

# Creating an Innovative Model for Distance Learning in EFL Context

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This study explores a new class model for Cross-Cultural Distance Learning (CCDL). Namseoul University (NSU) has participated in a CCDL project since the second semester of 2005, and has observed some very successful results. However, it was found from the results that the traditional CCDL method has some problems, so it was proposed that we attempt to solve these. Therefore, NSU and Waseda University (WU) adopted a new class model for CCDL from the second semester of 2006. In this context, the research explained in this paper had three purposes: i) to explain the class contents and procedure of the new CCDL model; ii) to prove the good points of new model through examining student response; and iii) to suggest ways of improving the new CCDL model, in addition to offering advice on how to use it. As the results of the student responses show, this new CCDL model is very effective in helping students enhance their confidence in using English. It also helps them to understand Japanese culture and people, and to improve their general English abilities. In conclusion, this new class model is suggested as a good model for developing Cross-Cultural Distance Learning.

**Keywords:** [cross-cultural distance learning/ New CCDL Model/ chatting/ video conferencing lecture/ self-confidence/ EFL Context/ 문화간원거리 학습/새문화간 원거리학습모형/ 동시담화/ 비디오화상강의/ 자신감/ 외국어로서의 영어교육상황]

## 1. Introduction

From the start of the second semester, 2005, Namseoul University (henceforth, NSU) has participated in Namseoul - Waseda Universities Cross-Cultural Distance Learning Project (NWCCDLP). This project consisted of two parts: the one was the video chatting activities, and the other was the video conferencing

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lecture. For the video chatting activities, NSU students made partners with the students from WU and agreed to meet in cyber space through a "Live On" program. While these activities, most students from both universities met for one hour once a week, and they had to record all the interactions through text chat and submit them as a report for the course.

The video conferencing lecture had the theme of "World Englishes and Miscommunications," in which Namseoul Univ. (Korea), Waseda Univ. (Japan), Hudan Univ. (China), and Hannam Univ. (Korea) participated every Thursday from 14:40 to 16:10. Every student had to study the lecture in advance through an on-demand lecture series on the web site. During taking e-lectures, every student had to participate in the course through listening and speaking only in English.

By being in touch and discussing English with the students from foreign countries, the students could practice English and experience the cultural difference and understanding through these two parts of NWCCLDP (the video chatting activities and the video conferencing lecture).

Although NWCCDLP has been very successful in helping NSU students to acquire and practice English (Chang, 2004, 2005; Nakano, 2006; Nakano et al, 2006; Park, 2001; Park et al, 2003), it was pointed out that there were some weaknesses in the CCDL project that we need to improve. As suggested in the paper of Chang (2005), there were something to be solved in order to improve CCDL: for example, 1) the needs to activate participation from the students, 2) time allocation, 3) diversifying the discussion themes, 4) the possibilities of utilizing voice chatting.

So this research focuses on exploring a new CCDL model through designing new criteria for a new model, describing the course contents and analyzing the responses of the students who participated in this new class model.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

The results of the previous research proved that CCDL projects have been

successful in developing English ability of EFL learners (Chang, 2005; Nakano, 2006; Park, 2001; Park, Nakano and Lee, 2003). Also M. Nakano (2006) pointed out that the objectives of CCDL like these: the first is to enable our students to achieve the English ability to integrate the four components of communicative competence. The second is to enhance our students' inter-cultural or cross-cultural awareness so that they are encouraged to create culturally third-place in which Asian youths can deal with real problems in the world, possibly fostering pluri-cultural personality. The third goal is to enable Asian youths to impart their local values in view of global perspectives. As we can find out from the objectives described by Nakano(2006), the CCDL project is very helpful in developing the four skills of English proficiency, so it is natural to make the CCDL project successful by developing a new model for CCDL.

