Using Technology to Make Professional Development Effective and Cost-Effective: The JOINT Online Course Program for Japanese Language Teachers

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Abstract

There have been significant challenges and difficulties for non-profit organizations in the development of online distance professional development programs due to the lack of institutional support and funding. By overcoming these challenges and difficulties, the Alliance of Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ), has developed and launched the JOINT (Japanese Online Instructional Network for Teachers) program for the Japanese teachers scattered around the world. The course curriculum implemented learnercentered learning with a mixture of individual, pair, and group activities during a 4- to 6-week course, and it included the components of instruction, collaboration, and communication. The technology was carefully selected so that these components were effectively structured and organized, and, in addition, the program was developed and managed cost effectively. The paper discusses and illustrates the structure of the JOINT program, especially the technology framework and technology tool selections, with examples from its Content Based Instruction course.

Introduction

Providing its members with professional development opportunities is one of the important functions of an organization of foreign language teachers. This is especially true for the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). Teachers of these languages are dispersed all over the country and often isolated from one another. Under these circumstances, it is not easy or financially feasible for school districts and local professional organizations to offer language-specific workshops.

The Alliance of Associations of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ) has for the past decade been organizing on-site professional development opportunities every summer for Japanese teachers from all over the United States. Gradually diminishing funding, however, has made it difficult to provide these on-site opportunities. A more costeffective alternative to on-site professional development is online distance professional development.

Distance learning has been evolving, in design, structure, and implementation, since the 1840s, when print materials were the primary medium and the postal service was the primary delivery method. With the progress of educational technology, not only has the medium changed, but the interaction type has become diverse. As technical and instructional components have been improved, it has become possible to achieve two-way communication (both synchronous and asynchronous), to create a variety of delivery methods, and to emphasize interaction between teachers and students as well as collaboration among students (Kraemer, 2008).

Despite the development of designs for distance learning along with technological progress, there have been significant challenges and difficulties for non-profit organizations such as AATJ in the development of online distance professional development programs. One of the biggest issues facing a professional membership organization is the lack of backing from a higher educational institution. Even though tech support is one of the vital parts of an online distance learning program, these organizations cannot take advantage of strong academic support for setting up a system and

troubleshooting. The prepackaged course management systems (CMS) – Blackboard, WebCT, Desire2learn are the main examples – that are available on university campuses are not financially viable solutions for language education organizations, particularly those in the less commonly taught languages. Such organizations cannot hire programmers to create a course management system from scratch or to maintain it. In brief, the unavailability of cost-effective online professional development programs with efficient tech support has been one of the important barriers for a non-profit organization to overcome.

However, the emergence of the Web 2.0 concept and applications dramatically opened up the possibilities for implementing online distance learning. The concept of Web 2.0, which emerged around 2004 according to O'Reilly (2005), fosters collaboration and interaction. While first-generation (Web 1.0) applications primarily facilitated users' retrieval of information, in the realm of Web 2.0 each user can be a content creator, and all users can share information and knowledge collaboratively in the Web environment. Since then, a large number of applications and services have been developed, and most of them are free of charge. [1]

In this paper, we describe and discuss the structure of AATJ's new online professional development program and the way it uses Web 2.0 technologies.

History

The first attempt to provide online professional development in the Japanese language field goes back to 1995. That year, the Laurasian Institution started designing an online professional development program called the Institute for the Teaching of Japanese (ITJ). This program attempted to develop an online program that included not only online courses, but also online lounges where teachers could exchange ideas, a resource center where teachers could upload and download teaching resources and share them, an information center where announcements and useful information for

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[1] As of Nov 2009, there are over 3000 Web 2.0 applications listed at

http://www.go2web20.net/

Japanese teachers could be posted, an online bookstore where teachers could order and purchase teaching materials, and a career bank to inform teachers of career opportunities.

