

報告

Preparation and Use of “Authentic English” Web Materials at The University of Tokushima (Tokushima, Japan)

Kohji NAKASHIMA *, Masanori MIYATA**, Kazuhiro W. MAKABE*, Donald STURGE*, Meredith STEPHENS*,
Kayoko UENO*

* Faculty of Integrated Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokushima

**Center for University Extension, The University of Tokushima

This paper outlines a pilot project funded by *The President's Fund of the University of Tokushima* that was designed to create English educational material to motivate students to acquire “Authentic English.” Recording was at sites in Honolulu (Hawaii, USA), Storrs (Connecticut, USA), Montreal (Canada) and Brisbane (Australia). Material was designed for use in teaching EFL students at our university who are taking general English courses. Section One of this paper refers to the aims and process of making English educational material for the Web. Sections Two, Three, and Four refer to how the materials were created. Section Five introduces technical aspects of the Web application. Sections Six and Seven discuss merits and problems related to the “Authentic English” material and its production.

1. Web Content for English Education

Kayoko Ueno

English teaching at Japanese universities is shifting from having students use English literature textbooks to equipping students to use English in various real life situations. Relatively little interesting and topical teaching material caters to this shift and there is a distinct lack of video teaching material. Students prefer visual images as well as audio recordings, but much visual material is out of date.

We aimed to provide interesting material for our students and to secure a consistent supply of teaching material that allows students to avoid having to buy textbooks that quickly become dated and uninteresting. Our approach to developing material seems particularly appropriate, considering the many English classes at our university and our economy of scale.

The pilot project was carried out by teachers at our university, including some with expertise in system design and some native speakers of English. We created teaching material for students of varying levels of English competence and various academic

disciplines. We designed a method for distributing the new material to our classrooms.

In fact, Chiba University has a system somewhat similar to ours that attempts to teach students “Authentic English.” Our project started with interviews by Ryou Sakuma and Kouji Nakashima with faculty members at Chiba University who pioneered “Authentic English” in Japan. Those interviews revealed that, while Chiba University provided sufficient funds to outsource shooting, editing, and settle copyright issues, project planners must arrange everything connected with the project, including obtaining copyright consent from every person who was recorded.

The Chiba University system requires software downloading for each computer terminal, which hinders easy access. In our system, contents run on the university website and our students can use computers equipped with a web browser. Recording took place on the explicit understanding that materials would appear only on computers at our university, so access to the material is now restricted to protect against copyright infringement.

At an early stage of this project, we invited Ms Kazuko Katsufuji (Anan National College of Technology) to explore the latest developments regarding Authentic English. Discussion with her included ideas that English is a communication tool for non-native and native speakers, that we expect our students to acquire a type of English that is neither American English nor British English, but something more easily attainable, and that there are many types of authentic English. The discussion encouraged us to have our project feature some interviews with non-native English speakers.

With the co-operation of a lawyer, we drew up a "Letter of Consent" to overcome concerns related to copyright protection and decided on some feasible shooting locations. After shooting, we edited the video files, made transcripts and designed Web applications.

2. Interviews in Connecticut, USA

Masanori Miyata

Associate Professor Nakashima and I made a visit to Connecticut, USA to make video interviews from September 8th to 12th, 2007. Interviews were scheduled with the help of Professor Keith Barker, Associate Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education and Director of the Institute of Teaching and Learning at the University of Connecticut. Prof. Barker had previously visited the University of Tokushima for the University Education Conference in 2005 to lecture on faculty development at the University of Connecticut.

Most interviewees were teachers and students at Storrs campus, UCONN. We asked them to identify themselves and speak about their majors, courses, hometowns, interests, hobbies and families. Interviews were up to 5 minutes for teachers and up to 3 minutes for the others.