Y. Yano (2006) pointed out the importance of CCDL by suggesting the effects of NNS-NNS interaction. He argued three effects of the interaction. First, using English in the NNS-NNS interaction helps the Japanese learners to liberate themselves from the inferiority complex toward native speakers. Second, using English for communication forces the interlocutors to be attentive to what is going on and leaves little room to pay attention to their pronunciation, their use of articles, and prepositions and other grammatical matters. Third, nonnative speaker interlocutors at times show difficulties in expressing in English and often make similar grammatical mistakes as Japanese do. This makes the Japanese learners to realize it is more important to participate in the discussion and express their ideas and opinions than being silent until your English becomes perfect, which never comes after all.

These research proves that the CCDL project plays a very important role in helping the nonnative speakers (like Japanese, Korean, and China, etc) acquire their self-confidence and gives them the non-threatening environment to practice English abilities. So it is natural that we make efforts to develop CCDL project based on the needs and circumstances of EFL learners.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Subjects

The students from WU and NSU participated in this research. The departments of WU were open and the number of the students were 18. The department of the students who participated in this class from NSU was English and most of the students were seniors, the number of the students were 18. But two of them could not attend the class regularly, so 16 students who did not miss the class and submitted the reports at the end of the semester participated in the research.

#### 3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected and analyzed by both qualitative method and quantitative method. For a the qualitative analysis, data were collected by analyzing the students' reports about new CCDL model submitted by NSU students at the end of the semester. The 16 students' reports were collected and the responses from those reports were analyzed. For a quantitative analysis, a set of questionnaire was distributed among the students who participated in new the CCDL model, and the students' reponses were analysed based on the results of the questionnaire.

#### 3.3 Developing the Criteria for New CCDL Model

Until now, it has been proved that the CCDL project plays a very positive role in learning and teaching EFL. But some scholars pointed out that there was something to be solved in order to improve CCDL like these (Chang, 2005):

- 1) This project needs to activate participation from the students. This project needs to emphasize the importance of NWCCDLP in English acquisition and cultural understanding.
- 2) Time allocation:

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This project needs to adjust the time table between the universities in foreign countries.

3) Diversifying the themes:

The themes are so limited that most chatting begins and ends with the routine greetings and self-introduction.

It needs to set a theme for every class.

It needs to survey the themes most students are interested in and wish to talk about.

4) The possibilities of utilizing the voice chatting:

Most students wish to make use of voice chatting to utilize NWCCDLP for improving their spoken English proficiency.

5) It needs to make a system to stay in contact with the students regularly after finishing this semester through e-mail or personal contacts.

So it is necessary to develop a new class model to solve the problems pointed out in Chang (2005). Based on the problems pointed out in the previous research, the new model for CCDL needs to be designed according to the following criterion.

**Table 1**  
**Criteria for Developing New CCDL Model**

	Problems of Traditional Model	Design Criteria of New Model
1	Needs to activate participation from the students	Group Project: Group presentation and Discussion in Class
2	Time allocation	In-Class Chatting
3	Diversifying the themes	*It decides the discussion topics in advance *One discussion topic per one class
4	The possibilities of utilizing the voice chatting	Both text and voice chatting in class time

So the new CCDL model has the distinguishable characteristics comparing with the traditional model of CCDL. First, the new model is based on the group project group presentation and group chatting. One group consists of 4 or 5 members from one university and each group can choose the topic of their presentation and discussion of their chatting time. It is certain that the group

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project can motivate and activate the participation from the students.

Second, the new model is based on the in-class chatting so that it can make time allocation easier. From the experiences of out of class chatting, sometimes it was a little difficult to match the chatting time from both universities. Third, the students who participated in the new model can choose the topics which were interesting to them in advance, and they can discuss one topic per one class so that it can diversify the theme for CCDL. Fourth, the new model can use both voice and text chatting during chatting time, so that the new model can be useful for developing the spoken ability of the students.

#### **4. Course Description of A New CCDL Model**

This section describes the contents of the new CCDL model through explaining the course procedure, class schedule, group project, presentation topics, and course evaluation.

