

KANSAI GAIDAI UNIVERSITY

Students, Teachers, and Differing Assumptions : Working with Resistance to EAP in an Intensive English Program

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Students, Teachers, and Differing Assumptions¹: Working with Resistance to EAP in an Intensive English Program

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Abstract

English for academic purposes (EAP) courses provide advanced language study useful for students preparing to study abroad; however, students in Japan, even when likely to study abroad, sometimes resist EAP. This article reports on an activity set designed to unearth students' beliefs about coursework in regular (non-language) classes in the United States. Furthermore, the activities serve as a lead in to a class discussion of the teacher's undergraduate experiences in the United States. Before introducing the activity set at the end of the article, the teaching context and student assumptions are described, including especially problematic preconceptions encountered in multiple classes over a period of nine years. Particular attention is given to written responses from two classes of English majors at separate universities, which revealed that a significant number of students believed classes have little or no lecture or reading, and instead believed classes are primarily characterized by presentations, debates, or discussions in pairs or small groups. These students' responses informed items on a subsequent survey of 651 students, which showed similar assumptions by non-English majors—a response possibly representative of a more widespread misconception in Japan about the nature of instruction in university-level courses abroad. The validity of these views is examined with reference to the author's experiences, and studies about the widespread use of lecture in the US.

Keywords: study abroad, EAP, motivation, beliefs

Every year, Japanese university educators see former students heading abroad. Some go for regular university coursework in a new country, and will take classes for natives of their host culture. Some are enrolled in high stakes programs, and must succeed or face consequences. At the same time, students who have grown up in Japan may not have an accurate image of what these classes entail. This may cause them to underestimate the value of English for academic purposes (EAP), even though such instruction could help prepare them for the challenges. Furthermore, students lacking accurate information about classroom norms abroad may be in for an unpleasant surprise overseas. In this article I discuss these

student preconceptions, and how I elicit and work with them.

After describing the context for the activities, I will introduce data from former students revealing mistaken student assumptions. In light of this, I describe the activity set I use to better prepare my EAP students for study abroad. The tasks I use ask students to articulate their expectations about classes overseas and compare them to my own experiences as a student in the United States. This allows me to act as a cultural informant from one of the cultures students might visit. The article closes with reflection on how the activity set helps students and improves my courses, as well as comments on why the issue is important.

1. Background and Context

I originally created the activity set described here for students in an intensive English course at Kansai Gaidai University, but have subsequently used it with students in Gaidai's regular program and English majors at Notre Dame Seishin Women's University in Okayama. I initially developed the activities because the intensive students were generally very motivated, but were sometimes resistant to the challenging activities and language of EAP. This was a problem, because these students were contenders for study abroad. Although most students were eager to chat, many were clearly less interested in—and some vocally dissatisfied with—activities using harder academic readings or lectures. Normally sociable students could become passive or openly irritated by discussion questions without easy answers, or those requiring close attention to the meaning of a text or lecture. As a former exchange student myself (from America to Japan, in fully Japanese university classes), I could empathize with my students; however, I also knew it was critical that they learn how to participate. In my own case, I remembered how I had certain expectations, mostly subconscious, of what Japanese university classes would entail. I was only able to articulate those assumptions after encountering different expectations. This made me begin to consider how I could have my students become aware of their own expectations while still in the safety of my classroom.

These students—highly motivated and eager for English—wanted the chance to study abroad, so I began to wonder if the root of the problem might be their expectations regarding what classes abroad would be like. This seemed reasonable. As first and second year students, they had not yet had the chance to study abroad, and they varied in terms of what information was available to them about the challenges. Some had foreign friends

or friends who had studied abroad, others had been abroad in high school (a very different world from university), and some only had access to information in the media and from former teachers. At this point, few of the students had actually talked to anyone about what undergraduate study abroad might be like, and for the most part the students' expectations were based on their experiences as language students, in a language classroom. This is particularly problematic, because best practice in (non-EAP) language teaching does not necessarily mirror what students are likely to encounter in content courses abroad. This led me to the tentative conclusion that if students had a misinformed view of what they would actually be doing in courses abroad, it would probably play out in what they thought they needed to be doing in order to prepare. Eager to see what the students would say, and unable to find any other good materials to unearth the students' assumptions, I developed the activity set at the end of this article. Using the activities has allowed me insight into what the students believe, discussed next.

