

LAB NOTES

International Distance Education: University of California, Los Angeles and Seoul National University

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Daytra Hansel reported on this project for the IALL'91 conference at UCLA.

Background

Distance education at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) began with the development of international projects. The need arose because of the role UCLA has played in the development of English language and teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) programs in other countries.

Dr. Russell Campbell, Director, Language Resource Program, International Studies and Overseas Programs (ISOP), has been responsible for the development of English language centers in several countries. In order to provide greater opportunities for students at UCLA and abroad to improve their language skills and to expand existing programs, he saw the importance of using teleconferencing technologies.

In 1987, he began experimenting with distance learning by joining an advanced Japanese language class at UCLA with Japanese students who were studying English at a Japanese college. The system that was used at each site was a small video phone which was connected to a 19" monitor. Students held lengthy discussions in Japanese and English to improve their verbal skills and examined cultural issues. Although the images were black and white and rather crude, the students enjoyed the five sessions and felt it was a valuable experience.

The next experiment was with a Spanish class at UCLA that had sessions with an English class at a university in Spain. The project began in 1989 and is continuing today. The students use the system once a year, usually during the spring quarter. They meet once a week for an hour and discuss assignments in Spanish and English.

UCLA/Seoul National University Project

Because of the successful experiences with the Japanese and Spanish schools, it was decided in 1989 to develop a more extensive project with Seoul National University (SNU) in Korea. As part of an

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international exchange program, UCLA students had been spending their summers taking Korean language classes at SNU. In an effort to expand UCLA students' exposure to Korean language instruction, as well as share English language instruction and linguistics with SNU student and faculty, it was decided to create a three-year distance learning project. It would consist of short courses comprised of two or three lectures, guest speakers, and additional activities such as conferences, symposia, and research projects. The exchanges would be shared between UCLA and SNU with each campus offering lectures and short courses as requested. No credit would be issued between institutions for the exchanges. The lectures would supplement existing areas of study, essentially enriching the curricula at each institution.

The bulk of the funds for the project was provided by the Korean Research Foundation which covered most administrative expenses, instructor honoraria, and the long distance telephone charges. UCLA and SNU provided funding for their own equipment.

During the initial planning phase, it was determined that other academic departments would be approached to join the project and offer lectures and short courses, thus expanding the project to facilitate a wide range of academic areas.

The project began in April, 1990. Classes are held during the Spring and Fall academic quarters, three to five times per week, two hours per class. Class hours are usually 5 – 7 P.M. at UCLA which is 9 – 11 A.M. the next day at SNU.

Interactive System

The decision was made to use a different type of teleconferencing system for the project. [The system] needed to be flexible enough to accommodate the different

teaching styles, sophisticated enough to effectively present a variety of course materials, user-friendly, importable and usable in Korea, and cost effective.

Optel Communication's computer-based audiographic system was chosen. It operates in real time with two standard dial-up telephone lines (one for voice and one for computer text/graphics), electronic tablet, and still frame (color) video. Video images can be taken from a camera, video tape recorder, or camcorder, and stored in the computer for presentations. Additional aids such as audio cassettes and video tapes may be used.

Cost of the equipment and using the system were primary considerations. The system had to economically accommodate up to 15 hours per week of transmission time (between the U.S. and Korea). The use of motion video (full or compressed) was considered, but the expense to set up and operate was...prohibitive.

The system is housed at UCLA's teleconferencing facility, which is a multi-purpose area consisting of a TV studio which doubles as a large viewing room, and a control room that includes a satellite receive system. There are two floor cameras and a graphics area with one camera. The room is configured differently for each class session, depending on the needs of the instructor and students.

Instructor Recruitment, Training and Support

Instructors [are] recruited early to allow training time and [for the development of] class materials. One to two hours of training is done individually to give an overview of the system, determine how it could be used most effectively to support their lectures, decide what materials to develop and discuss cultural etiquette. Administrative

support is provided to each instructor to assist with the preparation of materials which are faxed or downloaded to SNU before each class. Instructors are financially supported for each two-hour presentation. Usually there is extra work involved in preparing for the lectures plus the time it takes to present, and most of the instructors already have a full teaching schedule.

Description of Three Classes

The following is a description of three types of classes that were held during the project's first year.

Korean/English Language Class

Professor John Duncan and a group of UCLA Korean language students met once a week for six weeks with their peers at SNU who were taking English. They spent two hours each week discussing topics and doing assignments. The first hour of the class was in Korean, the second hour was in English. It provided an excellent opportunity for students to practice their verbal skills and exchange cultural information. Before class, pictures of the instructor and students were transmitted. As students spoke, someone pointed to their picture. Visuals were shared and discussed, and comments were noted by writing on the electronic tablet.

Korean Music Class

Professor Man-young Han gave a lecture to a UCLA audience. His description of Korean music and instruments was enhanced with audio tapes that played as pictures were shown of noted musicians and the instruments that were used. A number of questions were asked about the sounds the instruments made alone, and then combined with others. Professor Han was able to repeat certain musical chords and melodies for clarity.

Linguistics 103: Language Demonstration (Hausa)

Dr. Ian Middleson lectured to a group of SNU students and faculty on phonics, primarily for the Hausa language. An assistant pronounced words and phrases in the Hausa language. He used a computer [that held] aspects of additional languages to provide similar or associated words and phrases, [and an] electronic tablet to draw diagrams of the mouth, tongue, and throat showing sound formation. Charts and graphs, which had been downloaded to SNU, were also discussed.

Future Expansion

The second year of the project began in April 1991. The number of classes [grew in 1991] to 17. Additional departments have joined the project, i.e., Fine Arts, Architecture & Urban Planning, Public Health, and Sociology. Two or three new departments are scheduled to participate by Fall 1991. (*See update on page 28.*)

The use of different technologies is being explored. The cost of using compressed video is dropping significantly and will soon be a viable option for international exchange. As a member of the Foundation for the International Exchange of Culture and Scientific Information by Telecommunications, UCLA is planning to participate in educational and research projects with universities throughout Europe using T1 technologies.

Administrative Structure

Dr. Russell Campbell and Daytra Hansel are UCLA's co-principal investigators. Dr. Oaksook Kim, Coordinator, Korea Program, ISOP, administers the project through the Korea Program. At SNU, Dr. Sang Oak Lee, Associate Professor, Korean Language and Literature and Dr. Nahmsheik Park,

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Director, Language Research Institute are co-principal investigators.

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Update: Since this article first appeared, additional distance learning short courses have been transmitted to SNU by the UCLA Departments of Electrical Engineering, Chemistry and Biochemistry. Several special sessions on Teaching English as a Foreign Language have been conducted, and two special seminars were held. The seminars focused on Koreans in America (October 22, 1992) and on U.S.—Korea Relations: Political/Economic Strategies for the Pacific Rim. Each was a two-hour discussion with the participation of panels of experts on both sides of the Pacific. A new compressed video system has been installed at UCLA and plans are being formed to experiment with this technology for course transmission in the near future. The equipment has been used successfully for business meetings and research projects.