##### **4.1 Course Procedure**

WU and NSU had this class every Thursday during the second semester of 2006 from 10 : 30 to 12 : 10. One group from WU or NSU presented its group presentation for 20 minutes, then one group from WU or NSU presented its presentation for next 20 minutes. After that, all of the students moved into the PC rooms so that they can participate in group chatting on the same topic presented during the previous presentation time. The group presentation was delivered through video conferencing, and group chatting was delivered using live-on system and Moodle programs simultaneously in both universities.

##### **4.2 Class Schedule in the second semester, 2006**

This semester was the first semester to start a new model of CCDL, and there were some mismatch between two universities because of the different

academic calendar. Actually NSU started on the 28<sup>th</sup> August, and WU started on the October, so the students of NSU prepared the course during the August and September.

**Table 2**  
**Course Procedure of New CCDL Model**

Time Every Thursday	Type of Group Project	Tool for Communication
10:40-11:00	Group Presentation	Video Conferencing
11:00-11:20	Group Presentation	Video Conferencing
11:20-12:10	Small Group Chatting	Live-On System and MOODLE

**Table 3**  
**Class Schedule of New CCDL Model**

	Class	Week	Contents	
Namseoul University		8/28-10/4	Preparatory Work Research/ Presentation	
		10/5	Chooseok Holliday of Korea	
	1	10/12	Course Introduction Self Introduction	
		10/19	No Class(Mid-Term Exam of NSU)	
	2	10/26	1 Group Presentation & Discussion Theme : family	
		10/26 - 11/1	Post comments about discussion on Oct 26	
		11/2	No Class(Sports Festival of WU)	
	3	11/9	2 Group Presentation & Discussion Theme : Career	
	CCDL Class		11/9 - 11/15	Post comments about discussion on Nov 9
		4	11/16	3 Group Presentation & Discussion Theme : Social Systems
		11/16 - 11/22	Post comments about discussion on Nov16	
		11/23	No Class (National Holliday of Japan)	
5		11/30	4 Group Presentation & Discussion Theme : Current Affairs	
		11/30 - 12/6	Post comments about discussion on Nov30	
	6	12/7	Review of Group Presentation	
		12/14	No Class (Final Exam of NSU)	
		12/21	No Class (Winter Vacation)	

### 4.3 Group Project

This model utilized the group project which consisted of two parts, one is group presentation and the other is group chatting. Group presentation through video conferencing: 4 or 5 students form a group to work on a project so 4 groups from NSU, 4 groups from WU and 8 groups total participated in this class model.

The group presentation needs to include the followings:

- 1) Background research: the students explain the topic by citing from sources and using relevant data
- 2) Field research: the students distribute questionnaire or interview university students about the topic
- 3) The students propose the solution to improve the situation
- 4) The students present their finding using the power point

Group Discussion was delivered through chatting by Live-on System. This class model divided the students from WU and NSU into 6 groups, which consisted of 3 members from each university, so one chatting group members are 6 . During the group chatting time, each student participated in chatting on the same topic presented in the group presentation.

### 4.4 Presentation Topic

The students of WU and NSU were guided to the possible themes to the students before the second semester of 2006 so that the students could choose and discuss the theme and order of their group presentation and discussion.

After they discussed the topics of the group presentation, the students decided the topics and order of group presentation as follows:

- The first Group Project Topic: Family (WU - NSU)
- The second Group Project Topic: Career (NSU - WU)
- The third Group Project Topic: Social System(WU - NSU)
- The fourth Group Project Topic: Current Affairs(NSU - WU)

**Table 4**  
**Topics for the Group Project**

Main Topic	Examples of Sub-Topics
(1) Family	Family obligations      Decreasing Birth Rate Nursing Parents      Ideal Marriage
(2) Career	Purpose of going to university      Ideal Work/Life balance Job Hunting      Career Goal
(3) Social Systems	Military Service(Korea)      Imperial Family(Japan) Well-Being Boom in every society
(4) Current Affair	CEO of Livedoor was arrested for alleged securities law violation

#### 4.5 Course Evaluation

This course was evaluated according to the following criteria. The criteria for evaluating this course consisted of four categories: group presentation (50%), group chatting(20%), attendance(20%), final report(10%), so total 100%.

