An Implementation of the CCDL Project at Waseda University and its Affiliated Universities

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1. The aim of CCDL

Waseda University has been promoting Cross-Cultural Distance Learning (henceforth, CCDL) project since the year 1998. Initially, they started Cyber seminars with Korea University through computer networks. Now they broaden their networks of universities and offer various kinds of Cyber Learning. In this chapter, we would like to discuss benefits obtained from the experiences of CCDL.

The aim of the project is mentioned by Hirano, co-founder of CCDL project.

The aim of this project is, in the first place, to construct mutual understanding and good ties of friendship between students of Waseda University and those of its overseas (particularly Asian) sister universities. Secondly, it aims to develop an effective method for the acquisition of English as a common language and other foreign languages. For the attainment of these aims, the latest multimedia and internet technologies such as video conferencing, chat and e-mail systems are fully utilized.

(https://ccdlsrv.project.mnc.waseda.ac.jp/ccdl/static/document/idea.html)

In sum, Hirano mentions three advantages of CCDL. Students participating in CCDL can (1) acquire English language, (2) develop mutual understanding with overseas students and (3) get used to Information Technology. These three are sought-after skills in today’s society in the new century.

Most of Waseda University students in Japan have already had a basic knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. However, they tend not to have communicative competence and skills because they do not have enough chance and necessity to use English in their daily life. However, Hirano believes only if they had an eminent necessity to use English, they would acquire communicative skills and knowledge in a relatively easy way.

2. A brief outline of CCDL

At the beginning of 1999, when Waseda started to enlarge the CCDL project, Waseda had only 3 overseas schools. However, as of the academic year of 2002 more than 20 schools newly joined the project. As the number of the affiliated universities has increased, even the number of mediated language for communication has increased. For example, CCDL provides participants with opportunities to communicate not only in English, but also in Chinese, Russian, and Japanese. Students who speak English in daily life may have difficulty in finding merits in communicating with EFL students only in English only. Therefore in the sessions of University of Essex in
England, the medium of communication was two languages: English and Japanese. Participants are expected to use their own language in the first half and their target language in the latter half so that they can think of their activities as beneficial. In the case of collaboration with Chinese Department at Korea University, Waseda students learning Chinese communicate with Korean participants in Mandarin Chinese.

Students participating in CCDL are organized by the system on CCDL homepage as in Fig. 1. By the use of the system, they are expected to find partners, communicate with other students and teachers. Since this system plays a central role in the management of CCDL, I would like to focus on introducing what students do and what teachers can do by the use of the system in the following sections.

Fig. 1  Our CCDL homepage
(https://ccdlsrv.project.mnc.waseda.ac.jp/ccdl/index.asp)

3. Students’ Tasks

First, we would like to outline what participants are expected to do. Their tasks consist of roughly five things:
1) Orientation and Profile Registration in HP,
2) Choosing partner and Appoint-making,
3) Weekly Chatting,
4) 200-word Summary in HP, and
5) Occasional Face-to-face Dialog by videoconferencing

We would like to discuss each task more in detail in the following sections.

3.1. Orientation and Profile Registration on HP

Waseda University students participating in CCDL take an orientation course in the first class of the CCDL course. Students can learn what they are going to do in the course and learn how to use some equipment, while teachers provide a guideline for this cyber learning and check students’ computer literacy and teach how to use communication tools, depending on their level.

During the orientation in 2002, about three teaching assistants for technical support were assigned per one class whose class size is about 30 students. A few students had problems with the use of computers and teachers and assistants needed to help them from the very beginning, i.e., starting a browser, typing URL and pressing the enter key to display Web pages. Therefore, teachers and assistants were busy taking care of some novice students, while computer literate students were proceeding the next step by themselves. Moreover, some students did not have their email address yet. We made them sign in online free-mail services such as yahoo mail or hotmail for tentative use. As of 2002, different levels of computer skills are one of the biggest problems
when starting the project. However, that kind of problem will be solved as high school students in
Japan start to learn how to use computers as obligatory.

We will describe what students will learn during the orientation, step by step:

(Step 1) Profile registration

Firstly, they will visit CCDL HP and register their profile. And they are supposed to fill in the following information, as in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization*</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Language level (Chinese)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department/School</td>
<td>Date of birth</td>
<td>Language level (Russian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID*</td>
<td>Email Address*</td>
<td>Language level (Japanese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name in English*</td>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Language level (English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nickname in English</td>
<td>Phone number</td>
<td>First language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name in mother tongue</td>
<td>Residence*</td>
<td>Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We should notice that some information will be disclosed to all the participants. We will bring privacy issues to students’ attention and have them read the privacy policy at [http://ccdlsrv.project.mnc.waseda.ac.jp/ccdl/static/ppolicy/ppolicy_eng.html](http://ccdlsrv.project.mnc.waseda.ac.jp/ccdl/static/ppolicy/ppolicy_eng.html)

(Step 2) Login to the system and make sure that your profile is disclosed in your “profile detail” shown in Fig 2.

