

**Conspicuous Internationalization? Creating an International
Communication Lounge on a Japanese University Campus**

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Abstract

Internationalization has become an important strategy for many Japanese universities as they face falling enrollments. While some have successfully attracted students from overseas, others seek different means by which to promote their international appeal, primarily as an attractor of domestic applicants. One way that this is highly visible is in the creation of international communication lounges on campuses: mediated spaces for intercultural exchange and language study that have developed out of the imported model of the self-access center. This ethnographic study looks at the establishment of an International Communication Lounge (ICL) at a private university on the outskirts of Tokyo, where exchange activities, open-access communication classes, and self-study facilities are provided to students in a casual setting. Phillips and Ochs (2003) four stages of policy borrowing in education are utilized as a framework to gain insight into the motivations of various stakeholders in the development of the facility. The ICL is shown to have had a positive impact on interest in international exchange programs and on motivation to study English among the small group of students who make use of the facility. Through this study, a microcosmic view of one university's efforts to internationalize their campus is provided, and there is an impetus for further discussion on the value and implementation of self-access communication spaces on university campuses.

Keywords: internationalization of higher education; Japanese universities; policy borrowing; self-access language learning; study abroad.

Introduction

Internationalization Outside Japan's Elite Universities

Case studies looking at the internationalization of university education in Japan have tended to focus on elite public and private universities, such as those that have received Ministry of Education (MEXT) funding, first through the Global 30 Project (G30) and more recently as Super Global Universities (SGU) (Askew, 2011; Ishikawa, 2009; Ishikura, 2015; Shimizu, 2014; Yonezawa & Shimmi 2015). Yet efforts to internationalize campuses are being made across the range of universities in Japan. Much like the G30/SGU universities, attracting students from overseas has been viewed as an important goal for many other kinds of institutions as well, with the bold target set by the government of 300,000 international students studying in Japan by 2020 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015).

For elite national and private universities in Japan, the motivation to internationalize comes from a drive to compete with other knowledge-based economies and their universities to bring in the brightest international talents, a process which in turn, is expected to develop homegrown students into *global jinzai* (globally-minded human resources) who can drive Japan's economic competitiveness in the 21st century. Yet outside of this small group of elite schools, for the bulk of private universities in Japan (of which there are almost six hundred), the motivation to bring an international student body onto their campuses is quite different.

Demographic changes in Japan have led to a diminishing pool of 18-year-old prospective applicants and a surplus of university places. As projected by the Ministry of Education, the number of undergraduate places reached equilibrium with the number of Japanese of college age around 2009 (as cited in Kuroki, 1999, p.17). For those not aiming for places at elite schools, university application now involves contemplation of "the relative attractiveness of competing admission offers from a large number of colleges and universities desperate to fill places and generate enough tuition revenue to avoid bankruptcy" (Kinmonth, 2005, p.106). For these at risk schools, attracting students from overseas is commonly viewed as a way to make up the deficit of domestic applicants. Yet in reality, bringing in large numbers of international students is not without prohibitive costs, risks and challenges that prevent this from happening. As a result, many of these institutions focus their attention instead on the visibility of internationalization on their campuses and other conspicuous means by which their international profile can be raised, primarily as an attractor of domestic applicants.

This ethnographic study charts a project undertaken in one such university, to establish an International Communication Lounge, as a hub of student led intercultural exchange and language learning activities at Kita University (both the name of the university and the lounge have been changed for the purposes of this study). The ICL has become an on-campus focal point of internationalization for various stakeholders in the university administration and for students. Yet through the process by which this space was established, a number of questions are raised. What role does a self-access space for language learning and international exchange play in the internationalization of a university campus? To what extent has the ICL come to meet the differing purposes of university administrators and students and what contrasting notions about internationalization does this suggest about each of them? Guided by these questions, this study aims to further discussion on the role of such communication spaces, which are becoming an increasingly common fixture on campuses in Japan, and simultaneously provides a window on the state of internationalization at a university on the periphery of Japan's higher education elites.

