



Constructing a Web Site for International Students

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Constructing a Web Site for International Students

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Abstract: This is a research report of the project for constructing a Web information site for international students at Doshisha University. The research first started with the search for information provided for international students both on-line and off-line. It then proceeded to the construction of a site with relevant information, the creation and compilation of reference and study materials for those prospective students, and finally to the installation of the WWW server from which above information is to be sent out. Through this research the nature and scope of the services needed for the international students have become apparent. At the same time, the essential know-how of the web server administration has also been acquired.

Introduction

This research project was carried out over a period of two years, from April 2000 to March 2002. The purpose of the project was to construct a web site (organized web pages) for international students, that is, Japanese students who go abroad to study and the students from other countries who come to Japan to study.

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As we began our research, we started off by reading available literature, namely, papers, books and manuals for studying abroad. A part of this literature was for the management of international sections of institutions.¹ The majority of the handbooks and manuals provide basic information on how to motivate oneself to study abroad, how to look for scholarships, how to prepare for the TOEFL, and how to look for an appropriate institution. In addition to these, there were some reports, or personal experiences, written by the predecessors. Information is often general because the writers aim at general readers.

As we turned to Internet resources, we noticed that most of the information provided by these books was already available through the Net. If the search is properly done, the obtained information is quite often as accurate and often much more up-to-date than that in the printed books. Therefore, we decided to compile a series of linked sites to give out most up-to-date information for studying abroad.

When we started to develop our site, we noticed that, in the process of selecting information, we had to have a target visitor to our sites so that we could choose the most relevant pieces of information for them. In this context it was best, and natural, to have Doshisha students and colleagues as target visitors. For those interested Doshisha students, their chances for studying abroad are, first and foremost, in the affiliated institutions and programs. Thus we have created Doshisha-specific information sites. As we found a few for overseas research trips for academics, we added the links to these sites to inform our colleagues about arranging trips for overseas academic conferences. All these can be seen in “For Japanese Students” section.

Another target was those prospective students abroad who aim at studying in Japan, hopefully at Doshisha, or those who have started to study in Japan. Although information for Japanese students abounds on the Internet, there is almost no substantial well-organized collection of information for non-Japanese students. Some exceptions are the sites created by universities and

colleges. Both International Christian University (<http://www.icu.ac.jp/>) and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (http://www.apu.ac.jp/index_j.html) run completely bilingual sites for those students. On-line information pages of the International Student Center at Kobe University (http://www.kobe-u.ac.jp/~kisc/def_Fe.htm) offer valuable information on the university and the region in three languages; English, Japanese and Korean. In order to supplement the lack of information from our side, we have prepared student-created introduction pages and Japanese language-related pages. In addition to these, we added a site for those who seek opportunities to teach English in Japan. Information for this section has been prepared in “For Non-Japanese Students”.

Doshisha has its official English pages. However, when the student visitors find their peers’ effort to introduce Doshisha, they feel much closer to the institution. For this reason we added the “The Doshisha” section that has been created by our students.

One of the toughest hurdles our students face when they try to apply to a university or college is their English proficiency, which is often measured by the TOEFL. This is one of the reasons why so many shelves are filled with the TOEFL test preparation guides and drills at most of the large bookstores. However, these guides and drills by themselves do not necessarily improve students’ proficiency. Systematic guidance has to be given to them in classes, and if well-planned on-line supplementary materials are provided, the process of learning will be greatly facilitated. For this reason, we have created and accumulated study materials in the section, “Classroom Materials for Studying English”.

In the rest of the paper, we will explain the purpose and structure of the sites in more detail. We will also discuss the advantages and risks of administering an independent local web server. A conceptual map of the site can be found in the Appendix.

For Japanese Students

For Japanese students who go abroad to study, we have created and/or updated the following web pages. We have included a description for each page.

“Study Abroad”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/online/www/study.htm>)

This page has links to a great many useful sites. These include time in international time zones, currency converters, weather forecasts, school calendars in various countries, web pages of universities and language schools, seven articles for students who would like to study abroad, web pages of organizations and government offices, resources, information about tests such as the TOEFL and the GRE, institutions, reports and projects by Doshisha students, learning materials that are helpful for students who want to study and live in the United States, information on writing academic English, projects done by Doshisha students for non-Japanese people and useful resources compiled for them, and advice for traveling abroad (in Japanese).

