

GoogleClassroom を利用したオムニバス講義の 必須基礎教養科目【英語1】とその実践

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Delivering an Omnibus-style Syllabus Online with Google Classroom: A case study of Compulsory Foundational Education English 1 Classes

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概要:本稿は、2020年に発生したコロナウイルスの世界的大流行の間、日本文理大学(NBU)の必須基礎教養【英語1】のオムニバスシラバスや講義がオンラインで実行されたことの紹介である。具体的に言うと、GoogleClassroomをオンラインプラットフォームとして、数百人の履修生と複数の講義や教員を含む【英語1】のオムニバス形式シラバスの実践例を紹介するものである。また、オムニバス形式シラバスをオンラインで実行することにあたっての問題や解決法をも紹介する。

Abstract: The following is an account of how the syllabus of English 1, a compulsory Foundational Education subject for year 1 undergraduate students, was conducted online at Nippon Bunri University (NBU) during the worldwide Covid19 pandemic of 2020. More specifically, it provides an example of how an omnibus-style curriculum involving hundreds of students and multiple classes and teachers can be conducted using Google Classroom, and also proposes solutions to problems encountered along the way.

キーワード:オムニバス形式シラバス、オンライン学習、GoogleClassroom、コロナウイルスの世界的大流行

Keywords: Omnibus-style syllabus, online teaching, Google Classroom, Covid19 pandemic

1. Introduction

The following case study took place during the spring semester of 2020 and came about as the result of the sudden requirement to offer classes

online in response to the Covid19 pandemic. In late March and early April, 2020, a series of Faculty Development (FD) sessions were organized to assist faculty accomplish the daunting task of hastily shifting the delivery of their curriculum from face-to-face classroom teaching to an online teaching platform. While the online delivery of a series of classes taught by a single teacher to a single group of students over the course of a semester is a comparatively straight-forward task, the same cannot be said for English 1, a 15-week compulsory Foundational Education subject typically taken by undergraduate students in their first semester at Nippon Bunri University (NBU). English 1 is taken by approximately 700 students and taught by 5 different teachers over 25 classes per week. In addition, although each class carries the name of one of the 5 teachers, i.e., “Collins Class” etc., the curriculum was designed in the omnibus-style, whereby all teachers rotate through all classes in two-week cycles during an 8-week rotation period. In other words, all English 1 students encounter all 5 teachers throughout the course of the semester. Classes on either side of the rotation period are taught by the “home” class teacher. Students are initially placed in streamed classes based on the results of a placement test and take a final exam at the end of the semester. The omnibus, or rotation component, takes place during the middle eight weeks of the course. The following case-study describes how these different stages of the course were arranged and delivered via Google Classroom. It also proposes solutions to problems encountered along the way.

1.1 Omnibus and the NBU English 1 curriculum

Omnibus is a term used widely in Japanese universities and is described by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) as a class delivery method whereby the content of a class (or course) is taught by multiple instructors (MEXT, 2009). The introduction of an omnibus-style English 1 curriculum was described at the March 18 NBU University Senate Meeting as follows,

“English 1 shall be a compulsory subject for all first year students during the spring semester, and students will take multiple classes taught by all English teachers. Teachers shall use teaching methods that instill a motivation to study in students. By allowing students to take classes with teachers whose teaching methods interest them, the number of students interested in studying English shall increase” (March 18 NBU University Senate Meeting, 2015, p.2).

In addition to exposing students to different teachers and teaching methods, the omnibus approach also exposes students to a range of English accents including British, North American, Eastern European, and Australasian, which assists in preparing students for the TOEIC listening section. Indeed, the conversation texts in the English 1 textbook, developed in-house, include standard components of the TOEIC listening section.

A number of case-studies focusing on the use of the omnibus approach at Japanese universities have been published. Haruta and Hiyagon (2011), citing Usami (1999), identify two major issues that can result from using an omnibus approach. Firstly, a dilution of the overall purpose and logical framework of lectures, and secondly, although a common issue with large classes in general, a tendency for lectures to become passive and a

resulting difficulty in promoting deeper learning and understanding. Wakita et al. (1999) summarizes observations and sentiments from students, who stated that following the conclusion of lectures, it was difficult to ask questions or deepen their understanding of lecture content. Furthermore, since teachers may change from week to week, and because lecture materials are distributed in class, if a student misses a particular lecture it is difficult to know what the lecture was about. Suzuki et al. (2012) stated that in omnibus situations where different invited speakers conduct each individual lecture, it is difficult to hold meetings in advance or to observe each other's lectures. As a result, although the content of each class may be interesting for students, an overall cohesion between lectures and the course of study itself may be lacking. In their case-study of a contemporary enterprise and profit course delivered through an omnibus approach, Iwata and Sato (2014) described the positive feedback received from students and instructors. Students stated that the omnibus allowed them to see a different side of their teachers and to learn from different perspectives.