Background: Kita University and Japanese University Internationalization

Kita University has two campuses: the original campus, in a rural, prefectural setting approximately 70 kilometers from Tokyo, opened in the 1960s. A second campus was established in the 2000s in a suburb on the edges of the capital. With Japan's demographic changes already a concern for universities at that time, the location of the second campus within the Greater Tokyo area was chosen as a way to gain catchment. Four of university's five faculties were to offer their programs at both campuses, increasing the total number of students from around 2,500, to more than five thousand, 5,343 in 2015 (data from the university's website). Although some degree programs face difficulty, overall the university has successfully maintained enrolment figures, despite the crunch that is hitting universities in Japan.

However, in the same period the university has struggled to attract international students. In fact in 2004, prior to the new campus opening, the university had 794 international students enrolled in their undergraduate programs, making it the fourth largest international undergraduate student body in Japan. Figures published in 2015 show that this figure has fallen by more than half to 326 (see tables 1 and 2). To put this in context, in the same period the overall number of international students studying in Japan has steadily increased by more than 20,000 (Japan Student Services Organization, 2015), yet the university has struggled to maintain the size of its international student body, despite the concurrent doubling of their capacity through the opening of a new campus.

Sources within the university suggest a major reason behind this is increased competition among Japanese universities for international talent. They highlight the fact that it has become easier for students from China and other Asian countries (who have traditionally made up the bulk of the university's international student body, and continue to do so) to access places at more prestigious schools. Students who at one time chose this university because they faced barriers entering other schools, are no longer coming because they now have more avenues available to them.

Table 1 & 2. Ranking of Japanese universities by number of overseas students in undergraduate programs, 2003-4, 2014-15 (Asahi Shimbun, 2004, p.147; 2015, p.162)

Japanese universities by number of overseas students enrolled in undergraduate programs 2003-4		Japanese universities by number of overseas students enrolled in undergraduate programs 2014-15	
1. Ritsumeikan APU	1378	1. Nihon Keizai	3,098
2. Josai Kokusai	1058	2. Ritsumeikan APU	2,286
3. Takushoku	818	3. Waseda	1,828
4. Kita University	794	4. Osaka Sangyo	1,003
5. Osaka Sangyo	744	5. Nihon	951
6. Nihon	716	6. Meiji	827
7. Tokyo Kokusai	700	7. Takushoku	782
8. Jobu	647	8. Ritsumeikan	766
9. Kokushikan	618	9. Meikai	752
10. Jochi	528	10. Tokyo Kokusai	611
11. Meikai	496	11. Josai Kokusai	584
12. Toyo	453	12. Doshinsha	572
13. Ritsumeikan	411	13. Chuo	551
14. Chuo	403	14. Kokushikan	531
15. Kyushu Sangyo	402	15. Kyushu Sangyo	526
16. Ajia	395	16. Kansai Gakuen	464
17. Kinki	395	17. Keio	464
18. Kyushu Kokusai	394	18. Daiichi Kogyo	441
19. Keiai	360	19. Hokuriku	416
20. Asahi	334	20. Toyo	414
		21. Digital Hollywood	404
		22. Ryutsu Kagaku	398
		23. Shisaikan	359
		24. Osaka Keizai Houka	346
		25. Osaka Kokusai	344
		26. Jochi	339
		27. Osaka	336
		28. Shobi Gakuin	332
		29. Kita University	326

A comparison of tables 1 and 2 would seem to support this view. The total increase in the number of international students studying in Japan is clearly seen in the large numbers of international students at the universities that top the 2015 table. As in 2004, all universities in the top twenty for undergraduate students are private universities: the national universities in general are more focused on recruitment of international students at graduate level (Huang, 2015). Prestigious, private G30/SGU universities such as Waseda, Meiji and Keio occupy places in the top twenty of the 2015 list, when in 2004 they had much smaller numbers of international students. Nihon Keizai, which tops the list with more than three thousand international students, has not received G30 or SGU funding, but is one university that has actively sought to distinguish itself as a leader in international student recruitment within the past 10 years. Within this milieu, *Kita* is a university that finds itself with a drastically reduced international student body.