“Studying Abroad”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/abroad/default.htm>)

This page was originally created for Doshisha students who would like to participate in exchange student programs and non-Japanese students who would like to come to Doshisha University.

“*Ryugaku*” (Studying Abroad)

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/japanese/library/resource/abroad/>)

This is a Japanese version of the above resource. It includes more information in Japanese, governmental and organizational information related to Japan,

information about studying in various countries, and some other useful information.

“*Kaigai Shuccho*” (Going Abroad for Business)

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/japanese/online/overseas.htm>)

This page was originally created for faculty members planning to attend international conferences. Later, more information about traveling internationally and in local areas was added. Useful practical information is available here.

“Winnipeg Program”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/abroad/winnipeg/>)

We made this web page for students who are interested in going to University of Winnipeg for a semester as part of a Doshisha University course. This site includes links to some background readings to help students improve their communication with English-speaking people. There are also links to some useful reading materials available on-line in English. “Why don’t You Study Abroad?” encourages students to study abroad. It lists some advantages and disadvantages, and it explains different types of study abroad programs, such as degree seeking programs, one-year academic study programs, language training programs, and vocational training programs.

There are five articles for this site: three in English and two in Japanese. The English articles are: “Why Don’t You Study Abroad?”, “Canada”, and “Studying Abroad and the Internet”. The first English article is an invitation to studying abroad. The second one is an orientation reading to help students understand what Canada is like, including its government and educational system. The third one gives some basic knowledge and skills that students need to use the Internet to make study abroad successful. For these three readings, there are reading comprehension quizzes, and either students or teachers can use them to find out how well students understand them. The two Japanese articles are about education in Canada.

We have linked the above study abroad sites to ESL/EFL-related sites in order to help students find useful information. We also provided a link to “Academic English”, with which students are not familiar. They need some information about research and writing academic papers, and this page has some links related to them.

While studying abroad, students usually need to spend a lot of time studying in the library. It is a good idea for them to know about libraries and how to use them. We have linked a reading called “University Libraries” to this page.

Web pages on the University of Victoria, made by students who went there as exchange students, are also linked here, since they are very useful not only for students who go to this particular university to study, but also for those who go to other Canadian universities as well.

We have added some Japan-related links pages, since Japanese students may need to study about Japan, Japanese culture and Japanese language in order to explain them in English while they are in Canada. Since we would like them to talk about their institution, Doshisha, we have also created a link to a site with readings about Doshisha. It describes Doshisha, its history, and its founder, Joseph Hardy Neesima.

In order to show how studying in Canada is different from and similar to studying in the United States and the United Kingdom, we have created links to information sources for studying in those countries.

This Winnipeg Program sites have several PowerPoint files, which Kenji Kitao used to give a lecture for orientation for the students. They are about Canada, university life, classes, home stay, intercultural communication and travel. They are self explanatory and useful to read.

For Non-Japanese Students

“Doshisha Student Projects”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/online/www/study.htm#non>)

Students have made web pages to help people from other countries who visit Japan, travel in Japan, and study in Japan. They also made web pages with links to resources for Japanese language study. We organized those pages at the above URL.

“Japan and Japanese Language”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/online/www/japan.htm>)

We have made a links page, which include information about Japanese language, culture, literature, libraries, mailing lists, newspapers, TV, radio, and magazines, movies, organizations, resources, teaching/learning materials, college associations, university Japanese programs, and Japanese programs in Japan, as well as teachers' homepages which have useful information and gateways for various types of information.

“Learning Japanese Language”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/online/www/japanese.htm>)

We have made a web page for people who would like to study Japanese language. We included links to sites which have various resources, information on kanji and kana (hiragana and katakana), vocabulary, grammar, conversation, basic Japanese, online courses, tests, learning materials, and Japanese language schools as well as Japanese language dictionaries.