**Table 5**  
**Criteria for Course Evaluation**

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Score
Group Presentation	Relevance of background research sources to research question	7
	Relevance of video to presentation	7
	Presentation & interpretation of fieldwork data	7
	Nonverbal & verbal delivery of presentation & group cohesion	7
	Consideration of audience & technology	7
	Organization of content & logic of structure/flow	7
	Overall Impression	8
Group Chatting	Attendance & submit the contents of chatting	20
Attendance	The students must attend every class.	20
Final Report	The students must submit the final report.	10
Total		100

## 5. Results and Discussions

This paper focused on exploring a new model of Cross-Cultural Distance Learning between NSU and WU. At the end of the semester, the students had to submit the reports about their feelings and results of their study about this new model of CCDL. In general, their reactions to this new class of CCDL were very great, and some of them can be summarized like these:

### 5.1 The Results of Analysing the Students' Journals for New CCDL Model

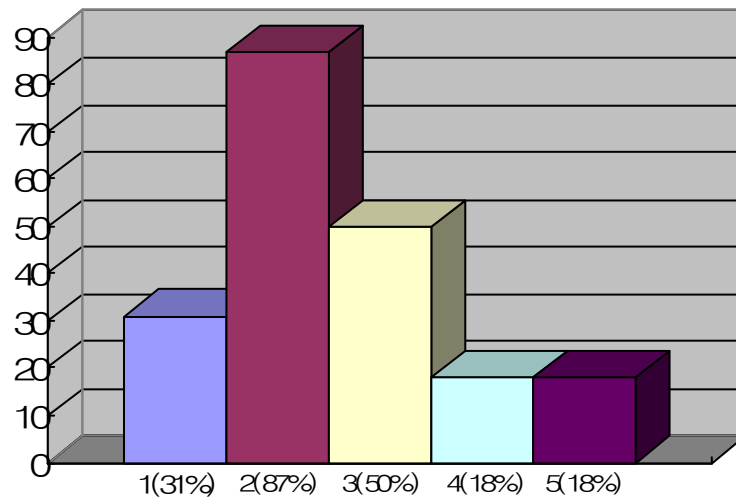
The analysis of students' responses to this new CCDL model show that most of the students agreed that the effects of the class were very good, and the results can be summarized into several categories like these:

- 1) This class helped the students to have self-confidence in English.(31%)
- 2) This class helped the students to understand Japanese culture and people.(87%)
- 3) This class was very interesting.(50%)
- 4) This class helped the students to recognize the importance of English.(18%)
- 5) This class helped the students to improve their English abilities.(18%)

One student reported that this class did not use a textbook, instead of textbook, the computers and internet and other multi-media facilities were used as teaching materials and methods. He said that these facilities matched the young generation's tastes, so during the class he was not bored, which was the most impressive thing to him.

And most students said that it needed to upgrade the hardware for the class, because sometimes the internet was not connected very well, and they had some problems in voice quality of headphone sets and microphones. So it could be suggested that every year we need to upgrade the circumstances of this kind of on-line class.

**Figure 1**  
**Students' Responses about New CCDL Model**



### 5.2 The Students' Journals about New CCDL Model

As I pointed out in 4.1, most of the students who participated in this new CCDL model said that the effects of the new model were very good and helpful for them. This section explains the contents of the students' reports as the evidences for the results of students' responses suggested in the section 4.1. The number of the students who took this course was 16 members, and all of them submitted their responses about this semester as the form of reports, and key points of their responses and arguments can be summarized like the followings.