Five rigorous course modules were developed and one pilot module on interactive language teaching was offered online. This pilot module was a combination of online activities and consultations by telephone with a facilitator, who was an experienced high school Japanese teacher residing in Seattle. The module lasted for four weeks. Each week, the participants living all over the United States, read materials online. Questions related to those materials were presented, and they posted their answers on the online bulletin board. The facilitator coordinated online asynchronous discussions based on the answers posted on the bulletin board. If the participants wanted to ask questions or talk with the facilitator directly, they could call a toll-free phone number during the office hours scheduled several times a week. The participants were required to submit a teaching material, which they developed based on their weekly learning, by the end of the program.

This program faced the challenges that any pioneering work faces. In the middle of development, the project team realized that the web tool they had been using was not appropriate for online professional development and changed to a different tool (WebCT). This change forced them to spend a great deal of time and financial resources on the training of technical staff. The module was designed to use as much capacity as available Web resources and the Internet could offer at that time, and was designed to facilitate interactions between the facilitator and the participants as well as among the participants. However, these were the early days of the Internet. Many participants had never used the Internet before participating in this program. The majority did not have access to the Internet at home, so they had to do all their course-work at their schools or offices. Even there, for many of them, the only available Internet connection was often a slow dial-up connection via a modem.

The ITJ project ended in 1998, as the project funding ran out and the focus of the Laurasian Institution shifted from Japanese language education to other projects. In 1999, this online professional development program was transferred from the Laurasian Institution to AATJ. AATJ renamed this program JOINT (Japanese Online Instructional Network for Teachers) and began a needs analysis of online professional development of Japanese teachers in the United

States. While gauging the needs of Japanese teachers, AATJ also did some background research on online professional development. In 2002, AATJ organized a workshop on online professional development by inviting people who were involved in the development of an online professional development program through ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) (Morrison, 2002) and the GOLDEN (German Online Distance Education Network) project of AATG (American Association of Teachers of German) (Moeller et al., 1999). Both of the programs provided many good ideas. AATJ, however, is not affiliated with any university, so, unlike the ACTFL program, which was based at Weber State University in Utah, or the GOLDEN program, affiliated with the University of Nebraska, we could not make use of resources and services provided by a large institution.

In 2007, the Japan Foundation, realizing the urgent need for online professional development for Japanese teachers in the United States, provided AATJ with a start-up grant. In October 2007, AATJ invited a number of individuals who are active in professional development in the Japanese language field and organized a task force to explore the possibility of launching an online program. This happened to coincide with the infusion of free services available through cloud computing and Web 2.0 technologies.

The task force, taking advantage of these free online services, decided to design and develop a rigorous curriculum for professional development of Japanese teachers. The task force appointed two college-level teachers as the curriculum developers as well as the facilitators of the first course on content-based instruction (hereafter CBI). They worked together with a technology specialist, who is managing a college's computer lab, to design the course and launched it in September 2008. Based on what we learned while offering this course and on feedback from the participants, we redesigned and offered it a second time in January 2009.

Curriculum Development

The curriculum developers collaborated almost entirely at a distance, except for occasional face-to-face meetings. One of them, who was familiar with the online teaching and learning environment, acted as a mediator between the curriculum development team and the technology specialist.

Both of the curriculum developers had experience in teaching Japanese language and culture at the advanced level, successfully implementing a content-based instruction (CBI) approach. They agreed to design this course to resemble a face-to-face workshop as much as possible, focusing on hands-on materials development. Additionally, a careful effort was made to maintain the academic standard of a graduate-level course.

The principle of backward design was used to develop the curriculum. First, two main goals were identified: to provide Japanese language teachers professional development and resources that could help them create content-based instruction (CBI) lessons; and to enhance the language proficiency of non-native Japanese-speaking teachers who aim to develop advanced reading skills and content or cultural knowledge in their students. Next, assessment tools and evaluation criteria were determined, followed by topic selection and development of teaching materials. To achieve the second goal, most teaching materials were developed in both English and Japanese, providing comprehensible input. It was hoped that non-native Japanese teachers would directly experience the CBI approach, in which they would learn about CBI in Japanese and improve their overall Japanese proficiency. In addition, the curriculum was designed to provide instruction but also to promote collaboration and communication among the participants in order to maximize the learning effectiveness.