A major difference between the case studies described here and the situation at NBU is that English teachers use a shared textbook, have a clear view of the overall framework of the course, and, prior to the Covid19 pandemic, met frequently on campus to share information and ideas. The English 1 (Yoshikawa, et al. 2000) textbook was developed in-house by NBU English teachers and is made up of twelve conversation-based units. Units 1 and 2 are taught by all teachers while the remaining ten units are divided up among all five English teachers – each teacher being responsible for two units.

During the 8-week omnibus period, each teacher delivers their two units to students in the four other teachers' classes while rotating on a two-week basis. During the rotation period, therefore, the textbook units are not taught in the same order as they are presented in the textbook, and since each unit of work is begun and completed in one class, an overall progression and development of topics is difficult to achieve. This potential paucity of cohesion between classes and the course of study itself reflects the observations made in the omnibus case studies described above. The major distinction here, however, is the focus on active student participation and communication, meaning that the potential for passive student engagement is to some extent mitigated. Prior to the Covid19 pandemic, classes were taught in-person by teachers using the textbook, classroom equipment including a blackboard and CD players, and supplementary materials. Classes typically consisted of the following three stages, 1) an introduction to new vocabulary and expressions including pronunciation drilling, 2) a series of listening activities following the unit conversation, and 3) a communicative task whereby students work in pairs or small groups to create, practice and perform their own conversation. Attendance was taken using written attendance cards that teachers would distribute to, and collect from, students at the end of each class. Each student was also given a participation score for that class, based on teachers' classroom observations, which were tallied up at the end of the semester to provide each student with an overall participation score. The arrival of the Covid19 pandemic and subsequent shift to online teaching required these classroom methods and procedures to be urgently reconsidered and adapted. The following section

describes the delivery framework that resulted from these reconsiderations and adaptations.

2. Shifting to an online framework

While a number of options, including Skype and Microsoft 365, were initially considered, Google Classroom was adopted as the primary delivery platform by the coordinating faculty of the English program. The University subsequently created and distributed Google account to all students. The primary reason for this selection was the ability for teachers and students to access and use the various applications available through one username and password in the GSuite including Google Classroom, Google Forms, and Google Meet, and importantly the file-sharing capability of Google Drive. Utilizing these applications, the ultimate goal was to recreate online the three stages of a pre-Covid19 English 1 class while maintaining the omnibus syllabus and gathering participation and attendance information. A total of 25 English 1 Google Classrooms were created (each teacher taught five classes per week) and teachers were registered as “Teachers” in each classroom to ensure that they could post materials during the rotation period.

2.1 Orientation and getting students into the correct classes

Prior to class registration, and in the final days leading up to the switch to online classes, all students came to campus and attended an orientation session that provided them with the necessary information and documents for class registration, class placement tests, and other administrative procedures. Students registering for English 1 were placed in classes based on the results of placement test which they were informed of

during the on-campus orientation. The decision was made to conduct the placement test online via a Google Form, and a QR code linked to the test was printed in the orientation documents. Based on the results of the test, students were placed into one of five class levels consisting of three “standard” and two “basic” classes. In order to ensure that students understood what was expected of them under the new online system, a second orientation was conducted online which all students joined. The orientation session was conducted via Google Meet in a Google Classroom into which all registered students were invited via email. Upon joining the Google Classroom, students were met by an instructional PowerPoint explaining how to download the Meet application onto smartphones, and where to find the link to a Meet session. Approximately 140 students were invited to each orientation session and considering that this system had not been trialed by faculty with such large numbers of students, many of whom had never used this technology before, it was a great relief not only that students responded to the invitation email, but also that they successfully arrived in the Meet session. During the orientation, the basic flow of online classes was explained and all teachers gave a self-introduction. Students were also given an explanation of the omnibus system and were informed that teachers would rotate on a two-week basis between weeks 8 and 12 (Figure 2). At the conclusion of the orientation, students were invited to their individual Google Classroom by their class teacher (based on the results of the placement test) and the orientation Google Classroom was archived.