“Teaching English in Japan”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/online/www/teij.htm>)

This page was originally made in 1996 and was very useful for people who

were considering coming to Japan to teach English. Since then we have made and expanded the above two pages. We have updated this page entirely and moved some links to those two pages.

Most information on this page is for people who plan to come to Japan to teach English now, but there are still some useful resources for people who have other purposes.

The Doshisha

We have created and expanded the site about the Doshisha for the students who come to study at Doshisha University. This has a brief description about the Doshisha and links to the home pages of all Doshisha institutions. The top page can be accessed at the following URL: <http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/doshisha/>.

This site has mainly two kinds of information: Doshisha University itself and its history and present situation; and Joseph Hardy Neesima, the founder of Doshisha, who lived an interesting life in the 19th century.

For the history of Doshisha, we have provided a brief chronology of the Doshisha and information about some of the western-style buildings at Imadegawa Campus that were built in Meiji Era and were designated as important cultural properties.

As for the information about Joseph Hardy Neesima, we have a chronology of his life, a biography of his younger days, and some of his important writings in English. It was not easy to obtain these writings, but now it is possible to read them on-line.

Classroom Materials for Studying English

The basic problem for many Japanese students who would like to study abroad in English-speaking countries is that their English proficiency is not

high enough. Thus, we have made materials to help them to study English. The following URL will lead you to the pages: <http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/>.

“Extensive Reading”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/graded/>)

Many students are not used to reading much in English: all they may read are textbooks for their English classes. In order to supplement their reading, we have provided an orientation material for extensive reading and graded readers. We have posted a list of all graded readers in the library on-line at the following URL: <http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/graded/esllist.htm>. We gathered book reports. In our classes we have evaluated those graded readers (Kitao, K., et al., 1990). We have started a database of graded readers as a student project. Students read low-intermediate books, which are 1,000-2,000-word level books. They write descriptions of the books, and, after peer correction, students finalize their reports and they are added to the database. We have worked on this project for a few years and have learned, among other things, that it is important to give our students a specific task. (Kitao & Kitao, 2002b) You can see the database at the following URL: <http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/library/resource/book/graded.htm>.

“Reading Materials”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/reading.htm>)

We have put many reading materials on-line. They are on communication, intercultural communication, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Internet and computers, etc., which are very useful in that students can learn a great deal about what they should know in order to study in those countries.

“Writing Materials”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/library/student/writing/>)

This section was originally made to give advice on writing effective e-mail messages. For any average student, it is not easy to write easily readable email messages, that is, messages that are correct, clear, concise, and courteous. In this section we stressed that the writer needs to look at the message from the point of view of a reader and try to make the message as easy as possible to understand. We emphasize that students should write a message, re-read it and revise it. Students help each other to improve their messages.

“Listening Materials”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/library/student/listening/>)

This is a relatively new project, and as a matter of fact, we put listening materials on the web after we finished this international students web page project. However, we were preparing to put listening materials on the web while working on this project. We have put recordings on-line for some textbooks for which we solved the copyright issues. We created exercises for listening, and students are now able to listen to the recordings and work on those exercises.

“Vocabulary”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/library/student/vocabulary/>)

For many non-native speakers of English, their weakest point is their vocabulary. Their vocabulary is much smaller than that of native speakers. We started constructing vocabulary database with students using a textbook, *Working with Words* (Kitao & Kitao, 2001). We suggested twelve ways for students to increase their vocabulary, and students have developed it a great deal over a semester. You can see the results at <http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/library/student/vocabulary/working/>.

On the Internet, here are various web sites where students can develop their vocabulary. Therefore, we have made a links page for building up their word power (Kitao & Kitao, 2000).

“Academic English”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/academic.htm>)

One major problem Japanese students encounter in a university in an English-speaking country is that they are not familiar with academic English, and they have difficulty following classes and carrying out assignments for their classes. We have made a links page for academic English, which covers areas of study, resources, search tools, evaluating resources, study skills, writing, doing research, writing research papers, avoiding plagiarism, and creating web pages.

“Quizzes”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/quiz/>)

For students' self study, we have provided quizzes, since they like to test themselves. There are quizzes related to grammar, vocabulary, TOEIC, TOEFL, dialogues, and reading. They can study them at their own pace and as much as they want.