The course developers checked the consistency of the developed materials in terms of styles, language, and format. For that purpose, they tested the system at their own institutions after the materials had been prepared for online delivery.

In summer of 2008, the AATJ executive director, who serves as the administrative coordinator of JOINT, announced the course and handled all of the administrative processes including course registration, university credit, and gathering information from participants.

Course Structures

First CBI Course

The first CBI course was offered in fall 2008. Sixteen teachers were registered in the first CBI course. Half of them were teaching at the college level and the other half were teaching in high schools. Half were native speakers of Japanese, and the rest were non-native speakers. Two participants who were living outside the U.S. were both non-native speakers of Japanese. One of them taught at a university in Australia, while the other had just moved to Japan to teach English in a college.

Participants were paired based on their teaching level and language background in order to maximize their interaction and learning. Four pairs at the college level and four at the high-school level were formed; each pair consisted of a native and a non-native speaker of Japanese.

As the outcome of this four-week course, the participants were required to develop a CBI unit as a pair-work project using appropriate authentic reading materials. To guide participants to complete this final project, we selected necessary knowledge and developed teaching materials and learning activities. Figure 1 illustrates the overall course structure.
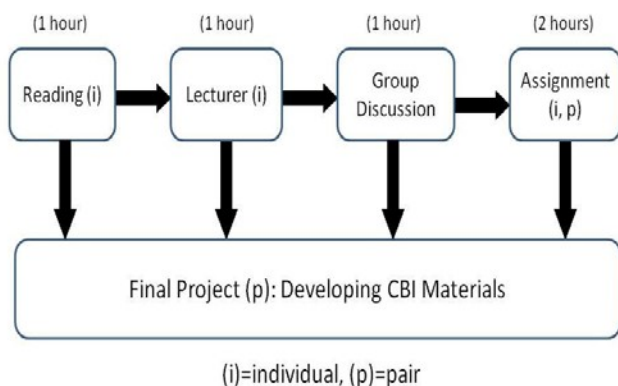

Figure 1. Structure of the First CBI Course

Topics covered in this course include the principles of CBI, curriculum design, instructional strategies, materials development, and assessment.

Participants studied independently according to a weekly course schedule that included background reading, listening to a lecture, participating in a group discussion, and working on assignments. Reading assignments included theoretical and pedagogical readings on CBI that we found online and sample materials such as syllabi and CBI learning activities that were prepared for this course. The content of the lectures was based on the readings. Critical content was explained with graphic illustrations or specific examples to help participants' understanding.

Participants were divided into three groups, and each group met online as a class with the instructors once a week for an hour. Questions related to the reading materials and the lectures were presented, and participants exchanged their answers during the group discussion. Each week a facilitator who was selected from among the participants coordinated online synchronous discussion. The instructors participated in the discussion whenever the need arose. Other activities were conducted outside of the class, either individually or as a pair activity. There were two assignments. One was to develop CBI materials with a partner, and the other was to keep a reflection journal individually. The final project was divided into three parts: writing the goals and objectives, creating reading activities (pre-reading, inreading, and post-reading), and creating an assessment. Participants engaged in materials development gradually throughout the course, and completed revision in the final week. We found that collaboration was critical for successful outcomes.

We estimated that participants would need approximately five hours per week to complete all the study components.

Second CBI Course

The second CBI course was offered in winter 2009, taught by the same college faculty members who developed the curriculum. There were a few changes in schedule. First of all, we required participants to complete an orientation prior to the course so that they could be familiar with the necessary technology tools and get to know the instructors, classmates, and project partners.

Next, the course was extended to six weeks in order to provide sufficient time to study each topic. Also, fewer topics were covered in this course, deleting an assessment component because of the lack of time toward the end of the course. Furthermore, we added a catch-up

week during materials development stage, allowing participants to review their materials and modify them based on the feedback they received from the instructors before they went on to the next step.

Fourteen teachers (i.e., participants) were registered in the second CBI course. Ten of them were teaching at the college level, three at high school, and one at an immersion school. Most of the participants were native speakers of Japanese, with the exception of one high-school teacher. All of the participants were living in the U.S. Participants were paired using principles similar to the first course. Five college-level pairs and two high school pairs were formed. Only one pair consisted of a native and a non-native speaker of Japanese.