1) NSU 03641302

At first, I was afraid of this class. The reason is that I can't speak English well. But, if I have confidence that I can speak English, but I lacks confidence. If I hear this class again, I will try to say. But, hard study English. ... **This class was good experience to me, and I was afraid at first, but I enjoyed a little.** ... Finally this class helped many students and they can

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speak English well.....**I did good experience and I got confidence a little. This class gave me the goal that I now has a goal to reach.**

2) NSU 02141090

**This class has a unique program. And having a class with Waseda University, a big-name university, allowsus to build up self-confidence. I really enjoyed the time when we are present each other. And working together is little tough work but everyone can enjoy this class.** The problemis that I would say, 80% of all the students speak English only they answer the questions. Thank you for your confidence and support.

3) NSU 01141205

I concerned about Japan culture. I was tense to chat with Waseda university's students. I felt Japanese students are same. **First I didn't know what to say. I didn't have any confidence in myself. However, I preparedthe presentation, I recovered my confidence**.... I had to announce the presentation in front of Japanese's students. ...Through this semester, I made friends with Japanese students. **Next semester I will study hard enough.**

4) NSU 02141047

In the beginning of this semester, I was worried about the presentation that we had because we were doing it with Japanese students. ... **Having a presentation with Japanese students with Japanese students made me nervous.** They could judge Korean people through us, so I thought how I do in front of them is very important. Now I've already had the presentation. ... I believe I could make it much better than this time because I had some experience. I am sure that I could learn something from any kinds of experience. ... **Overall having on-line classes with foreign students is very interesting and helpful.**I was really glad to taking this class and appreciate you for teaching and leading me.

5) NSU 03141594

First time, I was nervous to chat with Waseda university students. **I didn't**

**have confidence in myself and I didn't know what to say.** However, I started speaking English through microphone. As I talked about a job. ... I made a presentation. It was really tough... . Through this class, **I was conscious of the importance of English**...Through I felt that I should prepare more information to chat with Japanese Students. **I hope to chat with those ones more if I have a chance.**

6) NSU 03641301

I know exactly the importance of English, so I took this class and am happy to make my friends ... **I learned how to express my self in English.** ... **However it is** very difficult to express one's opinion by making English sentence because my English skills are poor. **I learned the correct way to express myself as I made mistakes and further more I could build my confidence in speaking English.**

7) NSU 00141553

**I think this semester was really good. I could make Japanese friends.** But this class also had some problems, for example **the hardwares had some problems. And I think we need to have various topics.** If the students could choose their own topics, it would give more interest to the students.

### 5.3 The Results of Analysing the Questionnaire about New CCDL Model

A set of questionnaire was developed in order to survey the responses for this CCDL model. The results of analysing the questionnaires which were gathered from 15 students who participated in this new CCDL class can be summarized like these: to the questions about the length of students presentation, and the style of the course (having presentation and small group discussion), most of students (80%, 57%) replied that it was appropriate. And the questions about the length of Live On discussions, 67% of the students responded that it was a little too short. And 43% of the students responded that they understood Waseda students' presentations, and 34% students replied that they understood about

half. Most of the students (64%) responded that they actively participated in the Live On discussion. 76% of the students responded that the BBS was helpful in understanding the presentation topic in depth. So the results of the questionnaire proved that most of the students were satisfied with this course and they could understand Japanese culture, and practice English skills (see Appendix 1).

## 6. Conclusions

This research has three purposes like these: the first is to explain the class contents and procedure of new CCDL model and the second is to prove the good points of the new model through suggesting the students' responses to the new CCDL model. The third one is to suggest the good ways to utilize and improve a new CCDL model. As the results of the students' responses show up, this new CCDL model is very effective in helping the students to have their confidence in using English, to understand Japanese cultures and people, and to improve their English abilities. In conclusion, this new class model can be proved as a good model for developing Cross-Cultural Distance Learning. From the results of the previous research (Chang, 2005), some problems of the traditional CCDL model were pointed out like these:

1) the needs to activate participation from the students, 2) time allocation, 3) diversifying the discussion themes, 4) the possibilities of utilizing voice chatting.