2. Method

For six years in my EAP courses at Kansai Gaidai, and three with English majors at Notre Dame Seishin University, I have shared stories of my experiences as a student while eliciting questions and comments. Students' responses to these activities suggested that there might be some widely-held beliefs, which prompted me to look more carefully at what my students seemed to think. When time is available, I have students give written responses to the activities. Although data is not available for every group of students, I do have information from two groups of English majors—one at Gaidai, and one at Notre Dame Seishin—totaling 44 student responses. Students (female and male; second year; a range of proficiency levels, but all in an EAP course, and all with enough English to function in an academic setting) were given time to write anything on their mind. Their answers, discussed below, reveal some fascinating misconceptions about what American university courses are like. Subsequently, I also conducted a questionnaire with 651 female Japanese students who are not English majors, and not contenders for study abroad, to see if their answers would echo the opinions of my English majors. Their answers are also described below.

3. Results

Of the 44 English majors, the written responses (done after going through my activity set, and summarized in Table 1) revealed that 75% of the students had believed that pair or small group discussion, debate, presentation, or some combination of these are the primary method of instruction used in content classes abroad. As part of my activity set, I explained to the students that although the language classes I took featured pair work, many of the regular undergraduate classes I experienced were lecture based (with some discussion or interaction, perhaps, but always with everyone in the room listening rather than in a pair or small group). Furthermore, almost every class had at least one textbook or binder. Reacting to this, 19 of the students were surprised that lecture is important (10 of those expressing strong surprise that it is important, or used at all), and 26 were surprised that reading is important (14 of those expressing strong surprise that it is important, or used at all). Only five of the students expected text or lecture would be important, and were not surprised by my experiences. Four had heard about someone else's experiences abroad, and said it was similar to what I described. One made the noteworthy comment that language courses are easy, and mistakenly assumed this meant it would be unnecessary to study in content courses abroad.

Interestingly, all of the students who gave these responses had the language skill to be contenders for study abroad, highlighting how language competence does not guarantee cultural knowledge. Some had friends from abroad, had friends who had studied abroad, or had studied abroad in high school. Even so, a significant number of students in these two classes had an image of coursework in American universities very different from what I experienced as a student (a proposition discussed in section four of this article). This led to a difference in our perceptions (teacher vs. student) of their needs, given that these students were likely candidates to study abroad in regular (non-language) courses.

How Widespread is the Problem?

Curious to see how the English majors' responses would compare with students in other departments, I surveyed 651 Notre Dame Seishin students who were not foreign language majors. These students were not study abroad candidates, did not go through my activity set, and were simply answering a survey on their image of American university courses. I wrote the survey items to see if there might be an overlap in the opinions of students from

these different groups. The questions were grounded in categories that seemed to emerge from my former students' comments, so while the results that came in were startling, they were not entirely unexpected.

The questionnaire was in Japanese (see Appendix), and consisted of 10 items. Two asked about age and major, with eight items on what the students imagined about regular content courses at US universities. Their answers (Tables 2 and 3) revealed significant numbers of students who do not believe textbooks are commonly used, as well as a belief among almost 50% of the students that lecture style is rare (37.02%) or almost nonexistent (12.60%). Furthermore, 90.79% of the students responded that "formal debate (with set teams, where the teams argue)" is either common enough to say it is the norm, or at least common. Similarly, 86.02% said that "debate (without teams, where individuals argue)" is either common enough to say it is the norm, or is at least common. Regarding discussion, 90.32% said that it is either common enough to say it is the norm, or at least common. Asked about discussion format, 23.04% of the students thought these were full class discussions (everyone listening). The other respondents thought discussions would be in pairs or groups of 3 (8.76%), small groups of 4-5 (49%), or groups of 6-10 (19.05%). When asked what the most commonly used teaching style is in US university courses, 16.13% of the students said lecture. On the other hand, for this question 50.38% chose discussion, 22.43% debate, and 10.45% "projects, presentations, etc." Finally, I asked how they think American students would perceive a teacher who uses mainly textbooks and lectures. I wanted to see how respondents would answer given only the options of "normal, or common enough not to be considered unusual" vs. "eccentric and unusual." The majority chose "eccentric and unusual" (59.45%), while 38.86% thought this would be viewed by U.S. students as normal.