Interviewees:

Academic Staff

1. Thomas J. Peters, Professor of Computer Science

Engineering

2. David M. Moss, Professor of Environment Education

3. Preston A. Britner, Associate Professor of Psychology

4. Cheryl Beck, Professor of Nursing

5. Kathryn Stewart Hegedus, Professor of Nursing

Graduate Students

1. Patrick M. Joyce, 4th-year PhD candidate majoring in Statistics

2. Michael Kapralos, 1st-year PhD candidate majoring in Electrical Engineering

3. Kathryn Theiss, 3rd-year PhD candidate majoring in Biology

4. Nicole R. McClure, PhD candidate majoring in Comparative Sociology

5. Jenna J. Bachinski, 1st-year Master's student majoring in Education

6. Heidi Stinauer, 1st-year Master's student majoring in Chemical Engineering

Undergraduate Students

1. David Rivera, sophomore majoring in Nursing

2. Christian Mendonca, senior majoring in Finance

3. Kelsey Murphy, junior majoring in Education

4. Kayla Rmanot, senior majoring in Physiology and Biology

5. Samantha Mirabella, junior majoring in Political Science

International Students

1. Patrick J. Flaherty, graduate student from Denmark majoring in Economics

2. Acima Cheriyan, sophomore from India majoring in Natural Resource Management

Part-time Students

1. Steven H. Taylor, tour guide at Mystic Port

2. Christine Hilliard, clerk at the Institute of Teaching and Learning

Catering Staff

1. Roselyn Lamont, manager of the restaurant on campus

Campus Tour Student Guides:

1. Joshua Obeiter, junior majoring in Business Marketing
2. Tyler Pathson, junior majoring in Engineering
3. Matt Sparzo, sophomore majoring in Real Estate
4. Ashley Loria, senior majoring in Communication Disorder
5. Alpa Patel, sophomore majoring in Economics

3. Interviews in Montreal, Canada

Masanori Miyata

Associate Professor Nakashima and I visited Montreal, Quebec, Canada to make video recordings of interviews from September 13th to 15th, 2007. Interviews were scheduled with the help of Professor Cynthia Weston, Director of Teaching and Learning Services at McGill University. Prof. Weston ran a Faculty Development Workshop at the University of Ehime in March, 2007.

We asked interviewees to identify themselves and speak about their majors, courses, hometowns, interests, hobbies and families. Interviews were up to 5 minutes for teachers and up to 3 minutes for the others.

Interviewees:

Academic Staff, Ancillary Staff and Students:

1. Mariela Tovar, Professor of Teaching and Learning
2. Marcy Slapcoff, educational developer
3. Sharon Roy, educational developer
4. Susan Cowan, support staff
5. Jessica Aboumi, undergraduate majoring in Biology (Psychology minor)

4. Interviews in Brisbane, Australia

Kazuhiro W. Makabe

I visited the University of Queensland, St. Lucia,

Brisbane, Australia for five days in August and September 2007 to take videos for the Authentic English project. This site was selected for several reasons:

- (1) Many Japanese students visit Oceania for sightseeing and study and some students from the University of Tokushima go to New Zealand for exchange programs. Extensive economic contact links Oceania with Japan, so that business people, including alumni of this university, visit the area regularly.
- (2) It is assumed that students and alumni in Oceania use English, even though the area has many non-native English-speaking people with various mother tongues and ethnic backgrounds. It is also assumed that Japanese students are unfamiliar with local English varieties, including Australian English.
- (3) Recording was relatively easy to arrange because the interviewer had an Australian friend who is a professor at the University of Queensland.

In Brisbane, the main interviewees were faculty members, post-doctoral researchers, graduate students and undergraduate students. Before recording, the interviewer explained the purpose and outline of the project in order to obtain interviewee consent. A few months before arriving on campus, the interviewer confirmed recording schedules to ensure that videos could be recorded and speakers had sufficient English ability. All interviewees were volunteers. The interviewer had legal permission from the Marketing Division to record employees and students of the university on condition that the video would be used only for English classes at the University of Tokushima.

The interviewer requested interviewees to introduce themselves and engage in conversation. Some videos were easy for beginners to understand, others were for advanced students. In order to elicit "World English" material, many videos featured non-native English speakers. The edited version of each video was supposed to be 1-2 minutes long, so recordings were 2-5 minutes long, on the assumption

that they would be edited later.

On reflection, there were problems with camera work and audio recording of ambient sound, particularly in videos made outdoors. In any future project, recording must be done more carefully.