“Student Projects”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/project/>)

Student projects can mean anything that students work on, that is, students choose a topic and make a web site about it. They search for information on the Internet, evaluate the resources they find, select and organize them, and add descriptions or explanations. They make links pages and write about their topic, based on what they have found.

These projects familiarize students with various aspects of the Internet functions and help them improve their English. The task is a good exercise for writing, which can make use of peer evaluation or group collaborations. Students can help one another and improve their English. Also, it allows students to write different types of passages. In addition, it is motivating for

students, since it can be used with topics they are interested in.

Other Projects

Students are fond of this type of project, in part because it allows them to produce something concrete and useful that can be seen by others. They are motivated to do a good job, because their web pages will stay on-line after the class is over. Some student projects can be also seen at:

<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/project/>,

<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/library/student/homepage.htm>, and

<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/>.

“Doshisha Students’ Projects”

(<http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitao/class/material/project/>)

This page not only holds students’ works but various materials teachers need to do this type of project. It includes advice for searching for information on the Internet, evaluating web resources, using search engines, making web pages, writing, and working in pairs or in groups. It also has links to forms for paragraphs and project evaluation, models, advice for avoiding plagiarism, advice on public speaking, and other resources.

Constructing an Interactive Web Server

We purchased a new computer to provide the above information and learning materials for our students. We did so firstly because we needed a new fast web server, preferably with a good search functions, in order to provide more effectively the information we gathered; secondly because we were convinced that, in providing study materials, it would be more interesting and fun for the students to learn from the Internet-based interactive materials than from text-only static materials. As we mentioned earlier, we tried to provide pictures and sounds via our institutional server (ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp). When we

did this, we mainly used JavaScript, a script language embedded in an HTML document. However, JavaScript has its limits and using JavaScript restricted the web server's capability in providing complicated learning activities. Therefore, we tried to make interactive web materials using CGI (Common Gateway Interface), a standard interface for running external programs from a World-Wide Web HTTP server. In order to use CGI, we had to construct a new Web server on a new computer. However, the process has not been an easy one, and we do not have a fully functional web server in operation yet.

Haruo Nishinoh has been running a WindowsNT-based server (muse.doshisha.ac.jp) for academic and educational purposes for five years. Using the knowledge and skill of computing and networking gained from this experience, he tried to implement a Linux-based network server on a new computer.

We decided to choose Linux because it is one of the most reliable and stable operating system inexpensively available. It is also a versatile system that allows most of the UNIX software programs to run on it, such as a very popular web server program, "Apache". CGI, which works on the web server, is best developed on a Linux/UNIX platform. CGI is attractive for our service because it enables us to create an interactive on-line learning environment. CGI-based interactive e-learning service modules have already been available on Linux/UNIX platform at the TESOL site (<http://www.tesol.net/scripts/>). This includes a vocabulary lookup program (<http://www.tesol.net/scripts/VocabSearch/>) and quiz and test programs (<http://www.tesol.net/scripts/QuizTest/>). Since we were planning to introduce CGI-based EFL materials on this server later, Linux was the best choice.

We were careful in placing this server on the network, for we were well aware that because of its versatility and flexibility, Linux, like other UNIX-based systems, often becomes a target of network assault. As we connected our server to the Internet, we opened just three ports: port 80 for web server, 21 for FTP server, and 22 for SSH (Secure Shell). These were the minimum and

essential services. Opening port 80 was necessary in providing interactive web services, port 21 was necessary to upload and download files to renew the pages from remote computers. SSH on port 22 was also needed to remotely maintain the operating system.

Even this minimum setting, however, had its vulnerability. Within 48 hours of operation, the server was severely attacked and overridden by an intruder, a computer program. This was done by what is commonly known as “Message File Buffer Overflow” and was caused by the vulnerability of WU-FTPd, a commonly used FTP daemon (namely, server) program, which was running as a default FTPd at that time.² This attack allowed the intruder to overwrite the memory stack of the FTP daemon. Once this was done, the system became extremely unstable and soon allowed the intruder to remotely take over the server machine. What happened next was that the intruder inserted a port-scanning program into our computer and then the program, having been executed, started to send a port-scanning command to other computers connected on the network. In short, our server machine was used as a stepping-stone of the attack on other networked computers.