In what follows, we will focus on the technological aspect of JOINT, discussing what Web 2.0 technologies we are using, how we combined them, and how this combined system works in delivering online professional development.

Technological Aspects of JOINT

Technology Selection

We selected technology applications with an eye to maximizing the use of Web 2.0 applications, and designed the AATJ JOINT distance online professional program primarily based on learning components and participant profiles. The course design reflected three learning components from the course curriculum: instruction, collaboration, and communication; and these components were adjusted and delivered while taking into consideration the participants' profiles.

The experienced classroom teachers who enroll in the JOINT courses are usually not members of the "new generation" that McBride describes (2009) or the "digital natives" of the current younger generation. Since our program targets Japanese teachers, in order to reduce the technology burden, "simplicity" and "userfriendliness" have to be taken into account in the course design and applications. The fewer applications we use, the sooner participants can become accustomed to the navigation of the applications. The fewer user accounts we create, the less confused the participants will be. A simple and user-friendly design not only helps participants but also benefits

the instructors who are developing content and minimizes the amount of troubleshooting that has to be conducted by technical support staff.

Considering all the financial, pedagogical, and technological issues involved in the curriculum design and needs, we decided to conduct the JOINT course with the combination of Google Apps, Google Groups, and Skype (adding Adobe Connect Pro in the second CBI course offering). Google Apps was used as the main application to administer the users and control other applications. Google Apps offers nonprofit organizations the ability to obtain an organization-specific domain free of charge, and they are able to use various Google applications within the domain. The applications under the Google Apps domain include Google Sites to create a website, Google Docs to share documents, Google Calendar to provide a schedule, and Google Video to share videos. Also, within the Google Apps domain, administrators can control the sharing settings to determine who can see the specific content as a viewer or edit the content as a collaborator. The applications used for the course as well as for program development are listed in Appendix A.

Administration and Troubleshooting

Administrative processing and preparation of tech support took place before the course began. Our administrative coordinator applied for the Google Apps domain as a registered tax-exempt nonprofit educational organization, making it free of charge to obtain the domain. Once the process was completed, the tech support staff member was mainly responsible for any technological issues in the applications.

Prior to the course, the tech support staff member accessed the Google applications and created instructional materials. Technology training for the course instructors was also conducted in order to familiarize them with the technology. Once the participants for the course were selected, the tech support created their accounts in the applications and controlled the sharing settings of the documents in Google Docs. During the course, the tech support handled troubleshooting via email or Skype in both Japanese and English as well as monitoring the weekly group discussion. After the course ended, the tech support re-accessed the applications for the course and made any necessary modifications.

Technology Used for the CBI Course

In the first CBI course, Google Sites and Google Calendar were used to create the course website and the course schedule respectively. Lecture files were created along with the lecture notes, linked to the course website, and stored on an external web server for participants to download. Google Docs was used to create documents for individual assignments and collaborative project. As a communication tool, Google Groups functioned as a group mailing list for the instructors and tech support to provide announcements, news, and reminders, as well as for communication among all the participants and instructors. Besides the Google Group mailing list, Skype was used for participants to communicate with their project partners and with the instructors during their office hours. Skype was also used to conduct weekly group discussions (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Technology Framework for the First CBI Course
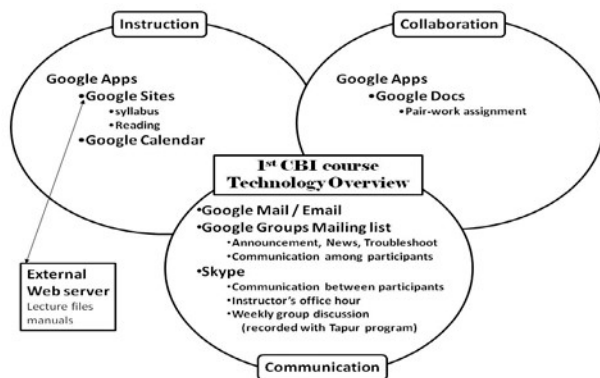
After the first CBI course ended, a survey[2] was conducted and necessary modifications in curriculum design and technology selection were made. The survey on the technology was conducted as a series of 4-scale multiple-choice responses (very easy to use, easy to use, difficult to use, very difficult to use), and open-ended comments on all applications (Google Sites, lecture, Skype, Google Group mailing list,

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[2] The first survey was conducted in Survey Monkey after the course. For the second CBI course, the survey was created Google Speadsheet in Google Docs and uploaded to the course website.