Although there may be other reasons than those cited for the decline, and it may be a different story at other universities, the difficulties faced by many private universities in Japan are highlighted by this case. Attracting students from overseas in order to make up for the falling numbers of domestic applicants is far from straightforward, and while internationalization is generally considered to be synonymous with large increases of international students at Japanese universities (Askew, 2011; Huang 2015), at many schools this is simply not happening. Increased competition for international talent has left some universities without, and they instead seek other, innovative means to promote internationalization on their campuses, as *Kita University* has done through establishing a prominent, on campus space for international communication.

Literature Review

Self-access Centers and Conversation Lounges in Japanese Universities

There has been a steady growth of self-access centers (SACs) at tertiary institutions in Asian countries since the mid 1990s. They first appeared at universities in Hong Kong where they were modeled on innovative centers at Oxford and Cambridge, and strategically introduced with government funding in a top-down fashion (Fouser, 2003). In Japan, the development has come later and mainly in the private university sector. The first SAC at a Japanese university was established at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) in June 2001 (Cooker, 2010), which has also become a hub of knowledge about self-access through the Japan Association for Self-Access Learning (JASAL). In the years since, a number of similar facilities have opened at other Japanese Universities. JASAL currently has 32 university centers listed in its registry (JASAL, 2016) yet there are certainly more at other universities that have not registered their center to this list¹.

SACs at tertiary institutions may have roots in language laboratories, libraries, language centers or computer rooms (Fouser, p.49), but they are distinguished from such facilities by their primary aim and benefit of promoting learner autonomy. Thus SACs can be defined by their purpose of inspiring students to take responsibility for their own language development (Hadley & Brown, 2007). They can also simulate immersion in a native-speaker environment by allowing learners to access authentic materials in their language of study, and offer opportunities to communicate with native speakers or near-native speakers (Gardner & Miller, 1999). As a result, they can motivate students by removing potential barriers to learning created by the demands of university curricula, and help them to overcome the language anxiety that

¹ The author personally knows of four universities with self-access centers that are not listed.

they may experience in more formal classroom settings. Self-access also appeals to institutions because of its flexibility:

It can be used on a large scale or a small scale. It can be conducted in a classroom, in a dedicated self-access center or elsewhere. It can be incorporated into a language course or it can be used by learners who are not taking courses. It can function at all learning levels ... It allows individualization but also supports groups. It is not culture specific. It is not age specific. In effect, self-access learning can benefit all language learners. (Gardner & Miller, p.11).

However, with a recent boom of new facilities in Japan, there is a notable shift in vision when compared with earlier SAC models. Although a priority at earlier centers had been to provide students with a rich variety of resources such as DVDs, graded readers, or test preparation materials, these are notable by their absence at many newer centers, where the aim has rather been to create communication spaces. In fact, early proponents of self-access had tried to shed “a view of self-access which likens it to quiet study or library work” (Gardner & Miller, p.14). In several cases, self-access center administrators sought to involve students in designing the layout of learning spaces; an exercise that gives students a sense of ownership of the space and which can help to overcome the preconception of a quiet study space (Taylor, 2014). Yet while many new centers are created in the image of cafes or lounges to promote an environment of informal or incidental learning, if self-study resources are jettisoned in the process, then there is a danger that students “misconstrue a SAC as more of a social space than a venue for enjoyable language study” (Hadley & Brown, p.28). A question for consideration as the number and range of centers grows in Japan (and one that is pertinent to this study) is whether a conversation lounge can rightfully be called a self-access center and really shares the same aim of promoting learner autonomy.