Unfortunately, we were unable to find the source of the attack, but we were informed that the attack came from some remote computer that had also been taken over by the intruder. Soon after the takeover, the scanning activities were detected by off-campus surveillance system and our computer systems office was alerted. Then within 72 hours of operation, our machine was remotely disconnected from the network by the systems administrator.

We are currently in the process of rebuilding the server. In doing so, we had to clean the hard drive, so that the least fragment of the attacking program may be eliminated. We had to re-install the operating system and rebuild the server systems. At present, the server is almost ready for operation. However, we are reluctant to open the service again until we are convinced that the server is completely secure and connections are well protected.

The lessons we have learned from this attack are as follows:

- 1) It will be necessary to have an on-campus monitoring system for server activities 24 hours a day so that when suspicious behavior is detected, the system automatically sends out an alert to the systems administrator and, if necessary, disconnects the overridden computer from the campus-wide network system.
- 2) It is also necessary to have an expert systems manager stand by who should immediately be able to handle emergency situations. Such an expert should be able to give proper advice to inexperienced server administrators.
- 3) Although we, as humanities academics, are not computer experts nor will we be able to acquire high level of expertise, our server administrators have to learn the basics of the operating system, server application and network security. This will take an unnecessary burden off from the shoulders of the systems administrator.
- 4) When a secure server is not available on campus, it would be a good idea to use commercial Web hosting services on the Internet. In this case, the remote service provider takes care of the maintenance, and users, in exchange for the security, will lose some of the control and versatility of the services.

Though we failed in the initial attempt, we are still convinced that it is necessary to own our private Linux server. We are trying to open it as soon as maximum security is established. We will make all the information above available via the Internet in the near future.³

Conclusion

Doshisha University's educational philosophy has two pillars: Christian education and internationalization. When it was founded one and a quarter centuries ago, they were unique in Japan, and that had a great significance in modern education in Japan. However, most universities now have international

programs and international exchange, and they send students abroad and accept students from overseas. What is still unique to Doshisha University?

Through this project, we found that Doshisha University is not necessarily very international. For the out-going students, it does not provide much information for its students who are interested in studying abroad. We do not have good orientation programs for that purpose, either.

For the in-coming students, there is very little information available in foreign languages. We do have the Center for Japanese Language to train international students to prepare to go to Japanese universities; however, it does not even have a homepage in either English, or Chinese.

The goal of this project was: firstly, to do research on available information sources for international students; secondly, to help Doshisha students to prepare to go abroad and; thirdly, to help international students who have come or wish to come to Japan by providing useful information, resources and materials on web sites. We feel that what we have prepared is very basic, but we hope that we will be able to provide more information in the near future. As well as renewing information on the pages, we are planning several functional revisions of our sites, such as, 1) providing an interactive bulletin board system for queries from international students, 2) providing a site map for easier navigation and accessibility, 3) creating more attractive and well-designed pages.

We feel that a part of our project should be an on-going project, to be taken over by Institute for Language and Culture or by the International Center of Doshisha University. Internationalization of an institution cannot be done without institutional reform. We hope that this project will be a stepping-stone for the future full-scale projects for international students so that Doshisha as a whole will become active again in its international exchange in education and research.

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Notes

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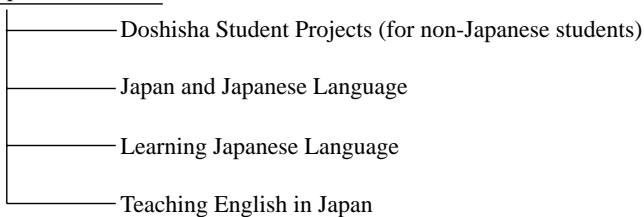
1. It is noteworthy that so few an article have been written for the topic even in the most popular journal for English education. The English Teachers' Magazine has featured on "International Exchange" only once in recent ten years. (Nakano, et al 2002)
2. "CERT® Advisory CA-2001-33 Multiple Vulnerabilities in WU-FTPD" [On-Line] <http://www.cert.org/advisories/CA-2001-33.html> (Retrieved: September 30, 2002)
3. As a postscript, vulnerability in file transfer can be avoided by using newly developed "OpenSSH Suite". This set of software uses encrypted secure shell (SSH) connection for remote login and file transfer. Detailed specification and software program can be found in the following URL: <http://www.openssh.com/>.