Technology manuals, etc.) were solicited, as well as comments on the technology support in general.

For the second CBI course, Google Docs was used not only for collaborative projects but also for interactive activities (e.g., selfintroduction, reflection journal) among the participants and the instructors. In addition, we incorporated two more applications into the course: Adobe Connect Pro and Google Video. Adobe Connect Pro was used for weekly group discussions, replacing Skype.

Google Video within the Google Apps domain was used to upload and share lectures for the course. Specially written bilingual technology manuals were uploaded into the attachment section of Google Sites. With the use of Google Video and the manual attachments in Google Sites, we were able to avoid using the external server that we needed in the first CBI course (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Technology Framework for the Second CBI Course

Instructional Materials

Course Website Google Sites and Google Calendar

The course website was created under Google Sites in Google Apps. The tech support created the template of the site and the course content was added by the course instructors. A Google Calendar was also created and embedded into the course website by the tech support so that the course instructors could add the course schedule (Appendix B). The AATJ JOINT welcome page included syllabus, weekly course schedule (reading list, assignment, etc.), evaluation rubrics, links to

lecture files and technology manuals, discussion information, FAQ, a link to Google Docs, tips for success, and embedded calendar.

Technology Manuals

The technology manuals for the applications (Google Calendar, Google Docs, and Skype) were written in both English and Japanese and covered both Mac and Windows platforms, considering the participants' native languages and their computer settings.

For the first CBI course, all the technology manuals were stored on an external web server. It was a requirement for the participants to read all of the manuals. However, this frustrated many of the participants, who indicated on the survey that the amount of material was so great that they had trouble going through all of the manuals.

Unfortunately, from the tech support perspective, the amount of material presented in the manuals could not be reduced because these manuals cover all of the necessary navigations and important issues and troubleshooting methods for all the applications we use. Also, additional applications (Adobe Connect Pro and Google Video) increased the amount of the manuals for the second CBI course. To reduce the participants' burden, we added another file, a "Technology Checklist" (Appendix C) in English and Japanese, for the second CBI course. The technology checklist contained the basic navigation tools and functions under each application. With this list, reading the manuals became necessary only when the participants had trouble with items on the checklist. All the technology manuals including the checklist were uploaded in Google Sites.

Lectures

To accommodate the participants' different learning styles, two types of lecture files were created. One format is a slideshow with audio. The instructors created slides with Microsoft PowerPoint along with the speaker notes and recorded the audio with Audacity. The other format is a scripted text lecture file. This file was created by converting PowerPoint slides to a Microsoft Word handout, and then converting that to a PDF file. For the first CBI course, three types of audio slideshow (original PowerPoint file, PowerPoint Slideshow file,

and Flash Player file called SWF converted by iSpring) were created and stored on the external web server. These file formats were necessary considering the cross-platform compatibility issues. The multiple types of lecture files confused some participants in the first course. Fortunately, the Google Video service that became available before the second CBI course began allowed us to upload the videos and share them with specific users. Therefore, for the second CBI course, a video file was created with PowerPoint slides and audio using Windows Movie Maker, and it was uploaded into Google Video in the AATJ domain (Appendix D). Therefore, we did not need to use an external server for the second CBI course.

Using Google Video allowed us to reduce the number of files to be created as well as to resolve the compatibility issue in the crossplatform environment. Also, this format was easier for participants to view than the lectures in the first CBI course, because it was not necessary to download large files.

