

2nd Northeast Asia Student Round Table

December 5-7, 2009

At

Korea University

Implementation Report

Akita International University

Japan

December 2009

1. Introduction

Student Round Table (SRT) is an international forum for university students in Northeast Asia to get together and have dialogue on the issues of their common interest and cultural exchange under their own initiatives. It is expected to be held regularly, hopefully once a year, at a university with participating students from different countries. Through these interactions, SRT aims to help students promote their understanding about their neighboring countries and build a broader and solid basis for future partnership and cooperation in the region.

The idea of SRT was originally offered by a faculty of Akita International University (AIU) in 2007 as great opportunity for students to discuss and exchange candid views on matters of mutual interest, thereby to strengthen their potential ties with each other. It was endorsed by the AIU Management and the first SRT was implemented in 2008 on the AIU campus in Akita as “SRT2008”. SRT2008 was held between AIU and Korea University (KU) from July 31 to August 11 2008, with 12 people (10 students and 2 accompanying faculty members) participated from KU. Also in AIU, in April 2008, SRT club was founded to organizing SRT forum and studying about Northeast Asia.

SRT2009 was held between AIU and KU from December 5 to 7 with 7 AIU students (6 undergraduate students and 1 graduate student) and 6 KU students at Korea University. Due to difficult circumstances, SRT2009 was held during the semester, but thanks to Korea University, all programs were organized efficiently by students.

This Implementation Report was prepared basically by AIU student members, expecting to serve as a record for future planning and implementation of SRT as well as reporting about SRT2009 to all people concerned. The report only covers major proceedings and activities of SRT2009 and, needless to say, does not represent the official comments and views of AIU or KU.

and KU side is as follows.

AIU side:

How can we improve the English education in elementary school in Japan and Korea?

KU side:

What can we do to enrich the quality of public education in Korea?

AIU members chose English education in elementary school as the discussion topic because efficiency of English education is argued now even though it will be obliged from 2011 in Japan.

4. Field trip

AIU members visited with the guide of KU members Insadong which is an area with a mixture of historical and modern atmosphere of Korea and Myeongdong which is famous as sightseeing area and experienced culture and life of Korea.

5. Participants

From the AIU side, 7 students who belong to SRT including a graduate student participated. 5 AIU students who are studying as exchange students in Korea also participated. The list of participants from AIU is attached as **Attachment 1**. From KU side, 6 students with various backgrounds and majors participated. The KU members were selected among members of KUBA, which is the largest cross-departmental student group of KU. The list of participants from KU is also attached as **Attachment 2**.

III. SRT2009 Proceedings

(Day1) December 5, Saturday

(1) Arrival of the AIU Team in Seoul (16:00)

All 7 students arrived at Seoul Incheon airport. Then, we went to the Hotel (Holiday-Inn) and met with the KU students.

(2) Orientation and Welcome Dinner (20:00-23:30)

After meeting with the KU students, we went to the restaurant. Welcome dinner was started by the welcome greeting of KU student, and then we introduced each other and talked about the next conference.

(Day2) December 6, Sunday

(1) presentation and discussion (9:40-12:50)

We were divided into 3 groups and discussed the topic we presented.

Presentation by the AIU side (9:40-10:50)

The conference started with a presentation by the AIU side. It included a summary of the English class of the Japanese elementary schools which starts in 2011, and a review about the point of agreement and the point of disagreement within Japan. After that, members discussed about the desirable figures of English education in Japanese and Korean elementary schools, and reached a conclusion.

In the presentation, Japanese students explained the background information that Japanese English abilities have been at a low level compared to other Asian countries, and referred to the outline of the planned English class that, for instance, it will be offered to fifth and sixth grade students, course hours are usually 45 minutes per a week, and its primary purpose is to have students entertain and get used to English. As for the main affirmative opinions, we explained the importance of early education in the language acquisition process and effectiveness for promoting children's global understandings. In the explanation about the opposite reasons, we talked about the alarm of decrease of time for the acquisition Japanese correct usage and education for Japanese tradition, culture, or history, and the potential that Japanese English ability can be improved by the revision of the curriculum of junior high and high school English class.

After this presentation, with reference to English class of Korean elementary schools, we discussed about desirable figures of English education in Japanese and Korean elementary schools.

In the discussion, there were varieties of opinions among students, such as (i) all of the classes should be offered in English, (ii) schools should replace the lack of hours for other subjects with classes on Saturday, (iii) it is important to be able to be proactive or communicate well in the mother tongue than to be able to speak English in the process of job hunting, or (iv) Japanese elementary school teachers, who did not take English examination to get their teachers licenses or renew them, cannot offer a good English class.

After the discussion, each three groups introduced its opinions to all the members, and we reached a conclusion.

Our conclusion was that (i) early education is helpful for acquisition of English, (ii) Japanese elementary school teachers as well as Korean teachers need to be trained by English examinations or training courses, (iii) before starting the English classes, school boards should deeply discuss about the negative effects on other subjects and their learning level, and (iv) the purpose of English education in elementary schools as well as junior high

and high schools should not only have students be able to use English fluently but help them build their identities as Japanese and Koreans, and for this goal, English courses in elementary schools should be easily accessible and enjoyable.

