems, KUFS started the "Japanese Teacher Training Program Corresponding to a Multicultural World" in 2008, which is supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. This project supports teacher training in several ways. We prepared a "Working room" at KUFS with research associates and several books, where students can study, discuss, and ask questions to the research associate in the room.

3 SNS for Japanese Teacher Training

3.1 Overview of SNS "JapaS"

As part of the “Japanese Teacher Training Program Corresponding to a Multicultural World,” we constructed and managed an SNS platform to solve these problems. We named the SNS platform “JapaS” as an abbreviation of “JAPAnese teacher training Sns.” JapaS is written in Java. Students who wish to be Japanese teachers, students who study Japanese, and professors use JapaS. In May 2010, users of JapaS numbered approximately 600 students, 10 professors, some officers, and some alumni who work as Japanese teachers abroad.

JapaS provides functions such as writing profiles, sending private messages, writing personal blogs, viewing lists of friends, organizing schedules, and so on. We show an example of a personal page in Figure 1. Users write their name, nickname, department and self-description in their profile. They can choose an access level: open to the public, friends only, or closed. Personal blog space can be used for writing something freely and informally, such as daily life, a hobby, or their general thoughts. They can create a community for any purpose. A Bulletin Board System (BBS) is available in each community. They can be informed of updates on a friend’s blog and BBS of the community by Really Simple Syndication (RSS).

3.2 Community of Japanese Teacher Training

The main community is the “Japanese Teacher Training Project,” to which users belong. The function of the community is to provide discussion space, messages to professors, a community blog, general information, and a common resource for material. The community pages are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

“Discussion space” is a multi-purpose BBS: to search resources, deliberate teaching plans, and share information on conferences and jobs.

The function of the “Message to professor” feature is that students can consult with professors about teaching Japanese. The value of this function is that professors can check their message list and understand the student’s situation. The messages can be viewed only by the student who posts them and their professor, so students can securely and honestly express their concerns to professors.

The “Community blog” is written by research associates, professors, and teaching assistants. In this blog, they write pieces on Japanese teaching and daily life. The content of this blog is extremely useful for students as it contains expert knowledge. Frequent updates to the blog provide current information and motivate students to participate in JapaS.

“Common resource for material” is a space where students upload photos, picture cards, sentence pattern practices, and practice exercises. When they upload a resource, they annotate it with a short explanation to facilitate searching

3.3 Community of Teaching Practice

The “Teaching Practice” community in JapaS is the space where students enter their daily teaching portfolio during practice-teaching. They enter the teaching content,

good points, improvements needed and made, and their impressions of cultural differences. They conduct self-evaluation on teaching practice on five levels based on the following six evaluation points. We also show an example of the evaluation page in Figure 4.

- Did you sufficiently prepare the teaching plan?
- Did you speak loudly and clearly during the lecture?
- Did you write an appropriate explanation on the whiteboard?
- Did you prepare the teaching material well?
- Did you sufficiently interact with the students?
- Did you conduct the class well?



Fig. 1. Snapshot of the personal page



Fig. 2. Snapshot of the community page



Fig. 3. Example of the teaching portfolio

日本語教育実習評価シート 自己評価			
目標達成度	努力度	達成度	自己評価
授業の準備はしっかりとされたか？	4.5点	4.5点	4.5点
授業中の声は大きめにはっきりさせられたか？	4.5点	4.5点	4.5点
授業をまとめてできたか？	3普通	3普通	3普通
材料を読み取って理解できたか？	3普通	3普通	3普通
学習者とのビーチャー（ペア）でのやり取りができたか？	3普通	3普通	3普通
授業の進め方（スムーズ）だったか？	4.5点	4.5点	4.5点

Fig. 4. Evaluation Sheet of Teaching Practice

Students can reflect on their experiences, express their understanding as it evolves, and reorganize their knowledge when they write their teaching portfolio. When they view teaching portfolios of their peers, they understand differences among them and rethink the characteristics of their own teaching plan or style. In addition, they get accustomed to communicating with other students about Japanese teaching.

Moreover, they search and read the journals of senior students in order to obtain useful information before beginning their own teaching practice. We believe that first-hand information from senior students is extremely useful for new students.

4 "Working Room"

In chapter 3, we explain the SNS for Japanese teacher training. We believe that using SNS for education has some merits, but we understand the existence of the demerit. The main problem is that students don't login SNS. Because, they feel bother of using SNS which we prepare for educational purpose. We think that there are two reasons. One is that the connection among them is very important. It is difficult for them to communicate unknown people. The other is that they feel nervous when their comments are seen by the other students and teachers. They are conscious that they have to write good comments and diary, so that makes them hesitant.

We try to design to construct community of Japanese teacher training, and prepare the "Working Room" to make face-to-face communication. We think that the combination SNS with "Working Room" is very effective for making community.

In "Working Room", there are a researcher and some Teaching Assistants. The researcher can give advices to students because he has experience of Japanese teacher and his major is Japanese linguistic. Teaching Assistants are graduate students of Japanese teaching, so they can support the researcher and follow students. And there are many books of Japanese teaching and some computer for using SNS.

Students come to "Working Room" with some purposes. Main purpose is to prepare trial lessons. Most senior students have to conduct trial lessons, so some senior students usually conduct preparation of lessons because they can discuss among them and take some advice from the researcher.

Some freshman or sophomore students come to "Working Room" in various reasons, such as professors' suggestion. They can see work of senior students in the room, some changes happen gradually; senior students give advice to freshman students; freshman students read others' diary and write comment in SNS.



