

Development of Continuing Education (C.E.) for Adults:

Instruction and Success of English C.E. at Koriyama Women's University

社会人向け生涯教育の発展：

郡山女子大学の生涯教育プログラム国際交流語学講座における指導とその成果

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要 約

この論文は、従来のような講義による教育方法とは異なり、受講生にとって「アクティブラーニング」を可能にするという観点から、「生涯教育」を調査研究してその評価をまとめたものです。受講生は経歴が多様で見識がより高くなって、自由に開講科目を選んでいきます。加えて教育は、マーケティングの見地からすると、教室を更には学校全体の定員を満たそうと益々競争が激しくなっています。このようななかで生涯教育の講座を繰り返し選んでいる積極的な受講生に対してどのような効果をもたらしているか、これらの受講生がなぜ繰り返し受講するのかについて郡山女子大学の国際交流語学講座を例として考察しています。

This paper summarizes the research value of “Continuing Education” (C.E.) from the point of view of enabling students with “Active Learning” as opposed to the more traditional lecture approach to education. Now students are diverse and more resourceful. They are free to choose studies or subjects. Additionally, education has become more competitive from the view of marketing to fill classrooms and even schools. We discuss the effectiveness of engaged students who repeatedly choose these C.E. classes, and why the students are persistently motivated as active learners.

1. Introduction

This paper is a summary of the affirmative aspects of the adult continuing education English language classes taught for the past 9 years at Koriyama Women's University (Continuing education will henceforth be referred to as C.E.). Initially, language classes were envisioned for university and junior college students to expand their international speaking skills. They

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were also conceived to have native language speakers as the instructors for each class. These classes began with four language choices: Japanese, Chinese, Korean and English. This paper gives a background of those initial classes, but primarily focuses on the English classes of recent years. To be very succinct, the lessons are currently meant for junior college students, university students and adults, but specifically for C.E. students who don't need a post-secondary degree to enroll in the classes. In addition, the current English classes have had a high rate of return. There are students who have enrolled and continued lessons for as many as eight consecutive semesters! For many students, this means they have been continuously enrolled and repeated this class since the year 2012. This paper will give supposition as to why adult education students continue to repeat the lessons as well as demonstrate past successful lessons with links for academics to do follow-up investigations on their own. Finally, a survey will help affirm the overall positive attitude prevalent among these adult C.E. members.

2. Continuing Education and Life-long Learning

C.E.⁽¹⁾ is a term that is becoming a crucial part of the vernacular of both professionals and students. In the historical context, this term is relatively new. C.E. methods vary depending on the content of the coursework, but the two most well-known and utilized methods for students of all ages are: post-secondary learning programs through actual courses taken at universities; and distance learning (D.L.),⁽²⁾ which allows students to advance their knowledge and attain educational degrees through the use of telecommunications, e.g. the Internet, without having to be physically present in classrooms. The ever-growing need for knowledge and information has ushered in a boundless capacity for continuing and distant learning while altering the educational pedagogy (methods and art of professional teaching). These alternative and supplementary approaches to traditional education are excellent methods which can be utilized and embraced by students of all ages to enhance their professional careers and their lives. The bottom line is that these C.E. and D.L. programs matter for every one of us! Through these courses, students gain a heightened sense of the importance of life-long learning. Specifically, the students become cognizant of how these methods of learning impact their daily lives, how they improve their interactions and understanding of people on a local and global basis, and how the knowledge acquired can positively impact their current and future careers.

3. The History of C.E. and D. L.

A deep and critical comprehension of any methodology in education would have to include the history, current practice, merits and demerits of the subject matter and how it came to be incorporated for widespread use; C.E. and D.L. are no different. It is difficult to ascertain

exactly when and where the concept of C.E. began, but the roots of the first institution of higher learning to offer C.E. programs to students who had completed their undergraduate (four-year) degrees can be traced back to 1907 in the United States of America to the University of Wisconsin-Madison.⁽¹⁾ This University in the City of Madison, Wisconsin, was the very first to offer C.E. courses to students to further their education and attain additional academic degrees. As classes grew and gained notoriety, C.E. classes were extended to students without previous university degrees.