Presentation by the KU side (11:00-12:50)

In the presentation, KU students explained about the cause of harsh examination war in Korea and the problems of the society that prefers private education rather than public education. After the presentation, we discussed how we can improve the quality of public education and what we can do about the harsh examination war to be moderate. The following are the main points of the presentation.

- (i) Every Korean student wants to go to a prestigious university to get a job so that they can get a high social status and satisfying salary. More than half of the people who work as diplomats or chief editors of well known companies are actually graduated from prestigious universities. The fact spurs Korean students to study very hard.
- (ii) Korean people prefer private education that includes cram schools and academies rather than public education and the common education students receive in their schools. It is because the quality of private education is better than public education. However, it is a problem that the academic achievement of children is decided by their parents.

Opinions about the harsh examination war in Korea to be moderate

- (i) The entrance examination in Korea is too difficult.
- (ii) If each Korean high school has its level like Japanese high school, the university that the students can enter is decided depending on the high school they entered. If there are differences about academic ability among high school students, the harsh examination war might be moderate because the start line is different depending on the students.
- (iii) Korea can refer the more relaxed education policy that was done in Japan.
- (iv) It is too few that Korea has only one examination for entering university.

Conclusion

- (i) The questions of examination should be limited in the range of text books.
- (ii) Korea should introduce examinations for entering high school so that students can enter the high school depending on their education level.
- (iii) Korean governments need to execute a policy so that students do not need to study too much.
- (iv) Each university should have its own entrance examination, so that students can take the examination many times.

Opinions about the public education to be improved

- (i) We need to improve the quality of teachers in public education
- (ii) We need to reduce the number of student per teacher.

Conclusion

- (i) The salary of a teacher in public education should be raised so that many people want to be a teacher. At the same time, the requirement to be a teacher should be also raised so that we can find talented people among them.
- (ii) Depending on the education level of students, we should divide them into some classes so that the number of student per teacher decreases.

These are the summary of presentation from KU side and conclusions of discussion.

(2)Presentation about SRT (13:40- 14: 30)

The Students of AIU gave a presentation about the objectives and activities of SRT to the students of KU in order to make them understand it. The participants then had a discussion as a whole. The following is the contents of the presentation and the discussion.

- (i) The objectives and history of SRT

SRT aims to have a discussion with students of six countries (Japan, Korea, China Mongolia, Taiwan and Russia).

(ii) About the SRT 2008

(iii) The future activities of the SRT

The ideas given by the AIU students in the presentation

- To have a conference at least once or twice a year starting to enhance a cooperative relationship among two or three countries.
- To have activities so students can experience lives in Akita, such as farming experience at rice fields of Akita, and to make business plans which aim to sell local products in the other country.
- To have meetings and discussions with KU students over the Internet

Discussion

(i) About the members and participants

The students of KU who participated in SRT 2009 are members of KUBA, an organization of KU which supports international students, which is not a discussion group.

(ii) About the funding

The way of funding was pointed out since SRT is to be held at least once or twice a year either in Japan or other countries.

(iii) About time of a year when the next SRT will be held

(iv) About the future relationship with the participants of SRT 2009

Conclusion

(i) If KUBA is going to make a new discussion group within it, there is a need to talk to the representative person of KUBA about it. If AIU emphasizes on maintaining the relationship with KU, it was suggested to contact with KUDC (Korean University Debate Club), an organization which discuss about global issues.

(ii) If AIU decides to work with KUDC, the issue of funding was pointed out since KUDC is a student run organization unlike KUBA supported by the international office. About this issue, both AIU and KU agreed to look for funding aids in their own counties.

(iii) All the participants agreed to hold SRT in longer term and during the holidays of each other's universes. Therefore, the next SRT will be held either in summer or winter (in KU's academic schedule, the summer holidays will be during the end

of June to the end of August, and the winter holidays will be during December to February).

- (iv) Out of regret that the connection among the participants of SRT 2008 had become poor, the participants of SRT 2009 each promised to keep in touch with each other by e-mailing or on SNS web sites (e.g. facebook).
- (v) These are the contents and conclusions of the presentation given by AIU and the discussion.

(3) Field Trip

After all the presentations and discussions, the students of KU led the students of AIU to a campus tour. KU, the elite private university, has a beautifully-built library and faculty buildings on a broad scale. In the 24 hours open study room in the basement, many students were studying hard as it was during the final week. Then the students visited Insathong, and explored streets filled with shops of traditional and hand-made Korean goods. After that, they visited the famous tourist area called Myeongdong in Seoul where rows of souvenir shops were located. For dinner, the students visited one of local Korean restaurants guided by KU students. Although it was a short trip, it was a great opportunity for all the AIU students to experience Korean culture and lifestyle.

List of Participants from AIU

Students

1. Misato Nishino
2. Nozomi Takeuchi
3. Ranmaru Kishi
4. Kasumi Shibamoto
5. Ayuko Nagata
6. Yukari Inoue
7. Kouki Nakagawa

(AIU Students Studying in Korea)

8. Chie Tsunemi
9. Mami Watanabe
10. Chika Harada
11. Akino Harauchi
12. Yukio Hasumi

List of Participants from KU

Students

1. Minchul, Jeong
2. Kangsu, Cheon
3. Taesung, Kim
4. Soye, Shin
5. Suha, Yang
6. Sinhye, Lee