So this paper set up new criteria for establishing a new class model for CCDL (see 2.3.2) so that the new model can solve the problems of the traditional CCDL model. Established based on the new criteria, the new CCDL model has the distinguishable characteristics comparing with the traditional model like these.

1) **Group Project:** The new model is based on the group project; group presentation and group chatting. One group consists of 4 or 5 members from one university and each group can choose the topic of their presentation and discussion of their chatting time. It is certain that the group project can motivate and activate the participation from the students.

2) **In-Class Chatting:** The new model is based on the in-class chatting so

that it can make time allocation easier. From the experiences of out of class chatting, sometimes it was a little difficult to match the chatting time from both universities.

3) **Various Topics:** The students who participated in the new model can choose the topics which were interesting to them in advance, and they can discuss one topic per one class so that it can diversify the theme for CCDL.

4) **Voice & Text Chatting:** The new model can use both voice and text chatting during chatting time, so that the new model can be useful for developing the spoken ability of the students.

The results for this new model for CCDL were analysed through both qualitative method and quantitative method, and the results can be summarized into several categories like these:

- 1) This class helped the students to have self-confidence in English.
- 2) This class helped the students to understand Japanese culture and people.
- 3) This class was very interesting.
- 4) This class helped the students to recognize the importance of English.
- 5) This class helped the students to improve their English abilities.

One student reported that this class did not use a textbook. Instead of textbooks, the computers and internet and other multi-media facilities were used as teaching materials and methods. He said that these facilities matched the young generation's tastes, so during the class he was not bored, which was the most impressive thing to him.

This new model requires the universities which would like to participate in this model set up some conditions precedent. The first, the both universities match the timetable for the class so that the students from both universities can meet at the same time through video conferencing and on-line chatting. The second, both universities must have facilities necessary for this class model, for example the personal computers, PC cameras, and headphone sets enough for the participating students. The third, the number of the students from both universities need to be almost same in order to make it easy to match the partners from each university.

In conclusion, this new CCDL model can be proved as a good model for cultivating English proficiency of the students in EFL contexts. The first thing

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is that most students were very impressed with the possibility of being able to get in touch with students and cultures in foreign countries. The second is that they could develop their English proficiency through the NNS-NNS interaction. The third is that they wish to participate in this new CCDL model again if possible, and they think this project can help themselves to activate the interests in cultural understanding, get their self-confidence in using English, and improve their English skills.

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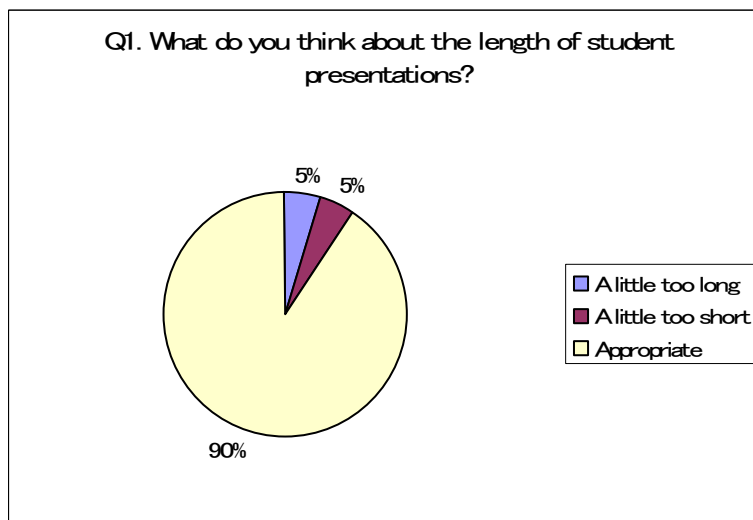
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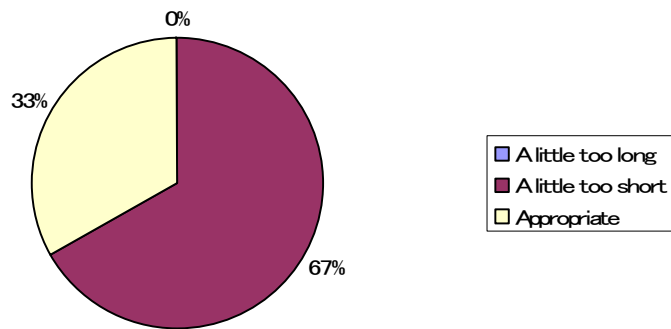
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**Appendix 1**

