

Introduction

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Introduction

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This volume is the result of a two-year (April 2010-March 2012) research project on Model United Nations (MUN) supported by a grant from the Research Institute of Kobe City University of Foreign Studies. This is Phase “2” of a project examining how to help facilitate Japanese and other non-native speakers of English to learn about and scaffold their participation in this imagined community, the MUN.

Created nearly eighty-five years ago as the Harvard Model League of Nations, MUN has expanded all over the world from primary through graduate school. Sadako Ogata (UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees 1990-2000) introduced MUN to Japan in 1983, when she was Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Studies at Sophia University.

While MUN is a course of study in many undergraduate institutions in the world, in Japan it is organized by clubs managed by students. Most MUNs at universities in Japan are conducted in Japanese or a mix of English and Japanese, making it impossible for international students who don't speak Japanese to participate. Very few students in Japan get an opportunity to participate abroad in MUN conferences that are in English.

In 2010, Kobe City University of Foreign Studies offered its first Model United Nations class in the International and Cultural Studies Course (ICC) curriculum, with an interuniversity simulation as part of the course work. Todd Thorpe (Kinki University) and Craig Smith (Kyoto University of Foreign Studies) and I co-designed and organize the Japan University English Model United Nations (JUEMUN), an interuniversity English MUN simulation for our students. Thanks to Dr. Donna Hurst Tatsuki (Kobe City University of Foreign Studies) we were able to hold our first simulation as a part of the 2010 Annual International Conference of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) in Nagoya, which she co-chaired. The 3000 educators who attended JALT 2010 had opportunities to observe the simulation, attend a workshop and see the country delegates on stage during the opening ceremony. Kobe City University of Foreign Studies hosted the second annual conference on November 26th and 27th of

2011 with our new President, Chuta Funayama, the founding head of ICC giving the opening address.

What I learned from attending MUN conferences in Asia, Europe, and North America is the power of networking, interdisciplinary collaboration, and benefits for student delegates, faculty, and recruiting officers for graduate school programs. My involvement with the MUN spans over two decades. In 1990, with my colleagues at Kyoto Gaidai Nishi High School we started an MUN unit of study in the curriculum and held what we have been told was the first simulation in English for non-native English speakers. Todd Thorpe and Andrea Paul (Monash University) ran MUN units in the program for many years further scaffolding them for EFL learners. Craig Smith at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies affiliated with the high school observed what we were doing and adopted the MUN cocurricularly. He has been creative taking MUN to new dimensions, holding an international simulation online and later designing and implementing “An Action Model United Nations Conference Imagine Peace 2007”, where resolutions were real projects, some of which received funding to be completed within a year.

In 2002, Craig Smith met Thomas Weiler (Bonn University) at the National Model United Nations conference in New York. Since then, they have attended conferences in each other’s countries and their groups have met abroad. Through Craig Smith I met Thomas Weiler. He introduced my colleague, Dr. Tatsuki and I to the DueMUN 2009 at Duisburg-Essen University where we met Dr. Ash Narain Roy (Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi), a conference guest speaker, advisor for the Indian Delegation and an international workshop participant. Dr. Roy skillfully moves in and out of roles as a diplomat, academic, educator and journalist.

This journal is an example of interdisciplinary collaboration. In his article, Dr. Roy uses the metaphors “dancing elephant” and “flying dragon” to compare India and China. He has included a reading list on these two powerful players on the world stage. Both of these countries need to be understood by all delegates participating in MUN simulations. Thomas Weiler describes two of the largest MUNs, the National MUN and the Harvard World MUN, that he and his students participate in annually. Andrea Paul and I describe an instrument that can be used for teaching, and assessment of spoken interaction in discussion genres to help scaffold students to be able to do MUN. Based on his experience teaching MUN to lower proficiency EFL learners, Todd Thorpe explains the process of the simulation. Educators working with nonnative English speaking

communities have requested an article such as this. Many MUN participants in the world are non-native English speakers. Craig Smith, in his chapter, considers how preparation for, and participation at MUN conferences may contribute to the development self-regulated learning. He also explores a role for teacher-mediation in university-level MUN conferences in Japan. Dr. Tatsuki and I, in our qualitative study, examine what delegates believe they learned at the first JUEMUN conference. The journal ends with Dr. Tatsuki's insightful commentaries on the papers.