Development of a Conversation Lounge as Policy Borrowing”

Administrators at Kita University were keenly aware of facilities such as the SAC at KUIS and the growth of communication spaces at other universities in Japan when they decided to import the concept to their campus. Thus the process of establishing the facility can be viewed as a form of policy borrowing, and is framed in this study through Phillips and Ochs model of ‘Four Stages of Policy Borrowing in Education’ (2003). This model describes the transfer of education policies from one setting to another through four stages of attraction, decision, implementation and internalization/indigenization. These are visualized and elaborated in their cyclical diagram shown in figure 1.

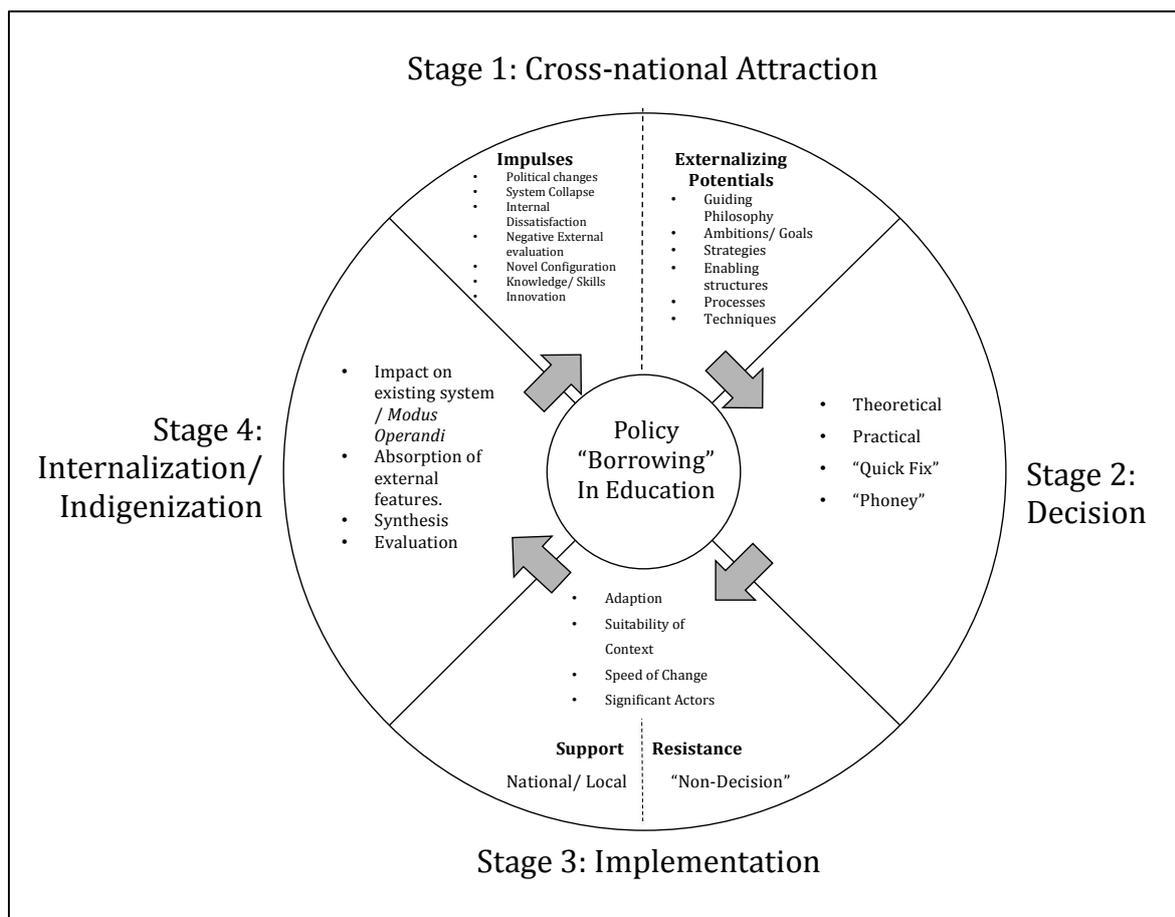


Figure 1. Four stages of Policy Borrowing in Education. (Phillips & Ochs, 2003)