4. Discussion

How Realistic are the Students' Expectations?

These student responses reveal a certain image of classes in the US: classes will be very interactive, mainly using debates, projects, group work, or discussions (in small groups or pairs). Furthermore, students imagine that lectures and textbooks will be mostly unimportant. Many of these assumptions run counter to my own experiences as a student, as well as research available on how university teachers tend to teach. Articulating assumptions allows us to make them open for discussion and examination.

As we talk through the activity set, I elicit student comments and questions, which often reflect the preconceptions outlined so far. The responses discussed below are particularly noteworthy, either because they are common or especially problematic. These student comments have come up in classroom conversation and question and answer sessions, so they are in that sense anecdotal. Readers should bear in mind, though, that all of these are ideas I have encountered more than once, with students who are study abroad candidates. Furthermore, student comments like these are what led me to look more carefully at my students' written responses and to conduct the survey, which gave results that seemed to confirm that some of the student comments below represent opinions held by a significant number of my students. As I respond to the student comments outlined below, I explain my thinking to students with reference either to my own experiences, or to research on how university teachers teach.

“I didn’t know reading would be so important.” This comment is both frequent and unsurprising, given how many of the students seem to think textbooks are rarely used; however, my own experience was that almost every undergraduate course had at least one book or binder. Moreover, in most of the courses I took, the text was at least peripherally important, and usually somehow central to the flow of each class. Whether courses were discussion or lecture based, most had either a direct or indirect tie-in to textbooks.

I have heard other less common misconceptions regarding textbooks while debriefing students. The student comments in this paragraph represent less frequently heard opinions, but the fact that multiple students have them make them worthy of attention. A handful of brave students have said, “I think a teacher who uses a textbook is a bad teacher.” This reflects a different view about what a good teacher is, and may reflect experience with teachers who do not use a book or who put the book aside. A student who sees this as good teaching could be in for a surprise when studying abroad. Another uncommon view that I have heard more than once is: “I thought American university students did not use textbooks.” On hearing this the first time, I thought the student meant reading in class; however, questioning revealed a belief that this study abroad candidate believed US students did not own or use texts at all. My activity set made it possible to discuss this extreme view, which I have now encountered a few times.

“I thought students in English speaking countries mainly discuss or debate.” Certainly discussions happen, but students in Japan may have an unrealistic view of how frequently discussion happens, or the type of discussion one is likely to see. Kehe and Kehe (1996)

reported that, out of 30 US teachers of freshman courses interviewed to find out what they felt international students needed, only one—a communications professor—mentioned the need for discussion skills. In reflecting on experience as an exchange student, Nagano (2006) observes students in Japan often worry about their ability to participate in discussions, even though there are other issues students are less aware of: large amounts of reading, heavy homework loads, and the need to be able to write well. Students preparing for study abroad in Japan are already aware of a need to develop discussion skills, while the task remains to raise awareness of other problem points. Finally, practicing debate can be useful as training in critical thinking as well as for learning how to disagree during a discussion; however, formal debate as a class activity, with set teams or turns, is something I have never experienced in an undergraduate setting. In asking others who have been through the US educational system, so far I have only heard of formal debate being used in law school (graduate) settings, or in a course on debate itself².

When it comes to discussion format, students also have some serious misunderstandings, such as, “I thought the discussions were mainly pair or small group work.” My experience as an undergraduate was that pair work only happened in language classes. Small group work was something we did in high school, and again in graduate school; however, small groups or pairs was generally not how discussions were done as an undergraduate. Usually discussions, if they happened, were full class affairs—everyone was listening. Furthermore, the few students I have had who said, “I thought the discussions were mainly chat (not academic, or on a text or lecture topic)” are in for a surprise, because the discussions are naturally about the course content.