5. Technical report on "Authentic English" Web Application

Kohji Nakashima

The video recorder (SONY HANDYCAM DCR-SR60) used for this project has 30 MB hard-disk media and can record motion pictures for approximately 7 hours and 20 minutes in HQ mode (9 Mbps). Video files are encoded in multiplexed-MPEG1/MPEG2 format (AVC) in default configuration, a size too large for our campus LAN system to manage because it requires excessive time for client computers to download from the server.

We compared several video formats and decided to convert the video files into MPEG4 (H.264, AAC) format, allowing file size to be reduced more than 90% without significantly decreasing image quality.

Comparison of some features of the original "Connecticut 04" video file and the converted MPEG4/H.264 file:

	Original Video Hard Drive Recording	Converted File
Format:	Multiplexed-MPEG1/MPEG2	MPEG4
Codec:	AVC	H.264, AAC
Duration:	149seconds	149 seconds
File Size:	161.2MB	12.0 MB
Screen Size:	847×480pixels	640 × 352 pixels

Motion pictures can be compressed efficiently using MPEG4 format and our LAN can handle the smaller file size with relative ease. The basic procedure for converting motion pictures into the final format on the web server is:

(1) Convert original multiplexed-MPEG1/MP EG2 formatted files into MPEG4 (H.264, AAC)

using free software 'iSquint' on MacBook Pro.

(2) Trim video images and amplify audio using Apple software "iMovie '08", and export to QuickTime format (m4v file extension).

Converted and edited video files were used for making English transcripts. We provided several hints to help students comprehend the English on the videos, and made a list of several keywords and phrases to remember from the transcripts. To deliver files using HTTP streaming method via the LAN on campus, we created Web pages in XHTML (EXtensible HyperText Markup Language), CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) and JavaScript on Apache 2.2 (Web server) and Fedora 7 (Linux OS).

While making this application software, it was observed that DOM (Document Object Model) techniques using JavaScript language make a user-friendly and easily understandable interface. DOM will be increasingly prominent in the field of educational technology and we plan to use DOM to refine the "Authentic English" Web application in the future. We aim to build a more effective and enjoyable environment for university students to experience various forms of authentic English collected from various regions.

URL of "Authentic English" :

<http://uzu.ias.tokushima-u.ac.jp/autheng/>

(Due to copyright terms, site access is permitted only for computers used at the University of Tokushima.)

6. Notes on Using A/V Speech Recordings for Teaching English in Japan

Donald Sturge

A/V recordings of people making impromptu speeches about themselves is not true conversational English but such recordings may help students understand that various English speakers have various speaking styles and that some people speak better and are more understandable than others.

A number of points must be carefully considered before preparing and using such recordings, including:

(1) Topic

Speeches made by ordinary people about their lives and work should interest Japanese students and this may be difficult, especially if the speakers' ages and interests differ widely from the Japanese students' ages and interests.

(2) Technical Production

Clear video image may help a learner better understand what a speaker says; clear sound is essential in A/V recordings designed for language teaching.

Generally, camera angles should be frontal or nearly frontal and the field of vision should be fixed or near fixed, which can cause complications if more than one person is being recorded simultaneously, especially if only one camera is being used.

A relatively inexpensive video camera may be adequate for amateur video recording, but the microphone integrated in a cheaper video camera is not designed to record audio that is good enough for language instruction. Generally, for acceptable audio, good quality microphones should be hand-held or attached to clothing. If a single microphone is used for two or more people, the microphone must be positioned so that sound levels are correct for all speakers.

Outdoor recording may be esthetically pleasing, but background noise can cause extra problems in recording outdoors. Acoustics in indoor areas vary greatly, increasing or reducing sound quality.

(3) Reinforcement of Undesirable Speech Habits

Recorded speech can contain non-standard pronunciation, unusual speed of delivery, unusual speech patterns, locally understood vocabulary items, rambling sentence constructions, grammatical errors, non sequiturs, expressions (i.e. "you know," "...ah...," "wanna" and "woulda") and other elements that are unwelcome in academic speech or writing. It is difficult to give students an accurate transcript of real speech without reinforcing undesirable speech habits.