However, this model was developed in the field of comparative education to look at cross-national transfer, and has mostly been applied to the adaption of education systems across borders at the level of national policy. Phillips and Ochs conceived the model out of their own study of transfer between England and Germany (Ochs & Phillips, 2002), and it has been utilized in other comparative transnational studies that looked at borrowing of secondary and higher education reforms at a national level in a number of countries (Chow, 2014; Eta, 2012; Strouzman, 2012). Yet it has also been used at a micro level, for example to study the import of the CEFR (Common European Frame of Reference for Languages) to an English program at a Japanese university (Rappleye, Imoto, & Horiguchi, 2011), and has been suggested as a means of understanding how broad concepts such as learner-centered education transfer across borders (Schweisfurth, 2013).

Although administrators at Kita University were importing a model domestically, from other universities in Japan and not directly from abroad, Phillips and Ochs cross-national transfer model is of relevance in this case. Complexity in the field of internationalization of education often makes it difficult to delineate clear steps in educational transfer in the current age: “a complex sequence of ever-changing processes of regional and trans-regional, national and international systemization and rationalization in education, sometimes replacing, sometimes overlapping one another” (Zymek & Zymek, 2004, p.26). Therefore, a model of educational policy borrowing also needs to be capable of describing the indirect forms of borrowing that take place at a micro level, often between institutions within one country. As in the case of the ICL at Kita University, these importers may not even be aware of the outside origin of the

policy they choose to import, but are nonetheless bringing in foreign concepts as they make efforts to internationalize.

Methodology

As one of the few native English teachers among the university faculty, I was asked to join the project team to establish the International Communication Lounge at Kita University. My direct involvement provided an opportunity to conduct ethnographic research as a participant-observer or participant as observer. Primarily a participant actively engaged in the work of the project, the viewpoint is necessarily subjective. Nevertheless, my status as a relative newcomer at the university and the only non-Japanese member of the project allowed a shift to the positionality of an outside observer in approaching the research questions, with the aim of gathering qualitative data and writing a detailed narrative description of the process.

From the spring of 2014 when initial meetings took place to discuss the possibility of opening the lounge, through to the summer of 2015, when plans had been fully implemented; records were kept of all interactions with others involved in the project during meetings and events held in the facility, as well as many informal discussions and conversations with staff and students. These field notes were then used to map out the establishment process across the first three stages of Phillips and Ochs model: attraction, decision, and implementation.

In order to evaluate the manner in which the fourth “internalization/indigenization” stage of the model had been achieved, semi-structured interviews were conducted in July 2016 with four key members of the project team, and with a focus group of four students who frequently used the ICL. Interviewees were selected as representatives of the different stakeholders within the university who had an interest in the ICL. These interviews help to triangulate the analysis of previously collected observation data, and are referred to in all four parts of the analysis, as the interview subjects were asked to reflect on the establishment process, as well as offer their own evaluation of the role of the ICL and the importance of internationalization within the university. Additionally, as a result of one of the interviews, data about study abroad program participation was made available, and is included in the findings. Details of the interviewees are provided in the table below:

Table 3. Research interview information

Interview	Interviewees	Description
Interview A	ICL administrator	Staff member responsible for day-to-day running of ICL. Responsible for promoting the center among the student body and the main liaison for students who use the center.
Interview B	Admissions office staff	Representative of the university admissions office, involved in initial meetings to establish the ICL.
Interview C	ICL English instructor	Part-time instructor who conducts extracurricular English conversation lessons in the ICL
Interview D	Deputy chief of International exchange Center	Professor who heads the committee of the international exchange center. Assigned to the position one year after the ICL had opened, following the retirement of another professor (referred to as Professor M.).
Interview E	Focus group of four students.	Members of the student group that organizes events in the ICL and frequent participants in extracurricular English classes. All four major in tourism studies, and the group included one freshman, sophomore, junior and senior. They are referred to as “freshman student”, “sophomore student” and so on. All four of them had experience of studying abroad.