“We have to write?” This is a topic that did not come up in students’ written responses, and is not an item on my survey. In this respect, this comment must be treated anecdotally, and is one that I plan on asking about in future questionnaires. Still, some students have commented they did not think writing would be important. Furthermore, in discussing the need for writing skills, some students were surprised that American professors do not proofread papers. Many of the courses I had as a student were assessed partially or fully through written tasks. Our professors did not proofread papers—a final copy was normally the first thing a teacher saw, and they expected it to be done well. In discussing this with students, and in teaching writing classes, I have also found some Japanese students regard peer editing as cheating. Students coming from Japan need to find out if peer editing or a visit to the Writing Center is considered common sense where they will be going, as well as

whether the school has requirements about how such assistance should be noted.

“Teachers lecture?” The numbers in my students’ responses indicate that although they were surprised by the use of lecture, heavy reading loads surprised them relatively more. Still, the most worrisome assumption, to me, is “I didn’t think lectures would be used.” This is doubly problematic because clearly many of my students seem to believe it, and also because lecture seems to be out of favor in language teaching. I am not arguing that lecture is best practice for language teaching. That is not my point at all, and in fact initially it was hard for me to bring myself to begin using lecture. The fact remains, though, that lecture is still a frequently used technique, and students preparing for study abroad need to know about and prepare for this reality. Taking notes while simultaneously listening to extended speech on an academic topic involves a skill set that students will not develop without exposure and practice. In the context of Japan, students expect that they will be asked to read something challenging in an English class; however, they do not seem to expect that they will be asked to listen to something longer than a few minutes—especially something like an academic lecture.

As language teachers, it is worth considering how widely lecture is still used. Large-scale studies conducted on how professors in American universities actually teach reveal this. One study by Thielens (1987) on 820 teachers found 80% lectured throughout all or most of the class period, and that lecture was preferred for physical and life sciences, discussion for literature, and a mixed mode for social sciences. Additionally, the study explained that lecture was the instructional method for “89 percent of the physical scientists and mathematicians, 81 percent of the social scientists, and 61 percent of the humanities faculty (although 81 percent of the art historians and 90 percent of the philosophers lectured)” (Bonwell and Eison, 1991, p. 3). Yet another by Blackburn, Pellino, Boberg and O’Connell on 1800 teachers found 73 to 83 percent chose lecture as their primary method regardless of institutional type (cited by Gardiner, 1994). Cooper and Robinson (2000) reported similar conditions in the Pennsylvania State system, with 80 percent of the 450 faculty respondents naming lecture as their primary teaching method. Though these studies are dated now, I suspect this has not changed so much based on the reports of my returning students. Undergraduates are still experiencing lectures. Our students need to know this might be part, perhaps a major part, of what they will be doing. Once students know this, it might seem more reasonable to them to get some practice in an EAP classroom before they have to do it in a higher-stakes setting where help might be less available.

So far I have described expectations our students may have about content courses abroad, but how can we bring out those assumptions in a non-threatening way?

5. The Activity Set

To unearth student beliefs, I use a series of discussion questions, tasks, and short readings, which typically takes two or three class meetings depending on the number of student questions. These activities are best used early in the term, when the students have had enough time to become comfortable with the class group, and have just started to realize that EAP is a challenge. This timing allows us to revisit the course goals stated at the beginning of the year, and means that as the year progresses I can refer to the activity set when a student seems unaware of the rationale for EAP activities. We discuss the questions as pairs, and I pause after each step for questions and comments from the class as a whole.

The first step is explaining to the students that we will spend a couple of classes talking about study abroad. In doing this I emphasize that I will share my own experiences as a student, describe my teachers, and invite questions. Throughout the series, I tell the students that I am reporting on what actually happened to me, that my experiences may or may not be typical, and that they should talk to the other teachers and students on campus to hear their stories, too. Having done this, we start with an easy pair discussion on where and why the students would like to study abroad, as well as the questions, “What is your image of content classes abroad? Do you think your image is accurate, and where does your image come from?”

Once the students are engaged, I refocus them on the question of what classes abroad might be like in more detail, often having them focus on their image of the US, my native culture. They work with a partner to make a pie chart showing what they believe students abroad experience in both lower level and higher level content courses (task shown in the top half of Figure One). Astute students will ask me whether the chart means “in class time” or “the entire experience,” and if they ask I tell them they can decide with their partner which they want the chart to show. In setting this up, I also tell them they do not need to include all the activity types I have listed, and that they can add other activity types if they wish.