Collaboration with Google Docs

Google Docs can be incorporated within a Google Apps domain. There were two main benefits of using Google Docs. First, it enabled us to operate document-editing features without having Microsoft products on our local computers. Another benefit was, similar to Wiki, the revision history and the ability to revert to the previous version in the history (Appendix E). This feature was particularly useful for the course instructors to monitor the progress of the collaborative pair-work and for participants to cope with accidents (e.g., when a page was accidentally deleted). Before the course began, the tech support created necessary documents and the instructors added activity templates in Google Docs. This reduced the participants' time and confusion. Also, the tech support could control the sharing settings so that each user saw only his/her own project file. During the course, participants completed various assignments individually and collaboratively while instructors were able to monitor and comment on their work. Google Docs was still unstable, and some issues remained unsolved. In order to get used to Google Docs (or get used to the potential problems it presents) before they started working on their project, we added a "self-introduction" task in the second CBI course, in which all participants introduced themselves for practice during the orientation week (Appendix F). This task gave the

participants practice with the basic navigation and functions that they needed for their projects (e.g., type text, insert link, insert images, etc.).

Communication with Skype, Google Groups, Adobe Connect Pro

There were a number of opportunities for communication in the course. Different applications were used to best meet the purpose. For communication between two individuals, for example, Skype and individual emails [3] were used. For communication among all the participants and instructors, Google Groups[4] was used. It allowed us to create a group mailing list and a Group page with threaded discussion. The group mailing list was used to provide announcements, news, and reminders from the instructors and tech support. It also functioned as a communication tool among all participants.

The weekly group discussion was conducted with Skype in the first CBI course. Skype has the function of making a conference call, which allowed us to conduct an audio chat with more than two people. The weekly group discussion was conducted using this feature with 5-8 people including two instructors. We used Tapur to record the group discussion sessions, and discussion audio data was stored on the instructors' computers. However, we found that this Skype conference call was significantly unreliable and unstable (e.g., many noise issues, dropping out of the call, etc.).

In the survey, the participants not only indicated that they felt Skype conference calling to be unreliable ("It was easy when it worked, but it was not very reliable", "There [were] some tech problems, and it took a long time to fix them."); they eagerly requested multi-user face-to-face discussion ("Not being able to see the faces of the participants

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[3] A Google email function is available in the Google Apps domain is available, but it was not used because of technical difficulties.

[4] Google Groups was not in the service under Google Apps domain, so it was created under a different Google account. A group mailing list can contain nonGoogle mail addresses, but access to a Group page with threaded discussion pages requires a Google account. So the thread discussion feature was not used for the CBI courses.

in the discussion or hear any *aizuchi* made me uncomfortable.")
Therefore, we added the new application Adobe Connect Pro
(Appendix G) in the second CBI course. AATJ obtained a license for
Adobe Connect Pro with a hosted server. This application allowed us
to share camera and audio transmission with multiple people. Prior to
the second CBI course, tech support created user accounts for each
participant and a meeting room for each group in Adobe Connect Pro.
Another responsibility of tech support was to make sure that the
settings of the participants' computers (webcam, microphone, and
internet connections) were adequate and appropriate to allow them to
enter the meeting room and run the discussion smoothly.
Furthermore, the tech support sent reminders to participants every
week through Adobe Connect Pro. During the group discussions in
Adobe Connect Pro, the participants and instructors primarily used
video chat and audio chat, while the tech support monitored the
discussion in the background for troubleshooting purposes and used
text chat to send out information. The discussion sessions were
recorded and stored on the hosted server.

Concluding Remarks

Successes and Challenges

Overall participant evaluation of the technology after the
second CBI course was more positive than that after the first CBI
course[5]. Three learning components – instruction, collaboration, and
communication – were successfully negotiated. The participants were
satisfied with the amount and quality of the instruction provided in the
course. Online collaborative materials development was relatively
successful. There was active participation in communication by
participants during the course.

The amount of troubleshooting was significantly reduced in the
second course, and the course was conducted much more efficiently.

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[5] Overall course evaluation was 4.3 for the first course, and 4.9 for the second

course on average (5=highest).