2.2 Stages of an online English1 class

For each lesson, materials were posted under

the *Lessons* tab and class instructions were written in both English and Japanese (Figure 1, which displays the typical lesson material and instruction layout). As described above, prior to Covid19, English 1 classes typically consisted of three stages (introduction of new words and expressions, listening activities, and conversation practice and presentation). Online, the introduction stage was delivered via a narrated PowerPoint video which not only covered the new words, expressions and pronunciation, but also included the conversation listening audio and comprehension questions. By including the audio materials in the PowerPoint, students were able to complete the listening component at their own pace. After students had viewed the PowerPoint, they were instructed to complete the listening exercises in their textbook and submit a Google Form worksheet which covered the content of that unit. This worksheet consisted of a series of vocabulary questions, sentence unscrambling tasks, and statement-response questions. Students were also required to

compose and submit a conversation script based on the model conversation in the textbook. The third and final stage of the lesson was a Meet session which students joined with their teacher as a whole group. During this stage teachers reviewed the content of the PowerPoint video and invited students to present the conversation they had prepared before the Meet session. This was conducted either one-on-one with the teacher, or between students themselves. At the conclusion of the Meet session, an additional Google Form link was posted in the Meet chat feed which served as the attendance card for that lesson. Students were to open, complete, and submit the form before leaving. Participation points were awarded on an all-or-nothing basis based on whether the student had submitted their Google Form worksheet by the deadline. The issue of attendance and participation, and the way that points were awarded, subsequently became the focus of debate among the English 1 teachers (see section 3).

Week 13: Unit 8 (Collins) ⋮

John COLLINS posted a new material: Unit 8: Travel & Experience

⋮

Posted 3 Aug (Edited 3 Aug)

① 8:50から : Unit 8動画を見ながら、問題を解いて、答えを教科書に書き込む / View the Unit 8 Lesson Video and answer the questions in your textbook (8:50~).

② 9:50まで: [UNIT 8 Textbook Work] のGoogle フォームに答えを記入し、提出する / Complete the [UNIT 8 Textbook Work] task using the answers in your textbook (by 9:50)

③ 9:50から : UNIT 8のMEETの時間に参加する (9:50~) / Attend the Unit 8 MEET Online Lesson (9:50~)
必ずカメラをオンにしてください (マイクは必ずオフにして) / You must have your camera switched on (keep your mic off).

Unit 8 Textbook Work

<https://forms.gle/RoWebM8u...>

(COLLINS)U8_Travel&Exp...

Video

Add class comment...

▶

Figure 1. Display of lesson materials and instructions in Google Classroom

2.3 Moving to the omnibus stage

Following the conclusion of the first two lessons, the eight-week omnibus rotation began. Figure 2 (see below) displays the five Tuesday first-period English 1 classes taught by Teachers A-E. By following the greyed-out “Teacher A” lessons, the reader can visualize how each teacher rotated through each of the four other classes on a two-week basis before returning to their original class during week 12 (lesson 12). As can be seen below, during week 4 (lesson 4) Teacher A would join Teacher B’s classroom and deliver the first of their two lessons with that group of students. Teacher A would post their class instructions (Figure 1) in Teacher B’s classroom together with their narrated PowerPoint video. Teacher A would also host a Meet session with Teacher B’s students and post the attendance card in the Meet chat feed. Teacher A would repeat this process as they rotate through the remaining classes until week 12 (lesson 12) when they would return to their original class. The final four lessons in each class would then be taught by the original teacher followed by the final exam which, unlike the placement test, was conducted separately in each class. This was due to the fact that the final exam for the “basic” and “standard” groups were different.

3. Issues and troubleshooting

The following session describes the main issues that were encountered by teachers relating to attendance, participation, and the completion of the Google Form worksheet. Due to initial time constraints, only one attendance Google Form was created for each class day (Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays). However, it was believed that by

having shared access to all attendance data, teachers would be able to keep track of their students’ attendance before, during and after the omnibus rotation period. Within the attendance form, students were required to enter not only their name and student ID number, but also the day and period of their class and their original class teacher’s name. A single Google spreadsheet for each day was then shared with all teachers, who would then extract the attendance information they required by using filters based on class period and teacher name (Figure 3). Attendance data would then be entered into the NBU Universal Passport LMS by each teacher. It soon became apparent, however, that this system was problematic and changes were necessary. The primary weakness of this system was that it relied entirely on students entering their correct information in order for data to be correctly filtered for and extracted. Added to this was the extra burden that the cumbersome filtering and extraction process placed on teachers after each lesson.