When most of the pairs are done, I direct their attention to the board, where I draw pie charts without labels showing my own experience as a student. Emphasizing that it is not a

test and unimportant whether their answers match mine, I invite them to guess with their partner what categories appear on my chart. After a few minutes, I invite their guesses, labeling the different categories as answers are suggested. The result is shown in the bottom half of Figure One, which I use to explain how the main things I experienced were text and lectures—with some teacher-directed full class discussion—in my first year at university. Then, as we got into the higher level courses, the amount of discussions increased somewhat and became more student-led. I explain how my teachers assigned reading as homework, every class had at least one book, and lectures—or discussions if they happened—were based on the readings. Students are normally surprised to hear that when discussions did happen, they were always full-class format. I take the chance to explain how, though it is not on my pie charts, writing is used to assess student learning through essay tests and reports. I also explain that in four years of university, I only gave one presentation in my time as an undergraduate in the US.

At this point I invite the students to discuss how their guesses compared with my stories, and field questions. When their questions slow, I distribute two handouts. The first describes surprising teacher expectations differing from those of teachers in Japan (e.g., different attitudes about students sleeping in class). The second is a description of six real, challenging, and experienced professors I had in the US. I include at least one with a unique approach, at least two who are “common” in terms of their teaching, and one or two who are not too unusual, but whose styles might be interesting. Students read these, imagining what it would be like to participate in the very real classroom scenarios.

Once students are ready, we discuss questions about the six teachers. These questions ask about the students’ reactions, and are designed to trigger reflection on those reactions. Questions I normally use include: “Which teacher sounds easier?” “These teachers are all regarded as expert teachers—none are inexperienced. All of them received high evaluations from both students and other teachers. Does this surprise you? Why?” “These teachers received high evaluations because their teaching styles match what students at a university level in the US are expected to do. Considering this, what differences do you notice between Japan and the United States? What similarities do you see?” “What skills do you think you still need to work on to be able to participate in all of these teachers’ classes?” “Which of these teachers do you think probably have a more unique style? Which ones do you think are common, and why?”

Normally in the course of the discussion up to this point, the major problematic

assumptions discussed earlier in the article come up. Most classes enjoy discussing the six teachers, and thinking about which ones are “common” in their approach. I find it worthwhile highlighting again that the profiles are of well-regarded expert teachers, because their style sometimes clashes with what the students think of as best practice. Students also see me in their shoes when I invite them to guess which of the teachers I got along better with, and which ones were harder for me. In writing classes, I also bring in my actual undergraduate essays—both good and bad—and invite the students to look at my professors’ comments. I wrap things up by highlighting how the concepts we discussed inform my approach to EAP instruction.

By this point the students are aware that texts are important and unavoidable, so as a final step I bring in a stack of textbooks from different disciplines. I like to bring my own actual texts or books that former students in their program have used while abroad. We pass them around and talk about them, guessing which subject each book is about, as well as what the students notice or feel about the book. As always, questions from the students are welcome, and when they see the books, the questions do come. “How many pages do you read?” “How much do these books cost?” Seeing the books has an impact. The students look at the vocabulary, the size, the lack of pictures, and realize there is much work to be done if they are planning to go abroad, and that I am doing everything I can to help get them ready. They begin to see that there are good reasons to focus on EAP. At Gaidai, I sometimes reinforce this by having my students interview our international students about classes overseas.

6. Future Directions

When I developed the first version of this activity set, I made it as a “one-off” discussion. It quickly became something I do each year with all my EAP students, and I have found that most students appreciate it. Former students have told me the activities outlined here helped them know more about what they might encounter abroad. The activities allow me to share my experiences in a non-threatening way, fostering a dialog with students about their expectations and my experiences, and encouraging their questions. Most of the students who actually go abroad tell me that my depictions mirror their experiences, too, but I always encourage my current students to find out what they can from the international students and other instructors. It helps the students understand why we do more than simple chat

activities in the EAP classroom, which in turn helps them focus more effectively on the work we need to do. The activities allow me to build a shared vision with the students about what the course goals need to be if our goal is preparation for study abroad. This is, for me, the most important benefit.