Most of the participants (90-100%) felt that all applications were "(very) easy to use" – with the exception of Google Docs. The open-ended comments indicated that the orientation week that was added to the second CBI course accounted for the positive feedback regarding the technology tools (e.g., "What I liked about the course was that I was able to check things like [the] syllabus and technology tools during the preparation week.") During this orientation week, the participants were able to get used to the necessary applications and receive sufficient support and troubleshooting tips from the tech support. We could say that because of this week, the participants were able to focus more on their project work (the content of the course) than on how to figure out the technology and solve technical problems. In addition, some participants mentioned in the survey that it was critical that the tech support provided manuals and technical advice in both English and Japanese.

Even though we believe that the course was conducted in a way that is both cost-effective and technology-effective, challenges still remain. Since the multiple-user face-to-face discussion became possible in Adobe Connect Pro, the nature of the troubleshooting shifted slightly toward real-time troubleshooting. This kind of troubleshooting, compared to the "traditional" type, does not give tech support staff much time to research the problems and provide solutions. Especially when dealing with a variety of computer settings and tools (microphones, headphones, webcams), the tech support may not have sufficient equipment to check what is causing the problem. To minimize real-time trouble, recommendations of equipment and sufficient testing prior to the course are necessary.

As previously mentioned, the only application on which we received negative feedback was Google Docs, which caused trouble for the participants when they were working on a project collaboratively. There are still some problems that have not been solved. It is necessary to provide information about these known "trouble spots" as early as possible so that future participants avoid struggling with the same problems.

Furthermore, using applications which are constantly being developed by a company such as Google has both advantages and disadvantages. It is certainly beneficial to see the updating of an application and new features being added. However, the update sometimes drastically changes the interface or navigation without notice, causing a gap between the technology manuals provided for the

participants and what they see when they encounter and use the application. Such changes can make it difficult for participants to look for a specific feature in the application.

Last, there is a question of how much technology has to be introduced in the course. Both the participant surveys and wider general surveys conducted by AATJ in the project planning stages indicated that there is a strong demand and need for technology, and that teachers would like to learn the new technology and eventually incorporate it into their teaching. It would be ideal if the JOINT online professional development program can provide teachers with opportunities to study specific pedagogical topics using the technology we provide, so that they can use these technology applications in their teaching environment. We need to investigate in what way we can best introduce useful technology, and also how much new information is appropriate for participants who teach Japanese in diverse environments.

Future Plans

AATJ plans to develop a curriculum of eight to ten courses (e.g., maximizing the effectiveness of advanced high school Japanese courses, advanced Japanese reading for non-native-speaking teachers, and basic concepts of Japanese language teaching) that can be revised and offered on a continuing, alternating basis for professionals in the field. Because the template developed for our courses, including small-group discussions in real time and pair and small group work, does not adapt well to large numbers of "students," enrollment has been limited to a maximum of 16 participants per course session. For this reason, demand for the courses has been greater than can be accommodated by the small-group framework.

Finances

From the technology point of view, it is possible to offer high-quality online instruction at almost no expense, thanks to interactive Web 2.0 technologies such as those described in this article. However, AATJ feels strongly the need to put its program on a professional

footing by offering fair remuneration to those who develop and teach courses, as well as to tech support faculty. Thus we continue to seek foundation support. We also feel that participants in these programs will value them more if they pay tuition, and although we cannot charge what such instruction would bring in a commercial setting, we ask participants to pay a course fee of at least $75 for each 6-week course, as well as the cost of graduate credit if it is desired.

Recommendations

There are still many negative opinions in academia about the validity of online courses. Some say that online courses are "MickeyMouse" courses, or that online programs are diploma mills. Our experience showed that online courses could provide Japanese teachers with effective professional development opportunities in many respects. We found that online courses produced more interactions and communications among the participants than onsite courses. Still, the rigor of the curriculum is a key to gaining confidence from peers and people outside the field.