4. Intermediate C.E. Classes and the International Space Station

In the past few years, the intermediate classes have begun with pertinent information of the times when the International Space Station (ISS)⁽⁸⁾ could be seen from Koriyama. That means a schedule of when people in Koriyama could actually see the space station pass over the city of Koriyama. We the teachers have seen the ISS many times, so it is really easy to see once you know two things: where it will be in the sky at a certain time and what to look for. During two well-timed instances, we were able to actually see the ISS in the sky with the students right from the classroom! While the schedule of the ISS is posted, the time when seen from Koriyama does not usually coincide with the class meetings. Thus, from the information available, the members have looked to find the ISS on their own. In some cases, spouses of students have also found this very interesting. Years ago we found information of when and where to look to see the ISS fly over Koriyama.⁽⁸⁾ Since that time we have used an application to help find the ISS.⁽²³⁾ While it can be easy to see, the weather and cloudy sky affect whether you can actually see it. It is brief and the schedule is precise, so if you know when to look it can be easy to see as it moves across the sky. In addition, we have watched videos the astronauts have made while in the ISS. For example, one video explained the kitchen and food preparation, another showed the sleeping area, and another showed the sports and exercise area.⁽⁵⁾ Recently an astronaut ran the equivalent of a full marathon in the ISS while the Boston Marathon was taking place in Boston, Massachusetts. However, this was not the first marathon completed on the ISS. That record was set in April of 2007 by astronaut Sunita L. Williams.⁽⁴⁾ She became the first person to run the Boston Marathon from the ISS during that 2007 mission.

5. An Adult Education Class

We usually have information about the ISS when we begin classes. That information is about five minutes of the class. After that, a new topic is introduced. We may write the topic on the board or use the Internet or handouts we have prepared. We answer questions regarding the topic as they are asked because primarily this is a speaking class and material is meant to be

interesting and to generate speaking activities or questions about the subject. In the past, we have talked about various topics such as: tornadoes,⁽¹⁴⁾ Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade,⁽¹³⁾ free web sites to study English,⁽¹⁶⁾ traveling, sports, marathons, clothing made of duct tape,⁽¹⁵⁾ ⁽²⁴⁾ ⁽²⁵⁾ Maui,⁽²⁰⁾ Chicago,⁽¹²⁾ Picasso,⁽¹¹⁾ favorite foods, sleeping, cooking and exercising on the ISS.⁽⁵⁾ While the subject of the ISS has been used as a main topic of conversation, it's usually a way of adding about 5 minutes to the initial part of the class. The class starts with how to visually sight or observe the ISS.⁽⁸⁾ ⁽²³⁾ This schedule is about a week in the future. The method for conveying information of the ISS often changes because at times it simply cannot be seen in the sky so it is just mentioned to remind the students. Other times it can be extensive and we will have prepared quizzes to help them understand and consolidate things like how big it is, how high it is, and how fast it travels. We either give students a print or simply write a short note of the schedule on the board. Occasionally members tell us they were able to see the ISS from the previous week and we talk about that briefly. After this the main theme of the class begins.

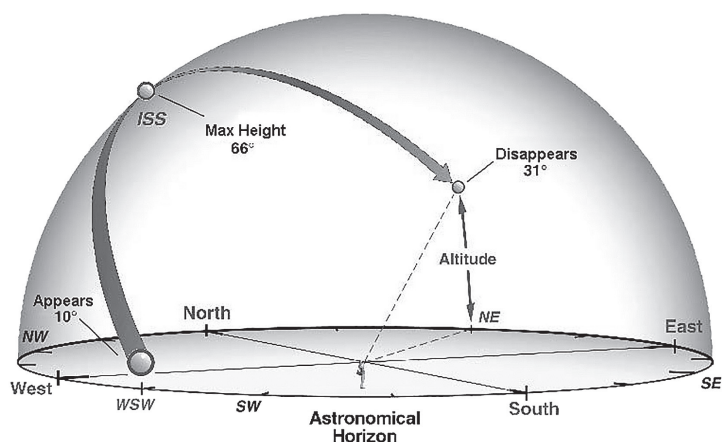
6. The 90-Minute Plan

The classes are 90 minutes and follow the 5th period schedule with 15 lessons. This follows the normal semester. We like to begin the class and use 40 minutes of materials we have prepared from our own topics. We often include a current event or something found recently. When a topic such as tornadoes⁽¹⁴⁾ is discussed, we use facts and information to talk about the subject. That information is supported with pictures when appropriate. For visuals we might use an iPad which can be passed around. Usually this is enough to get a response from most of the class members. Finally, for the remainder of the class time each week, the students freely discuss topics of their choosing.