In conclusion, I now feel more than ever that there is more work to be done. The questionnaire, conducted with students at a single university, leaves me wondering if the numbers reflect what a wider segment of the Japanese population believes. Clearly this is an issue for EAP teachers helping students preparing for study abroad, as it impacts student attitudes toward class activities; however, there are other questions to ask as well. How, for example, does the image that our students have originate? In closing, I see it as a good thing that English education in Japan is more communication-focused than it was a few decades ago. On the other hand, English education in Japan has seemed to shift more toward games and chat, perhaps because of a change in focus to children or English for casual communication. I wonder, though, if some of these students will seek to study abroad because of the fun times they have—and arguably should have—in the language classroom. If this is the case, are we giving students a distorted picture of what study abroad—or even at university as an English major in Japan—might be like? These are questions beyond the scope of this article, but worth investigating for universities with a strong focus on study abroad, on language education, or both—schools such as Kansai Gaidai.

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Richard Cleveland, a former colleague at Kansai Gaidai, led me to reflect on my own undergraduate experiences as an initial guide to thinking about what EAP courses should include. Though the activity set itself is mine, it was our collaboration in trying to help our students that led to the activity set described here, and I would not have made it if not for him.

Notes

- 1) For the purpose of this article, I am using assumptions to refer to students' possibly unquestioned and subconscious ideas about reality, which "represent the predispositions the individual employs to pattern the world and are usually felt by the individual to be an aspect of the world itself and not simply his or her perception of it" (Stewart, Danielian, & Foster, 1998, p.157). There is overlap in the way I use it with other terms such as values or perspective.
- 2) It is also worth noting that debate itself is not synonymous with critical thinking. Furthermore, the skills of evaluating evidence, disagreeing, and presenting a case can be practiced outside of a formal debate format. This makes me wonder whether spending large amounts of class time on formal debate activities is wise, especially if it reinforces mistaken student expectations that they will be doing similar things in classes abroad.

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Appendix

このアンケートは、日本の学生がアメリカの大学の授業についてのイメージを調べるためのものです。成績に影響はありません。名前や学生番号などを書かないでください。

1) 自分の学部は何ですか。

a. 食品栄養 b. 人間生活 c. 現代社会 d. 日本文学 e. 児童学科

2) あなたは何年生ですか。

a. 一年生 b. 二年生 c. 三年生 d. 四年生(以上)

アメリカの普通の大学の授業を想像しながら答えてください。はっきり答えが分かってなくても結構です。イメージで答えてください。普通の授業というのは、日本で勉強している外国語としての英語ではなくて、英語を母国語とした生徒達のための授業（歴史、経済、心理学、国語、美術、数学、宗教学など）です。

3) アメリカの大学では、教科書が__。

a. よく使われている b. 時々つかわれている c. あまり使われていない d. ほとんど使われていない

4) アメリカの大学の授業で、講座式（先生の説明がメインで、生徒達はほとんどメモっている）は__。

a. 普通といえるぐらいよくあること b. よくある c. 珍しいやり方 d. ほとんどない

5) アメリカの大学の授業で、フォーマルディベート式（チームがあって、チームで議論すること）は__。

a. 普通といえるぐらいよくあること b. よくある c. 珍しいやり方 d. ほとんどない

6) アメリカの大学の授業で、ディベート式（チームがなくて、個人で議論すること）は__。

a. 普通といえるぐらいよくあること b. よくある c. 珍しいやり方 d. ほとんどない

7) アメリカの大学の授業で、ディスカッション式（会話、話し合いが授業のペースになる）というのは__。

a. 普通といえるぐらいよくあること b. よくある c. 珍しいやり方 d. ほとんどない

8) アメリカの授業のディスカッションは__。

a. ペア式（又は3人のグループ） b. 4人～5人のグループ c. 6人～10人のグループ d. クラス全員が聞いている状態での話し合い

9) アメリカの大学で一番よく使われている教え方は__。

a. 講座 b. ディベート c. ディスカッション d. プロジェクトやプレゼンテーションなど

10) アメリカの大学生から見たら、教科書を使ったり、講座式の授業で教える先生は__。

a. 一般的で珍しくないか普通 b. 変わり者で珍しい

Tables

Table 1

44 English majors' written responses reporting their reactions to my activity set, and describing what they had previously believed US content courses would be like (students were free to write anything on their mind):

	mentioned unqualified surprise at	mentioned strong surprise at	did not mention this	expressed a belief that __ is primarily used
(Importance of) lecture	9	10	20	5
(Importance of) reading	12	14	13	5
Pair or small group discussion; debate; presentations; a combination	—	—	11	33