(Step 3) Learn how to use communication tools and practice.

We will explain how students will use the equipment for communication. They have 4 tools to carry out their activities: CU-SeeMe, Text Chat, BBS, and Message box. We will teach
what they are and how helpful it is for their study. Table 2 explains what kind of communication tools they can use. If they need more information about the use of tools, let them try to access “Help Page” that explains how to use.

(See also, https://ccdlsrv.project.mnc.waseda.ac.jp/ccdl/static/help/ccdl/eng/index.htm)

Table 2 Four communication tools for CCDL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synchronous CMC</th>
<th>CU-SeeMe</th>
<th>Communicate by video, sound and chat. Reservation is required.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synchronous CMC</td>
<td>Text Chat</td>
<td>Group Chat Room” is provided for each group. “Chat Room All” is open to every student in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronous CMC</td>
<td>BBS</td>
<td>Exchange your information and opinions with other students in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronous CMC</td>
<td>Message Box</td>
<td>Mail system with CCDL web page, which enables students to send messages to teachers and contact with partners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After explaining what to do for CCDL and how to use communication tools, we make students communicate with classmates for practice and encourage computer illiterate students to take extra computer courses or utilize preinstalled software that is designed to improve typing skills.

3.2. Choosing partners and making appointments

After the orientation, students are supposed to find partners by themselves. Although it is preferable that this kind of task is done altogether during the orientation, most of the overseas students do not yet register in the system at the beginning of the course; therefore, this task tends to be postponed at intervals. However, the usage of this is briefly explained during orientation, and Help page helps to give extra guidance to students.

Students log in to the CCDL system and read overseas students’ comments and profiles and apply for the partner that shares their interests and available time for communication.

Fig. 3 Apply for partners

Fig. 3 shows the page of “Apply for a partner”. When students need to find their own partners, they are supposed to open this page. This homepage system shows them some students whose schedules match their available time. By choosing one person among them and pressing
“Apply” button, the system automatically sends an application message to the person. Finally, a pair will be set if the person who has received the application logs in to the HP and approves the application.

### 3.3 Weekly Chatting

After the coupling was set, students start to communicate via Text-chat or CU-SeeMe. Text Chat is a text-based webchat, and CU-SeeMe chat includes visual elements by sending and receiving images. While TextChat can be used wherever a couple like to do, CU-SeeMe limits terminals and people who enter; therefore, we need a great deal of effort to manage CU-SeeMe sessions. Teachers’ management issues will be discussed in 4. However, for the moment, I would like to focus on how students utilize chatting equipments in CCDL course in this section.

**Text Chat**

![Welcome screen of TextChat](image)

Each couple or group will be provided with a room for “Group Chat”; therefore, other students are not allowed to enter freely. In other words, the private use is possible. **Chat Room All** is also available and open to every participant; therefore, students who have not yet had a partner can talk here when somebody is in the room. While students need to make a reservation for CU-SeeMe chatting, they need not reserve the conference room, since TextChat offers the same number of rooms as the number of groups or couples.

![Chat log](image)
As shown in Fig 5, students can save the latest conversation log. CCDL HP enables administrators and teachers to download all the logs of all participants by the use of the buttons in a circle in Fig. 6. We can designate the duration of time for logs. This system is beneficial for teachers to evaluate students, and for researchers to collect learner's data without transcribing them.

**Reservation for CU-SeeMe**

As stated before, CU-SeeMe is limited in the number of terminals and virtual conference rooms. Therefore, they have to reserve a conference room before starting communication via CU-SeeMe. In order to reserve the time when they will have a chat, they have to login to the system before each session. When each of the couples completed the reservation, the status will be sent to their own e-mail accounts and shown in the top page of the system, so that they can make sure of the terminal number and conference number they will need to use.

Without their reservation, students might miss the chance to have CMC due to double booking. However, most of them tend to skip this reservation task since practically 36 couples can engage in CMC simultaneously and quite enough terminals for CU-SeeMe are available at Waseda University. However, when the number of participants has increased, it will be important to have students stick to the rules. In addition, it is important that the system itself has to be simple enough for students to utilize, since they are not willing to follow complicated procedures. In order to keep the communication flowing, demotivating factors should be eliminated as much as possible.