7. Mission Expedition 39⁽⁷⁾

Information to find the ISS⁽⁸⁾ in the sky has really pleased the students! We've seen it fly over Koriyama while getting in our cars in the university's parking lot. It is even easier to see from more remote or darker locations in the countryside. Students and teachers have all seen it together from one of the seminar classrooms as the time coincided with our weekly 5th period class. That moment was brief; maybe 3 minutes for it to fly through the sky, but the students had a sense of wonderment. What made it even more remarkable, the Japanese astronaut Wakata Koichi of JAXA and NASA was in the ISS as it passed over Koriyama. From our classroom, in a loud voice, we all wished him well and a safe flight. This was astronaut Wakata's fourth space mission. Expedition 39⁽⁷⁾ was explained as a long endurance, six month stay on the ISS. His role in this mission was acting commander. This is historic because it's

the first time a Japanese astronaut became the station commander. All other commanders have been either Russian or American. We were clearly able to see ISS Expedition 39 pass over the west side of Koriyama (at 5:41:33 PM 221° Southwest on December 12, 2014). It was truly dazzling to be able to see astronaut Wakata flying 380km above Koriyama Women's University.



Spot the International Space Station ISS ⁽⁸⁾



Kirobo ⁽¹⁹⁾

Kirobo, a pint-sized android equipped with artificial intelligence, was sent as part of a longer-term project to see how a robot can act as a companion for isolated people, particularly to see if it can develop conversational skills.

Mission Expedition 39⁽⁷⁾

日本人宇宙飛行士の若田氏に長距離のあいさつを送る受講生の皆さんは、初めは夜空に何か見えるのだろうかと思っていました。しかし、通過予定時刻が分かっている、空の状態が良ければ、それを見るのは実際そんなに難しいことではありません。私たちは、大学の駐車場で車の中に居ながらにして、郡山の上空を飛行するのを見たのです。より田舎でもっと暗い場所であれば、更にいっそう容易に見ることができます。受講生の皆さんと私たち担当講師は、週単位で組まれた5時限目のひとつの講座とその時間が一致したので、皆でいっしょに見ることにしたのです。その時間はあっという間で、恐らく3分ほどで夜空を通り過ぎてしまいましたが、受講生の皆さんは驚異の念でいっぱいでした。何がいったいそう素晴らしかったかと言えば、それは、郡山上空を飛行通過するときに、JAXAとNASAの日本人宇宙飛行士若田光一氏が国際宇宙船の中にいたという事実です。私たちは皆、大きな声で若田氏に幸運と安全飛行を祈って叫びました。今回は、宇宙飛行士若田氏の4度目の宇宙飛行任務でした。第39次長期滞在は、国際宇宙ステーションでの6カ月に及ぶ長期の滞在です。この任務で彼の役割は船長でした。初めて日本人の宇宙飛行士が船

長になったのですから、これは歴史的なことです。これまでの船長はロシア人かアメリカ人でした。私たちは、第39次長期滞在の国際宇宙ステーションが郡山の西方上空を通過する(2014年12月12日午後5時41分33秒南西221度)のをはっきりと見ることができました。宇宙飛行士若田氏が郡山女子大学の上空380キロを飛行しているのを見ることのできたのは、本当にすばらしいことでした。

8. Classroom Preparation

Most support materials are created with computers. In other cases, we may use information from a book or something from the Internet. For instances when actual printed photos are required, it can be easier to just show the photos digitally than to print them. So in that case, we would use an iPad tablet and the Internet. We may visit a web site during the class to show the students images or write the URL address on the board. In that approach the students can then come back and visit that site again, too. By giving students material to find, they can take active learning to their level. Resources like media, current events or even a phrase are unparalleled when creating plans for active learning classes!

9. Adult Education and Experience

Adult students are usually more motivated as they do not feel required to go to university. They may be burdened with other activities, but they are used to balancing many things at once. In the real world, people often need to be active in multiple roles. Some of our adult students are constrained by jobs and home life, yet they manage to travel in Japan and overseas as well. Anyone who has recently traveled is always eager to tell the class about the travel experience and we're also interested in what they had to do, see and eat. Other members encourage this and it often makes for impromptu English questions as well. All information about travel is very interesting and is appreciated as a topic. Many topics offer students an opportunity to learn. In fact, all concepts are major considerations as long as there is an emphasis on keeping students speaking English. This can be done in many ways. We make a point of giving each student a chance to speak as much as possible every time we are together. Each person is a little different and so is their skill set. By understanding their levels, we can focus on those needs, and then interact and speak with them individually while still conducting the class for the entire group.