Our survey of JOINT program participants shows that they enjoyed the interactions with each other most, and such interactions became one of the most important factors in the success of the program. It is recommended that an online course be designed and developed so that interactions and communications among the participants and course facilitators take place easily and effectively. In this type of in-service professional development, the participants have already accumulated a great deal of teaching experience in the classroom. Sharing experiences with other teachers is an essential part of the course, and it encourages participants to reflect on their own teaching and learn new things from others.

Traditional teacher training focused on the acquisition of new knowledge and skills from the trainers, separate from what may be going on in the trainees' classroom. We found that it was more useful to design our course based on the participants' classroom practices and situations. Also, assignments and project work were designed based on their daily classroom teaching so that they could apply what they were learning to their classroom practice immediately. The ultimate goal of professional development is to enhance the classroom performance of teachers and, in turn, the effectiveness of student learning. Performance-based goals should be set for online professional

development and assessments should be designed to measure teacher performance (Tohsaku, 2003; Yokomizo & Tohsaku, 2003)[6].

To achieve the ultimate goal of a professional development program from the technology point of view – to infuse technology into the participants' classrooms by participating in this program – it is important to carefully assess and select technology tools based on the participants' pedagogical needs and personal profiles. As was described in this article, developing an in-service professional development program is targeting those with teaching experience, who are different from the current young "digital native" generation. The careful selection of technology and sufficient technology support will
determine whether the participants will have positive or negative attitudes toward technology tools in general. Positive attitudes toward technology will lead them to use the tools without fear or negative feelings in the course, and will eventually encourage them to use the technology in their classroom environment.

Technology is now an essential part of our life, including our teaching. Developing good knowledge and skillful use of technology helps teachers teach more effectively. Online professional development programs should be designed to help teachers learn and enhance their technology skills while participating in the courses.

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[6] The results will be reported in another paper (Douglas, Ushida, Tohsaku, & Sengiku, in preparation).

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Appendix A

Applications Used in the JOINT Course Program

Name	General Usage
<Courses>	
Adobe Connect Pro	Conduct online video conferences. There are charges for licensing and renewal.
Google Apps	Manage course (including users) in Google Docs, Google Calendar, and Google Sites.
Google Video	Share lecture videos in the course. It may entail some cost.
Google Groups	Send group emails.
Skype	Communicate among participants (audio and video).
<Development>	
Audacity	Record audio lectures and create mp3 files.

iSpring	Convert SWF files.
Survey Monkey	Conduct online surveys. Registration entails some cost.
Tapur	Record Skype conversations.
Microsoft Office	Create handouts and lecture files with PowerPoint and Word.

Windows Movie Maker Edit videos.

Appendix B
Google Sites and Google Calendar Welcome Page

Appendix C
Sample of Technology Checklist (English Version)

Appendix D
Lecture Video for the Second CBI Course: Google Video

Appendix E
Revision History Feature in Google Docs
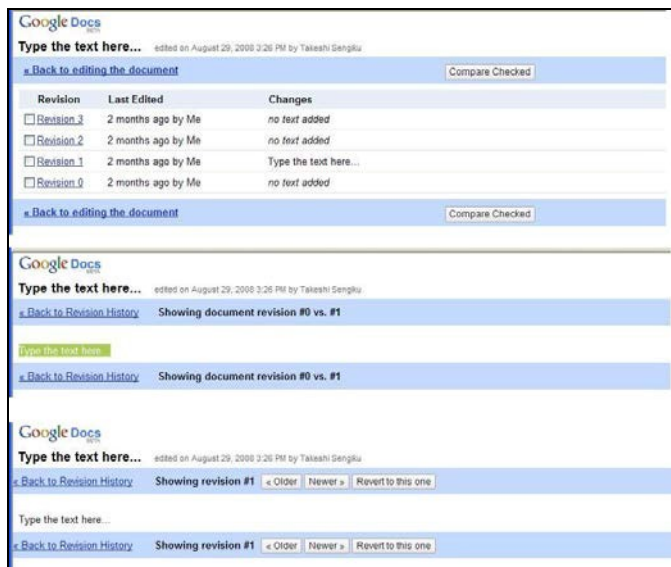
Appendix F
Template Page in Google Docs (Self-introduction Template)

Appendix G
Adobe Connect Pro