**3.4. 200-word summary in HP**

![Fig. 7 Post summary of each session](image7.png)

![Fig. 8 See other members’ summary](image8.png)
The fourth task for students is to post a 200-word summary of each communication. CCDL HP has “My Notebook”, as in Fig. 7, in which page they write a summary and submit it. They can read their partners’ or their classmates’ summaries in the page called “Member’s Notebook” in Fig. 8. They can also put their responses onto the discussion. The system can store up this notebook data as well as text chat. Students can download and save their own discussion. In addition, administrators and teachers can download all the stored discussion data for the purpose of research or evaluation on their students.

This kind of task has two main effects. One is to enhance students’ sense of purposefulness and the other is to train their language skills.

Some of the participants are spending most of the chatting session talking without any purpose or topic. The CMC itself may help them improve their language skills and establish mutual communication. However, as some researchers point out, students need goals for learning. (Miake, 1997; Helland et al., 1999). Therefore, writing summaries can help students reaffirm achievements of chatting the last time and go on to think what they are going to discuss during the next chatting. Moreover, seeing other students’ experience will be helpful for the next chatting. As noted in 2.3., the students who are receptive can be determined by coming to know other students’ gains or achievements: (See also Choi et al, 1999).

In addition, students will make some progress in their language skills by writing 200 words after each session, since teachers can support their writing skills by putting comments on students’ summaries. Some students’ progress in language skills will be discussed in the following chapters more in detail.

3.5. **Occasional face-to-face dialog by videoconferencing**

Waseda University refers to collaborative classes with affiliated universities through network by the use of video-conferencing devices as Cyber Seminars or Cyber Lectures. In Waseda, Cyber seminars are defined as students-to-students interaction, and Cyber lectures are teacher-to-students collaboration. In Cyber Lectures, basically, one or two lecturers at overseas Universities deliver a lecture first, and then students are expected to ask questions to the lecturers.

Fig. 3.9 Schedules, handouts and on-demand archives of Cyber seminars and lectures.

Before attending Cyber Lectures or Seminars, students have to do the following things:
1) access to HP at http://pc171115.pc.waseda.ac.jp/ccdl/. Fig. 9 shows the contents./
2) check the date and hour of the lecture or seminar.
3) download and print out its handout.
4) prepare for lectures such as reading materials and making their own questions to ask in discussion time.
5) go to the classroom where video-conferencing is conducted.
6) do on-demand self study to review the lectures and seminars if necessary.
7) exchange their opinions using BBS or mailing list.

3.6. Teachers’ roles

As stated before, teachers have to support students both linguistically and technically. Since technologies are always evolving, what teachers have to do must be decided, depending on the changing situation. Therefore, we would like to introduce teachers’ tasks in chronological order in this section by focusing on advantages and disadvantages.

Step 1: (in the year of 1999)

Outline:

Teachers made students login to CCDL system, see the profiles at the partner schools and apply for a partner through e-mail. After getting the acceptance from the partner, students were supposed to make an appointment and login the system and reserve a conference room for chatting.

Advantages:

➢ Students took the initiative in engaging in the project.
➢ Students freely communicated with partners.
➢ Teachers didn’t have to take care of making pairs.

Problems:

➢ Some students had difficulties getting in touch with partners, since at that time some students in Asia could not check emails frequently, because some of them didn’t have enough opportunities to use computers.
➢ Teachers sometimes cannot track the status sufficiently and cannot deal with change easily, because they had a class once a week.
➢ Students encountered a lot of technical problems. For example, the system server did not function properly.
➢ Computer illiterate students and uninterested students were demotivated by demanding tasks and frequently-occurring technical difficulties.

Results:

After all, we decided not to use some systems on homepage in spite of a great deal of human recourses.
Step 2: (in the year of 2000)

Outline:
Teachers asked students to write in available time and asked their partner’s teachers to send oversea students’ information. And then they made pairs of students based on their mutual available times. Teachers decided on such things as the person with whom students have a communication, the day and hour when they are supposed to chat, and the conference number and terminal they will use.

Advantages:
- Students got involved in the project because teachers monitor all of the things.
- To show teachers’ effort helped to activate the projects and boost students’ exchanges.
- Teachers had better and closer relationships with students owing to teachers’ involvement, as Helland et al. (1999) points out.
- Teachers managed to deal with change quickly and easily since students got to contact with teachers frequently.