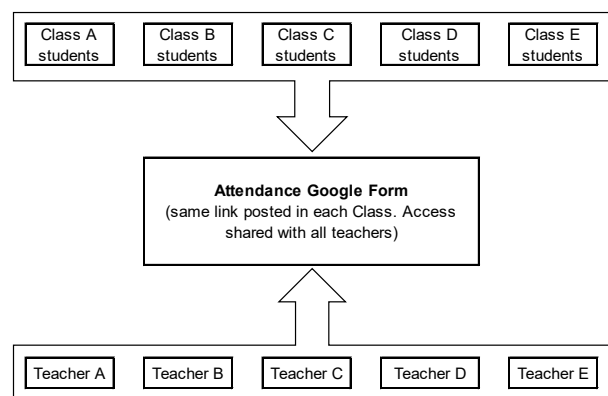


Figure 3. Flow of attendance data prior to change.

In order to reduce both the burden on teachers and mitigate the effect of students entering

incorrect data, individual Google forms were created for each class, period and day. A total of approximately 200 forms were generated. These links were posted in a shared Google Classroom for teachers, and teachers would copy and paste the correct link in the Meet chat feed of their classes. Rather than accessing and filtering data from a single shared Google spreadsheet, each teacher received a spreadsheet that included only information about their students (Figure 4). This continued throughout the rotation period, meaning that although a link would be posted by Teacher E in Teacher A's classroom, the data would subsequently be shared by the administrator only with Teacher A. As a result, attendance data issues were greatly reduced, although teachers continued to receive a number of attendance-related inquiries from students.

As described above, participation points had previously been awarded based on teachers' observations of students during class. When classes went online, however, participation points were to be awarded on an all-or-nothing basis based on the submission of the Google Form worksheet by the deadline, in other words, before the Meet session. This became a point of debate among teachers, particularly in relation to students who, in some cases submitted their Google Form worksheet and/or attendance card, had their cameras or mics switched off or were otherwise unresponsive when called on during the Meet session. Teachers proposed a tiered points system that would allow them to deduct points if a student was unresponsive, and it was suggested that such an approach would require students to follow the Meet session more carefully and encourage greater participation (see section 4).

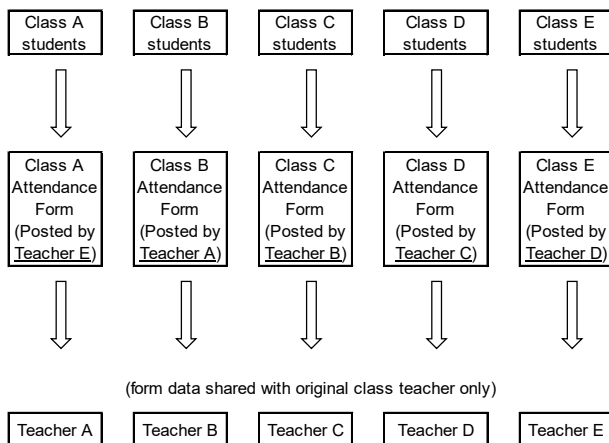


Figure 4. Flow of attendance data after changes.