Appendix: A Conceptual Map of the Site

For Japanese Students

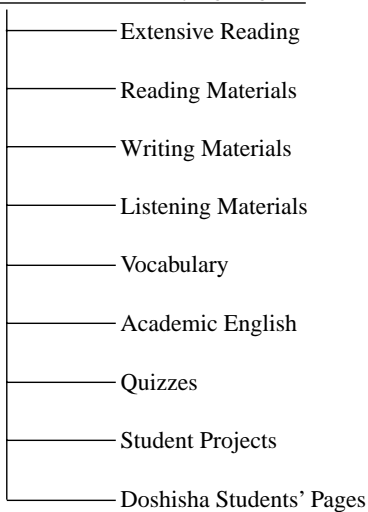


For Non-Japanese Students



The Doshisha

Classroom Materials for Studying English



梗概

留学生支援のための情報提供サイトの構築

西納春雄、木下康光、北尾謙治

本論では、留学生すなわち外国（主として英語圏）への留学を希望する日本人学生、および諸外国から日本へ留学を希望する学生と、すでに日本に滞在している在日外国人留学生のために必要な情報を整備し、オンラインで情報発信することを目的とした研究の経緯を論じる。

留学情報には、書籍やガイドブックの形で出版されているものが多数ある。その大部分は、若い一般読者を対象にしたもので、本学の学生の要求に必ずしもこたえるものではない。また、留学生を受け入れる機関のための手引き書も出版されているが、これらは機関の管理者向けであり、留学生の要求にこたえたものではない。教育の現場における留学生への対応は個々の大学や教育機関で行われており、それぞれの機関が編集した情報がインターネットを通じて学内・学外ネットワークに配信されている。本研究では、それらの情報のうち本学の学生に有益なものを選択収集し、また、独自情報を作成して、ネットワークを通じて提供することを試みた。

日本人学生のためには、海外の大学情報、留学の意義と動機付け、学内から応募できる留学プログラムへの準備のためのページ、加えて、同僚教員のために海外への学会出張のセクションをもうけた（For Japanese Students）、海外からの留学生のためには、日本文化紹介、日本と日本語への導入のページをもうけ、そして日本での英語教授を希望するネイティブスピーカーのためのセクションをもうけた（For Non-Japanese Students）、さらに同志社大学をより深く多角的に紹介するためのページも整備した（The Doshisha）、留学を目指す日本人学生にとっては、英語の学習と実力向上がもっとも大切であるが、これを適切に指導し補助するためのページも充実した（Classroom Materials for Studying English）、これらは同志社内部および外部から英語授業

の一部として、あるいは課外で利用することができる。

これらの情報源は現在言語文化教育研究センターのサーバ (ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp) に格納されているが、双方向的な情報提供を可能にするために、近日中に独自のLinuxサーバによって提供する予定である。新たなサーバの立ち上げは研究期間中に試みたが、稼働開始間もなくネットワークを通じた攻撃の標的にされたため、現在は稼働を見合わせている。これは苦い体験であったが、この経験を通じて、個人あるいは教育研究機関が独自のサーバを保守管理する際に心得ておかなければならない技術上のまた管理上の貴重なノウハウを得ることができた。

同志社大学は創立以来国際主義を掲げた教育をうたっているが、現在では近隣の同規模の大学と比べて、実人数の上でも制度的にも国際化の進展は遅々として進んでいない。本研究で開始した情報提供のうちには、本来ならば言語文化教育研究センターや同志社大学が取り組まねばならないものも多々ある。今後は組織的な改変も視野に入れつつ、21世紀の主導的な大学としての地歩を確立するための国際主義教育を実現すべく、全学的な取り組みが行われることが望まれる。本研究がその一助となれば幸いである。

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