Problems:
- Teachers had to spend a lot of time to keep the communication flowing.
- Teachers faced a lot of trouble with re-assigning chatting pairs.
- Teachers needed too much liaison work with partner teachers and students.
- Students became somehow receptive and lost the sense of learner-initiated activities.

Results:
In this kind of management, task allocation turned out to be difficult. Moreover, since it was totally separated from the systematic operation, personal cost was increased.

Step 3: (in the year of 2001)

Outline:
First, teachers asked co-workers to send students’ email list. After having received it, they tentatively made pairs without considering students’ available time and other information. Then they just made students know their own partner(s)’ email addresses and they told them to contact with the promising partners and make an appointment of chatting. After the pair set their schedule for communication, they are supposed to tell teachers the time. Finally, teachers provided them with conference room numbers that they had to use.

Advantages:
As compared to step 2,
- Students had opportunities for spontaneous activities.
- Teachers provided students with responsibility concerning appoint-making and negotiation.
- Miscommunication was avoided. Students took responsibility for communication and showed up on the scheduled time that they decided on their own.
- Students were happy that they got some flexibility regarding the scheduled time.
- Teachers managed to get rid of the burden of time and labor for the project to some extent.

Problems:
- There were too many complaints about the mismatch of time schedule.
- Some students lost opportunities to use CU-SeeMe sessions.
- CU-SeeMe was not actively used, because many other students did not use it.
- Teachers could not monitor students’ activities.

Results:
Since the reservation system is not systematically functioned, students’ butting in and double booking frequently occurred. Therefore, it was concluded that we needed more sophisticated and operational reservation system on the server.

Step 4: (in the year of 2002)
Outline:
With help from engineers, the system was renewed. We adopted learner-initiated communication under the basic concept of Step 1, since network problems were been resolving at Waseda and abroad. All the tasks such as deciding partners, making appointment, reserving conference room are supposed to rely on students. The difference with the old system is that students and teachers can do every possible task within the system. Since appoint-making system and computer messaging was added, students did not need e-mails. TextChat was added in place of E-mail and CU-SeeMe. In addition, teachers are no longer required to do coupling but they can grasp all the coupling status of students within the system.

Advantages:
- Students managed to do all the tasks for the project by login the multifunctional system.
- Teachers did not have to collect students’ personal data such as email addresses or available time.
- Teachers did not have to make mailing list since the system enabled them to send messages to all the students simultaneously.
- Liaison work between teachers was reduced.
- Teachers managed to see by the use of this system whether or not communication among students was developing smoothly.

Problems:
- Some students could not understand how to use the system because of multifunctionality.
- The complicated system was demotivating for students.
- Mechanical and operational system didn’t give us flexibility, for example, teachers could not decide on pairs when necessary.

**Results:**

Simplification of the system was needed. And we needed to explore the automatic grouping system if it didn’t allow us to make pairs by hand.

**Step 5: (in progress)**

**Outline:**

When we adopted step 4, a lot of students did not have partners, for the system didn’t give teachers the flexibility to make groups freely. Therefore, we developed a new function that enables us to make groups automatically, as shown in Fig 10.

As show in Fig. 10, the total number of participants in the project course is 138. Three Waseda students and three Korea students have already had their partners and 67 Waseda students and 65 Korea students haven’t yet had their partners. Teachers can make coupling automatically by putting the number of students they want to make pairs into the box in the circle in Fig 10. The results can be extracted as an Excel file as in Fig. 11.

![Fig 10: New Coupling System](image)

![Fig 11: Sample of results of coupling](image)

**Advantages:**

In addition to good aspects in step 4, by the use of the new grouping function,

- Teachers can provide all the students with the opportunities to communicate with overseas students.
- Teachers’ effort can be reduced, as compared to Step 2.

The management by the use of this function is still in progress. Therefore, we need to monitor problems and results from now on.

So, to summarize teachers’ tasks, whatever method or equipment we adopt in this kind of project, unless students actively engage in communication, the project would never last. Therefore, what we need to consider in this kind of project or class is that:
1) the method has to be simple,
2) the method has to make students determined and motivated,
3) and the method has to be somehow compulsory but it has to induce students’ spontaneous engagement.

5. Conclusion
I discussed several management issues of CMC activities that Waseda University encountered by showing some approaches and efforts on the part of students and teachers. Since we have to explore better equipments and methods with advance in information technology, our CCDL project is still at a developmental stage. Thus, we need to continue to keep track of this kind of project.

6. References

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