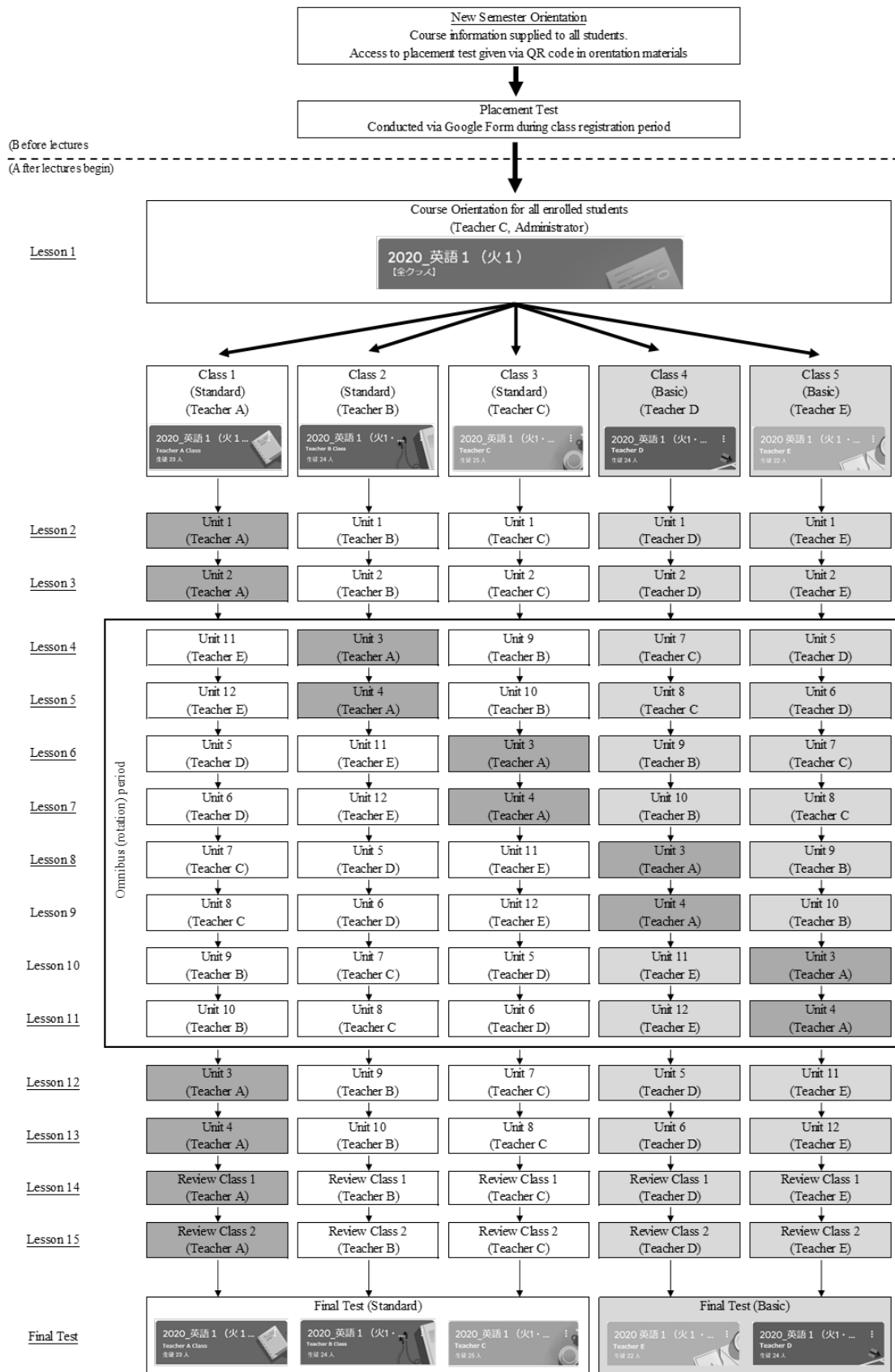


Figure 2. Schematic diagram of English 1 showing teacher movement during the rotation period

4. Learning from this case study and conclusions

The shift to online classes has placed an increased burden upon teachers and led to stress and fatigue (“Shift to online classes leaves Japan's university teachers exhausted”, The Japan Times, 2020) and the case of English 1 was no exception. The task of creating narrated PowerPoint videos, keeping track of Google links to be posted, and navigating through large amounts of data shared via Google spreadsheets not doubt placed an enormous burden on teachers. Although by no means perfect, the case of English 1 does provide an example of how an omnibus syllabus involving multiple teachers and large numbers of students can be successfully delivered online.

As described above, Haruta and Hiyagon (2011), citing Usami (1999), stated that omnibus classes tend to become passive and it is difficult to promote deeper learning and understanding. These concerns were reflected in the feedback received from teachers regarding participation. It was suggested that with the adoption of a more flexible online meeting platform such as Zoom, which allows teachers to breakup up large classes into smaller groups, classes could become more communicative, more student-centered and more engaging. The adoption of a tiered participation points system, as described above, could also stimulate greater participation. One of the concerns raised by Wakita et al. (1999) about omnibus was the risk of students being unable to get information and materials from teachers, particularly if the student was absent. In the case of English 1, this risk was mitigated thanks to lesson materials remaining available online after a teacher had rotated out of the classroom. Suzuki et al. (2012) raised the issue of information sharing among omnibus instructors. As the case of English

1 shows, this concern can be addressed through the sharing of data and information via various Google applications and the creation of a shared Google Classroom for teachers. Information must ideally be shared, however, in a way that does not create an additional administrative burden on teachers or coordinators. In conclusion, the current case study demonstrates that an omnibus curriculum can be successfully delivered online but that the way in which information is gathered and shared needs to be carefully considered by omnibus coordinators.

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Bio Statement

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