

Reflections on a Course

国際理解教育／英語・D.R. ボグダン

Preamble:

The class met for the last time only three days ago, so, while the memories of what took place in the course should be fresh, there has not been a great deal of time to consider and properly evaluate all the factors that might go into this report.

Course Overview:

The title of the class might be translated as something like "Current Affairs in the English-speaking World": however, the course has gradually morphed into something more along the lines of a comparative culture course.

This class is open to all students in the Faculty of Education, but primarily students, usually second-term sophomores, majoring in Education for International Understanding (EIU) and English Teachers' Education take it, with a smattering of students from other areas. For the 2010 Fall Term, 31 students registered for the course, and 30 completed it.

Basic Make-up of the Course:

As in previous years, much of the content was based on material from the text *American Communication Patterns* (アメリカ人の生活感覚) by William Gudykunst and 西田ひろ子著.

Use of Moodle:

Continuing the practice set up last year, materials were disseminated to the students via Moodle, the online learning management system, and the students, on their part, used Moodle to submit assignments throughout the course. As a new addition to the class, students participated in online forums, in which they commented and asked questions about content in the textbook and two movies dealing with inter-cultural contact.

Student-based Course Evaluation:

As in previous years, the students were asked to complete a very simple evaluation at the end of the course. The evaluation was conducted using a Moodle questionnaire module and consisted of two parts: 14 statements with which the students were to indicate their agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert scale, followed by four open-ended items.

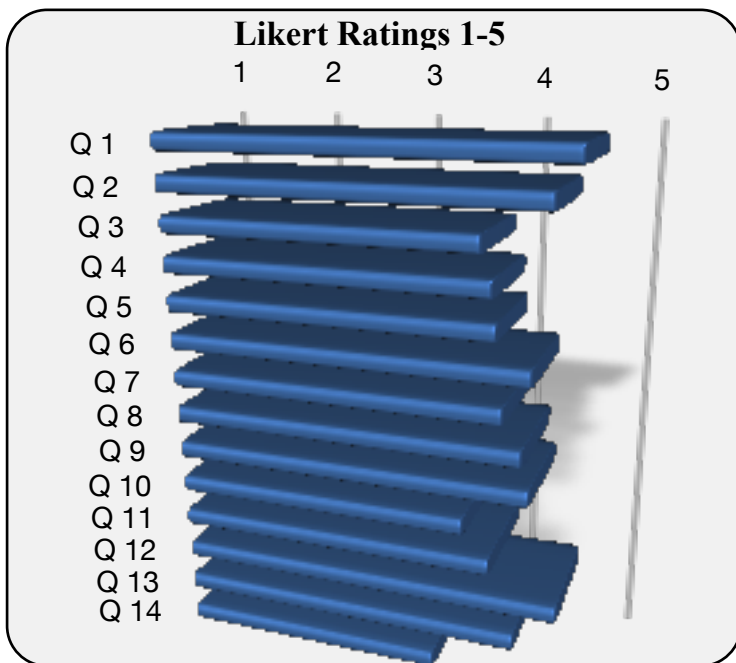
Likert Scale Ratings:

The students were asked to rate various aspects of the class in 13 5-point Likert-scale questions. They were also asked to rate their own performance in Question 14. The questions along with a chart showing the results are given below.

- 1 I enjoyed the course.
- 2 I found the course to be useful.
- 3 The textbook was useful.
- 4 Using Moodle helped me in this class.
- 5 The Moodle forums in general were useful and helpful.
- 6 The movies were educational and helpful.
- 7 Discussing the movies on the Moodle forums was useful.
- 8 The two in-class discussions were helpful.
- 9 The weekly quizzes were helpful in learning the subject matter.

- 10 Correcting the quizzes in class was useful.
- 11 Doing the crosswords was useful.
- 12 Doing the crosswords was enjoyable.
- 13 Writing the final report was educational.
- 14 How would you rate the amount of work you put into the course?

The average rating for the 13 statements about the course was 4.14 and the average of the students' ratings for their own performance was 3.43.



The first two statements, about the general enjoyability and usefulness of the class, received relatively high ratings of 4.6 and 4.4, respectively, while textbook and test correction came in last, at 3.83 and 3.7, respectively.

Both of the latter had problems: the text is old and sometimes outdated, while the correction process tended to take up too much class time (in fact, much more than it had in previous years, for reasons unknown at this point).

The two statements relating to the new addition to the course, the online forums, did not receive particularly high marks, 3.93 and 3.97, but they were not terrible either. The open-ended item about the forums did receive generally positive comments.

Open-ended Questions:

The students were given the opportunities to provide comments (suggestions) about the course in four major areas: what they found useful, what they would like to see changed, general comments, and their impressions of the forums as an educational tool. There were plenty of positive remarks about the course in both the sections on usefulness and general comments, indicated that a reasonable number of the students find the course either useful or enjoyable, or both.

As for the suggestions for changes, most dovetail with the somewhat lower ratings seen regarding the textbook and the quiz correction. As mentioned above, the text is old and needs to be updated or replaced. The students who suggested changes in the quiz grading, were concerned with the amount of time it took. What they did not realize, however, was the grading activity was not as concerned with the grading itself as it was with giving the students a chance to participate actively in class.

The open-ended comments on the usefulness of the discussion forums were generally positive, but some students were concerned with the fact that not all students participated equally. In a perfect world, everyone would participate equally, but, as with any class, there are bound to be differences in student participation. One suggestion made by several students was that time be set aside in class to discuss the Moodle discussions. Hopefully, this is the direction future classes will take if logistics permit.