Fig. 5. Snapshot of "Working Room"

5 Practice and Evaluation

5.1 Practice Overview

We use JapaS beginning in the spring semester of 2009. Students wrote about the process of preparing a teaching plan and their impressions after observing a class with

the help of professors during lectures. They commented on other students' entries and discussed teaching plans progressively as the teaching practice came to a close. When they performed their teaching practice, they suggested good points and points requiring improvement to each other.

Feedback from one another motivated the students. If a student thinks alone he/she may feel isolated and depressed, and this was prevented by the ongoing peer communication. It is clear that communication on the SNS supported the student's learning and improved their teaching practice.

We conduct questionnaire about JapaS for freshman students in 2010. The questionnaire contained seven questions. The respondents comprised 66 students.

5.2 Using Frequency and Writing Diary

As the response to "How much do you see JapaS per Week?", 12 students see JapaS more than 3 times and 19 students see 2 times per week. We get the result that about half of students usually see JapaS. About the other half of students, 28 students see 1 time, 7 students see less than 1 time per week.

58 students(88%) write diary after every lecture according to questionnaire. The result of response to "writing diary is very useful for preparing trial lesson?" is Figure 6. 82% students give good evaluation for writing diary.

Figure 7 show the result of "How do you take into account writing diary when you look at others' lecture?" 29(44%) students usually look at lecture with conscious of writing diary.

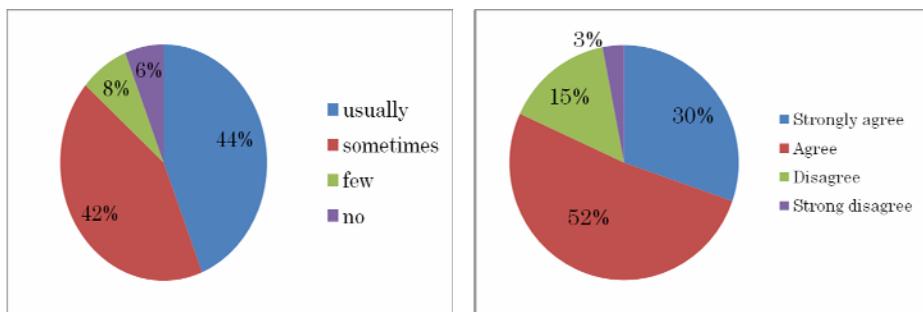


Fig. 6. "Writing diary is very useful for preparing trial lesson?"

Fig. 7. "How do you take into account writing diary when looking at lecture?"

5.3 Writing Comments to Other Students' Diary

Figure 8 shows the result of "How much do you write comments to other students' diary?". About 60 % of students usually write comments.

The result of response to "reading diary and comment is very useful for preparing trial lesson?" is Figure 9. 80% students give good evaluation for reading diary and comments.

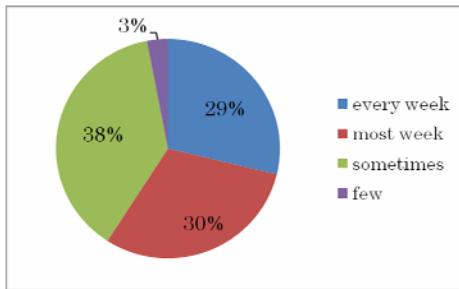


Fig. 8. "How much do you write comments to other students' diary?"

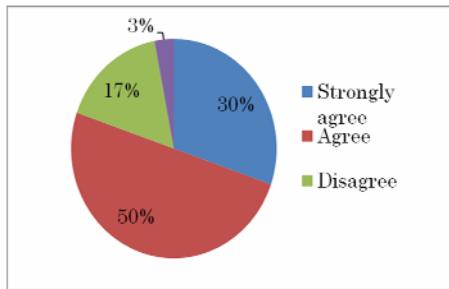


Fig. 9. "Reading diary and comment is very useful for preparing trial lesson?"

6 Conclusion

In this report, we introduce the Japanese teacher training program at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies. We explain our SNS platform which contributes to the program's success and "Working Room" which support the communication among students and teachers. We think that the combination SNS with "Working Room" is very effective for making community. The program's goal is developing Japanese teachers who can teach in a rapidly evolving multicultural society.

Students write various types information on the SNS such as self-descriptions, blogs, BBS entries, and reports on practice teaching. They can share information on Japanese teaching and communicate with teachers and other students. As an additional advantage, they can treat the SNS as a daily journal reflecting their teaching training progress.

Students come to "Working Room" with some purposes such as preparing trial lessons. Some freshman can see work of senior students in the room, some changes happen gradually; senior students give advice to freshman students; freshman students read others' diary and write comment in SNS.

We conduct questionnaire about JapaS for freshman students in 2010. As a result, Students give high evaluation, they use JapaS positively.

In the future, we will conduct an evaluation of the learning outcomes of students. Moreover, we will research the effect of combination JapaS and "Working room" in detail.

References

1. Murakami, M., Iwasaki, C.: Educational Improvement using SNS at University. In: 2008 International Conference for Media in Education (2008)
2. Sagayama, K., Kanenishi, K., Matsuura, K., Kume, K., Miyoshi, Y., Minato, J., Yano, Y.: Application of Campus SNS for Supporting Students and Their Behavior. In: Proceedings of ICCE 2008, pp. 581–586 (2008)
3. Sato, S., Kagete, H.: A Case of Overseas Study Tour based on an International Collaborative Learning Model. In: 2007 International Conference for Media in Education (2007)
4. Murakami, M., Nakamata, N., Nakanishi, K., Yui, K.: Design and Construction of an SNS Platform for Fostering Japanese Teachers. In: E-Learn 2009 (2009)