(4) Suitable Learner Targets

It may be counter-productive to challenge all but

advanced learners to understand or copy native English speakers. It may be unreasonable to expect that a learner could hear what a native speaker hears, especially if utterances overlap in conversation. In fact, a native English speaker might not be sure of exactly what is said on a recorded speech, even after repeatedly replaying the recording. In some cases, speech details may be understood by a native English speaker because those details are part of a familiar formula rather than because the details can be heard precisely.

(5) Suitability for Japanese Pedagogy

Dissecting English for testing discrete points is common in Japanese classrooms and such an approach can help students feel that they are progressing satisfactorily and help teachers believe that they are teaching well enough. Given such conditions, it is hard to see how dissecting recorded speech can produce material superior to graded materials already in use.

Recordings of English speech can be a basis for exercises that are more global, such as summarizing or paraphrasing, but such exercises might be challenging for teachers who may not have the ability or interest in correcting student-produced comment. Also, in Japan, the pedagogical value of global language exercises based on recordings of native English speakers may be questionable, since traditional methods of teaching and testing right/wrong answers related to discrete points seem to satisfy most Japanese teachers and students, even though such testing does little to prepare students for real world English.

Perhaps most disturbing for English training in Japan, recorded speech shows that native speakers sometimes have imperfect grammar or flawed sentence construction, so the A/V materials cast an unwelcome shadow over the grammar-based teaching and testing of discrete points that dominate English language training in Japan.

7. The Case for an Authentic English Listening Program

Meredith STEPHENS

I believe that interaction is essential for successful language acquisition. Students need to listen to English, experiment with speaking English, and receive immediate feedback. However opportunities for interaction in Japan are scarce. The ratio of English speakers to Japanese speakers in Japan is extremely low. Chances to converse in English for Japanese students are therefore minimal. The next best method of language acquisition is increasing input, and this can be achieved with the current program of Authentic English. The first reason this Authentic English program will be of benefit to our students is that it will improve their listening comprehension. Although students have recently improved their listening skills thanks to the inclusion of a listening component to the Centre Exam, the need for improved listening skills persists. Some may question the need for improving listening skills. Some argue that most students are likely to be confronted more often with the need to read English than to understand spoken English. However, I believe, that massive exposure is necessary to acquire a foreign language (see McDonald, 1987, p. 397), and in particular, massive listening exposure.

This program of authentic English will help achieve the aim of providing support in increasing students' exposure to English. Listening is clearly the first step in language acquisition. Once students have acquired a solid base in listening skills they will be prepared to move onto reading, and the productive skills of speaking and writing. The premature demand for productive skills without a solid input base is bound to be counterproductive because students will be producing language in a vacuum. The storage of language acquired from listening exposure is the base for creative expression. The alternative route, of acquiring language from grammatical exercises and the memorisation of vocabulary, taxes the memory and meets with less success.

The Authentic English program will lay the foundation for productive skills of speaking and writing by providing students with increased listening exposure. I believe some element of compulsion would be useful to our students. Only those who are highly motivated are likely to undertake a self-study program. A review of studies of self-access centres has revealed that they are vastly underused by students (Reinders, 1995). Making attendance at self-study a part of course work will ensure that its benefits reach a maximum number of students. However, mere exposure is insufficient. Feedback is essential if students are to benefit from their listening. Students could be required to complete comprehension exercises at the computer to demonstrate they have made use of this facility. Such exercises could include dictation, or other exercises that require a written response to what they have listened to. In the age of the internet there are now in fact multiple chances for students to listen to authentic English, but only by requiring students to formally respond to what they have heard can the listening experience be fully exploited. The exercises could be marked by computer and the results sent to the teacher to form a part of the total assessment.

Finally, students need to take responsibility for their own learning. No amount of teaching and testing can ensure that students can acquire English. Students must take steps themselves to provide maximum opportunity for meaningful input. The Authentic English program will enable students to take control over their own learning. Students can choose which extract they will listen to, at a time of their choosing. There will be no excuse for passivity because this is a self-directed exercise. Once students grow accustomed to the practice of self-directed learning, they will become aware of its benefits and hopefully it will become a lifelong habit.

References

McDonald, J. (1987) Sentence interpretation in bilingual speakers of English and

Dutch. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 8 (4),
379-413.

Reinders, H. (2005) Nonparticipation in university
language support. *JALT Journal Journal*, 27 (2),
209-226.