Table 2

Questionnaire results: 651 students (not English majors) and their answers on what they believe US content courses are like. These four questionnaire items ask about how common students think particular class styles are. These students did not do the activity set, are first and second year students, and are not study abroad candidates:

		In American university classes, __ is...			
		Common (a norm)	Common	Uncommon or rare	Almost nonexistent
4.	Lecture style is...	12.75% (83)	37.02% (241)	37.02% (241)	12.60% (82)
5.	Formal debate (with set teams, where teams argue) is...	41.63% (271)	49.16% (320)	7.07% (46)	1.84% (12)
6.	Debate (no teams, individuals argue) is...	29.65% (193)	56.37% (367)	11.06% (72)	2.92% (19)
7.	Discussion (where conversation or discussion forms the base of the class) is...	40.86% (266)	49.46% (322)	7.22% (47)	2.15% (14)

Table 3

Questionnaire results: 651 students (not English majors) and their answers on what they believe US content courses are like. These four items ask about textbook use, discussion group size, etc. These students did not do the activity set, are first and second year students, and are not study abroad candidates:

In American university classes, __ is...					
3.	Texts are...	Commonly used: 14.75% (96)	Used sometimes: 38.10% (248)	Not used much: 41.17% (268)	Hardly used: 5.68% (37)
8.	Discussions are in groups of...	2-3 people: 8.76% (57)	4-5 people: 49.00% (319)	6-10 people: 19.05% (124)	Full class, everyone listening: 23.04% (150)
9.	The most commonly used teaching style...	Lecture: 16.13% (105)	Debate: 22.43% (146)	Discussion: 50.38% (328)	Projects, presentations, etc.: 10.45% (68)
10.	From a US student's point of view, a teacher who uses textbooks and teaches using lectures is...	Normal, or common enough not to be considered unusual: 38.86% (253)	Eccentric or unusual: 59.45% (387)	No answer: 1.54% (10)	—

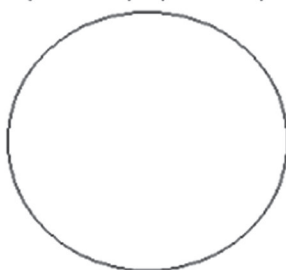
Figures

Think about your image of regular (not language) classes in English speaking countries at the university level. What do you think students experience when taking these classes?

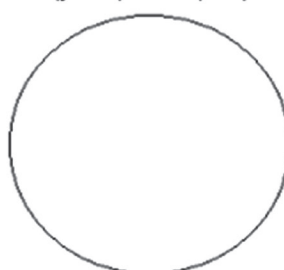
Make a pie chart showing how much you think a teacher uses these things as part of the course:

Textbooks, pair discussions, group discussions or projects, full class discussions, debate, presentations, lecture.

For a lower level course
(freshman/sophomore year):



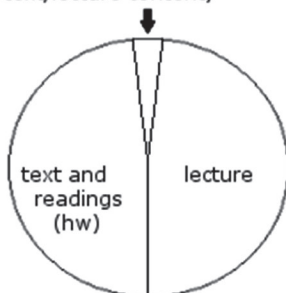
For a higher level course
(junior/senior year):



My experiences as a student in the US...

In lower level courses:

class discussion, mainly teacher
led questioning (about
text/lecture content)



In higher level courses:

discussion (class format)
about text or lecture
content

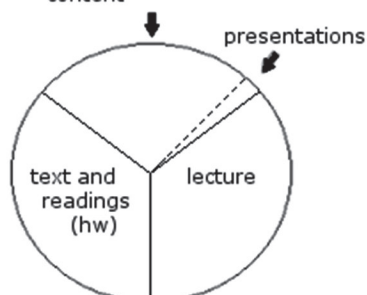


Figure 1. Task used to elicit and discuss student assumptions about classes abroad. In explaining the activity at top, I tell students to focus on the United States. The pie charts at bottom show my experience as an undergraduate in the US. This is never shown without an explanation of what the charts mean, provided in the activity set description of this paper.

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