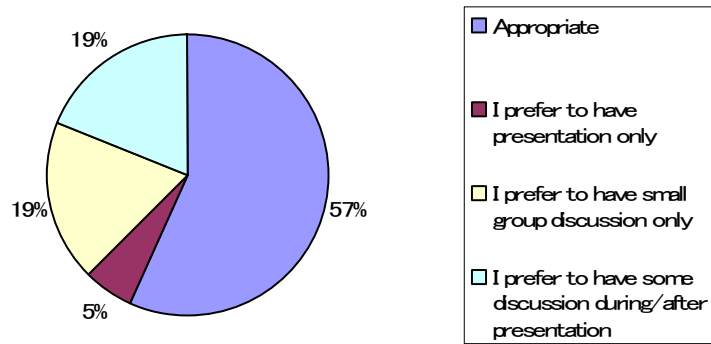
Results of Analysing the Questionnaire for New CCDL Model

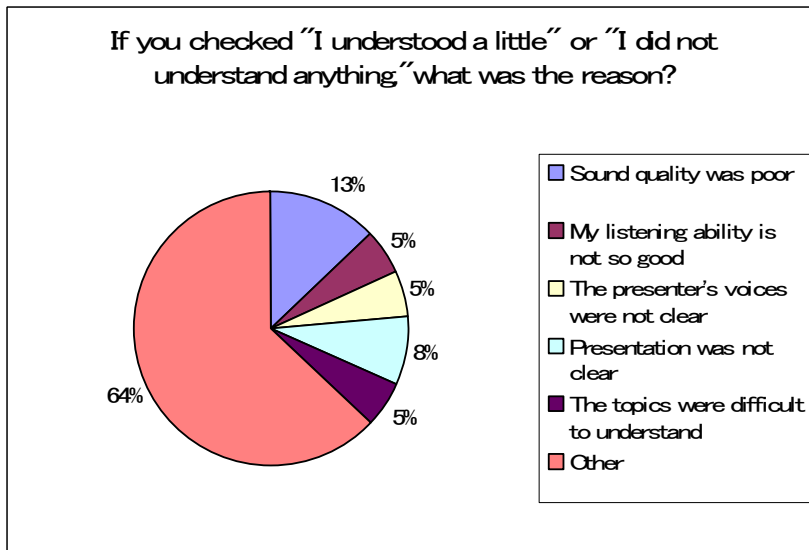
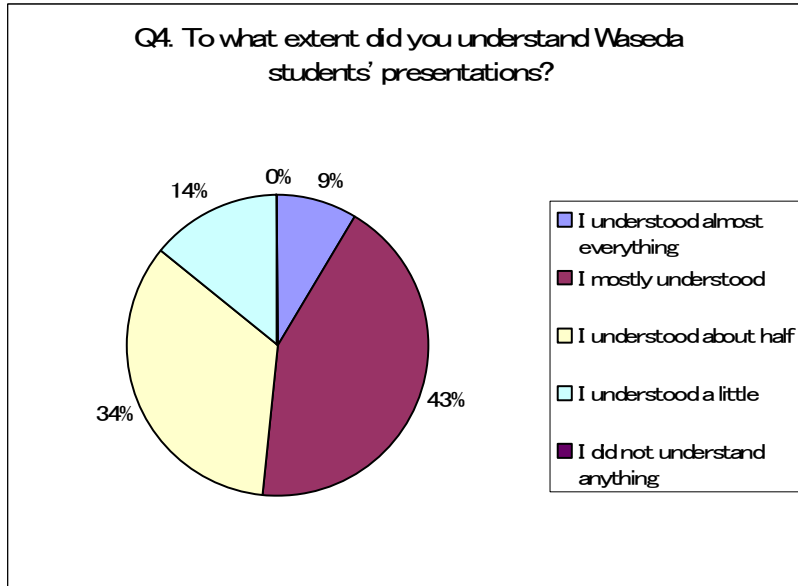


Q2. What do you think about the length of LiveOn discussions?