10. Survey Results and Other Statistics

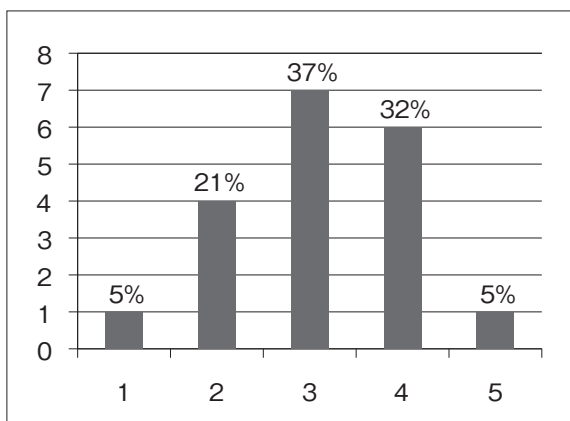
We recently had our students complete a survey of the C.E. classes to determine their opinions on the classes and get valuable feedback. The survey consisted of 20 questions including, "Is the material used in the lessons current and interesting?" and "Does this class

Development of Continuing Education (C.E.) for Adults:

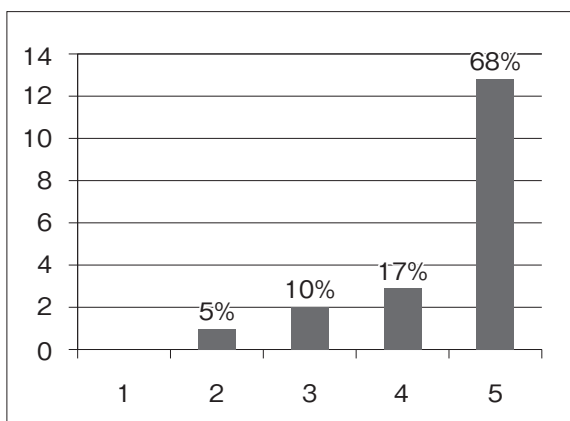
consistently challenge me in a positive manner?” The graphs and summary below show the results of the survey and impact of C.E. on students.

(Scale Rankings: 1 to-5 with “1” as “Disagree” to “5” as “Strongly Agree.”)

Do you use what you have learned in this class at home or at work?



I would take this class again.



A summary of other pertinent data collected from the survey:

- 95% of the students agree or strongly agree that lessons are always well-planned.
- 95% ascertained that they are becoming better at speaking English.
- 80% found the class suitable or very suitable for their level.
- 95% replied that their listening skills are improving.
- 100% believe the class challenges them in a positive manner.
- 80% have taken this class for more than three years.

11. Smaller Classes Maintain Impact

Having an optimal number of students really impacts a language class. It's been our experience that a class of one-on-one for about one hour of class is sufficient to keep the speaking fresh and focused. One-on-one, however, is not a normal school or classroom situation; language classes of 30 or more are the usual school classroom size. The optimal number is between 6 and 20 students, but smaller classes allow us to be more effective and personable.

12. Conclusion

Trends in education come and go, but since the inception of C.E. for adults in Madison, Wisconsin, this C.E. idea has grown to where more and more colleges and universities are offering it to improve areas ranging from lifestyles to career opportunities and promotions. Topics can range from current events all the way to unique and fascinating ones like the International Space Station. One clear advantage of C.E. is that with adult students coming from a wide variety of backgrounds and occupations, the class becomes a "melting pot" of students, with each offering a wealth of knowledge and decades of experiences to contribute to classes. As teachers, we use this wealth of knowledge to create an assiduous atmosphere in the classroom where students can readily share with each other the knowledge and wisdom they bring. Another advantage to having students from different backgrounds is that we can individualize the education for each based on those backgrounds and what each desires to learn. As in the example of themes like the ISS, the students can be taken outside the classroom to truly broaden their active learning potential with real-life experiences. The results of the survey we conducted were affirmative, especially in revealing reasons why we have a very high rate of returning students. With enrollment in the English C.E. classes so vibrant that students often have to be put on waiting lists to get in, the possibilities and expansion of the English C.E. classes at Koriyama Women's University seem endless and look to endeavor beyond the ISS and even outer space! The possibilities for the future of global C.E. classes are also unlimited!

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