Changes and Further Reflections

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Course Overview:

One big change for the class was that it became an elective rather than a requirement for students in the Education for International Understanding Course. Because of this and a forced scheduling overlap with at least two other important classes, only eight of the 17 sophomores (along with one junior from a different major) registered this semester. One positive outcome of this was that, practically speaking, only those students who were interested took the class. Another was that it allowed more individual interaction in a course which, with its highly seminar-like nature, requires such one-on-one interaction more than usual.

The students were to accomplish two major tasks: create personal web pages in both English and Japanese, and produce JavaScript-based interactive educational material promoting language learning and/or cultural awareness. As in previous years, they worked individually on the former and in groups on the latter.

Use of Moodle:

There were no textbooks for this course, and materials either produced by the instructor or selected from sources on the Internet were disseminated to the students via Moodle, the online learning management system. This came in especially handy with the various script examples. The students were able to see the scripts in action and also to view (and copy) the source code in order to adapt it for their own projects.

Students, on their part, used Moodle to submit assignments throughout the course, and to observe and provide feedback on their classmates' submissions.

Basic Make-up of the Course:

As in previous years, the course followed the following timeline: Basic Introduction (one class only), Web Page Authoring (HTML and CSS), and Interactive Projects with JavaScript.
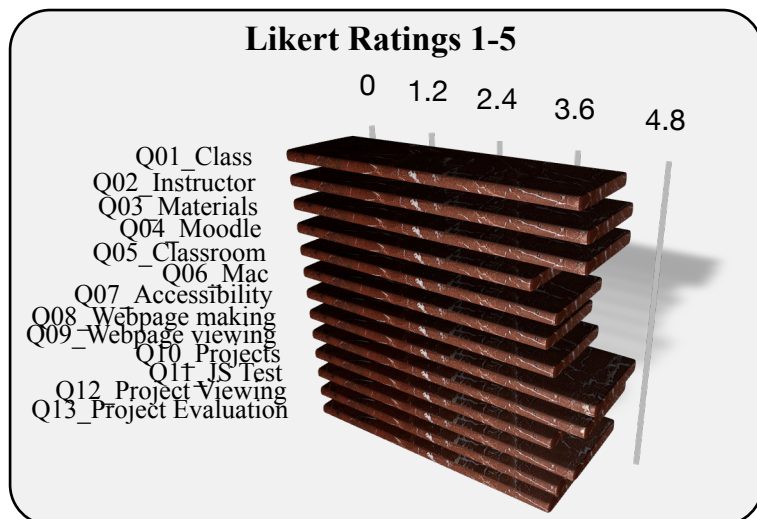
Student-based Course Evaluation:

The students were asked to complete a very simple evaluation at the end of the course. The evaluation was conducted via a Moodle questionnaire module and consisted of two parts: 13 items asking for ratings on a five-point Likert scale followed by three open-ended items.

Likert Scale Ratings:

The students were asked to rate the following: Class, Instructor, Materials, Moodle, Classroom, Accessibility, Webpage making, Webpage viewing, Projects, JS Test, Project Viewing, and Project Evaluation. A chart with the results of the Likert-rated items is given below.

As in the past, the students tended to rate the webpage portion of the course somewhat higher than the projects with the JavaScript interactivity. This year, however, the gap closed in a positive way; both areas received rather high ratings. Changing his teaching method, DRB refrained from going into great detail on the mechanics and theory behind scripting; he provided examples which might be useful in the projects, explained how they worked, and then let the students adapt them to their needs. This seemed to work much better than previous methods.

Actually, the average of all the ratings, at 4.37, was higher than the 3.85 average for last year, and similar items received higher ratings across the board. This was quite gratifying, but the one concern is that newly instituted Moodle Use ranked the lowest of all the items. For the instructor, being able to use Moodle was a godsend, but perhaps the students, who were taking the course for the first time, have no basis to compare what it would be like without Moodle. In any case, at 3.89, the rating for Moodle was still respectable; one might hope, however, that the students recognize just how useful it is.

Likert Ratings 1-5

0   1.2   2.4   3.6   4.8

Q01_Class
Q02_Instructor
Q03_Materials
Q04_Moodle
Q05_Classroom
Q06_Mac
Q07_Accessibility
Q08_Webpage making
Q09_Webpage viewing
Q10_Projects
Q11_JS Test
Q12_Project Viewing
Q13_Project Evaluation

Open-ended Questions:

The students were given the opportunities to provide comments (suggestions) about the course in three major areas: what they found useful, what they would like to see changed, and general comments. Below are the comments given, translated into English where necessary ("[sic]" is used where the students answered in English). The responses all tended to be positive, even the ones in the section for Changes Needed. In particular, the students seemed to think highly of the Macs and OS X. All in all, the course seems to be moving in a positive direction.

Usefulness:	Changes Needed:	Other Comments
Learning how to make web pages was very useful. I could know how to use Mac and how interesting to use applications.[sic] At the beginning it was difficult and I didn't understand anything, but once I got used to it, it was fun. Learning how to use the Mac was good. Now I want to use Macs. I think this is very useful class for me! I like using computers and I always use Mac. So, it's very interesting class.[sic] It was interesting taking a class like this that was a little different from other classes. Learning to make a website was educational.	I've developed an interest in Macs. Being able to make webpages in the end has given me confidence. I want to make some e-learning materials! Sometimes, I made some web page except for the class.[sic] It was just right. Now I want a Mac.	Thank you for everything, Bogdan.[sic] It was an interesting and fun class. Thank you. Nothing especially.[sic] I enjoyed very much! Thank you![sic] I'm really glad I took this class. If there's another one like it, I want to take it. I was able to learn in a very fun way! Thank you for teaching for a half year. It was very interesting class for me because of you! Thank you love you![sic] It was interesting being able to use JavaScript and all. Thanks for teaching us various things!!!