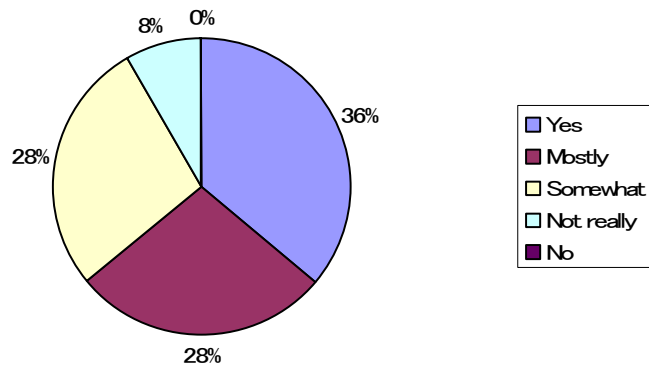


Q3. What do you think about the style of the course (having presentation and small group discussion)?

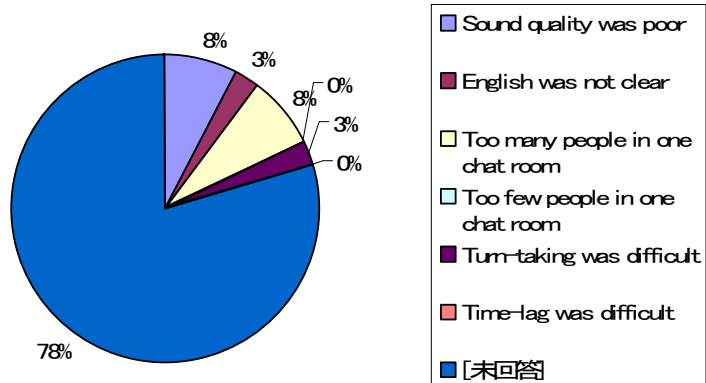


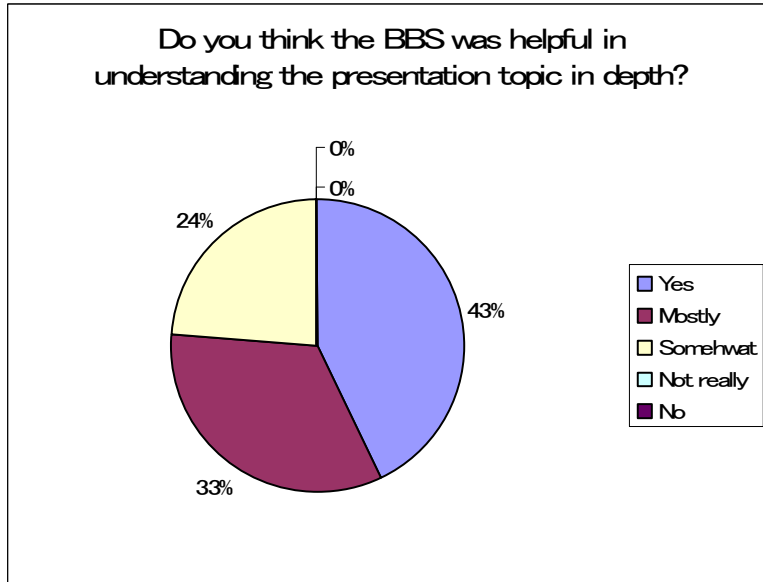


Q6. Were you able to participate actively in the LiveOn discussion?



If you checked "Not really" or "No" why?





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