All interviews were conducted in English, but as all of the interview subjects except interview C were speaking English as a second language, there was some editing for legibility when transcribing the interview data.

Findings

Stage I: Attraction

When Kita University opened a new campus in 2005, the design of the building included a large ‘English and Internet café’, which students could use for self-study. However, save for providing a few computers and English language newspapers, there was little intervention made to moderate the use of this space, and it received little attention from students for its intended purposes. In spring 2014, three sections of the university came together with the aim of renovating it: the international exchange center, admissions office, and English faculty. It was renamed as the International Communication Lounge and activities that would attract students to use the facility were discussed. Referring back to figure three, the main impulses from Phillips and Ochs’s model that motivated each of the three sections can be considered as internal dissatisfaction and negative external evaluation.

The international exchange center’s internal dissatisfaction stemmed from low interest in study abroad programs among students. The center has exchange agreements in place with universities in countries including the United States, China, Korea and Portugal. However, few students at Kita took advantage of these opportunities, and in particular, no student had ever been sent to the USA as an exchange student. A handful of students each year participated in

short-term study abroad programs of up to one month. By increasing student interest in study abroad through the ICL, and providing English classes in the space to help students prepare for tests such as TOEFL, they hoped to promote both long and short-term exchange programs:

Professor M. ... He especially wanted some students to go to the USA as an exchange student, but the students ... they need to pass the English exam to be an exchange student. So he decided that we will make a place for, how do you say that ... students who want to go abroad, so they can study English if they want or whenever they want. (Interview A)

For the admissions office, the impulse was a perceived negative external evaluation, especially in the eyes of potential students and their parents who might visit on open-campus days. Members of the office were aware of similar spaces at other Japanese universities, yet noted that many of those universities they were in direct competition with lacked such facilities. Thus, developing the visual impact of the ICL as a prominent and vibrant part of the campus was a strategy whereby they could distinguish Kita from local competitors and make the campus appeal to prospective students with interest in languages and international exchange:

I guess for *nyuushi* (admissions) it is for parents of high school students. They really want that their son or daughter will have international skills. Like, not only studying their major, but learning English and some skills to be able to work in an international environment. They really want their children to be that kind of person. Probably for *nyuushi*, it is a good thing to attract those high school students. (Interview A).

For *nyuushi*, it's a kind of promotion, and we have a tourism department, so it is very attractive for high school students who want to major in tourism. I think it is the most important for us that we could connect it to the department. (Interview B).

My personal involvement was as a representative of English teachers, for whom internal dissatisfaction stemmed from the difficulty of reforming the university's English curriculum. Although the university has no language majors, languages are given importance within the curricula of all departments and English classes are a requirement for all first and second year students in every department. This however, results in large classes of between 40-60 students with varying levels of ability and motivation, as more than a thousand students must be processed through several required English courses each year. Motivating students to be willing to communicate in class under these circumstances can be a challenge, and it can also be difficult for those students who do have ability and an interest to fully benefit from the classes, as students attested to during the focus group interview:

I sometimes feel those [required] classes are too easy or it is just useful to revise my English ... My major is international tourism, but I think it's not enough to touch the international, because almost all students are Japanese and can't speak English well in the class. So I wonder about is it is really international? I think it is not so international.

(Interview E, freshman student)

Interviewee: It was difficult for me to ask a question [in required classes]. That is the difference.

Interviewer: Why do you think it was difficult to ask questions?

Interviewee: The atmosphere is like... very strict. If I say something then everyone will pay attention to me. (Interview E, sophomore student)

While many English teachers among the faculty are interested in reforming the English programs, institutional constraints make it difficult to enact the large structural changes that would be needed for any significant impact. The ambition therefore, with the ICL was to provide small, student-centered classes that are a supplement and alternative to the compulsory classes in the English curriculum to benefit those students with high motivation who were being let down by the curriculum.

Stage II: Decision

From these initial impulses that were discussed informally in spring 2014, the three sections came together to make plans to renovate the English and Internet café and launch the International Community Lounge from September.

The Four Stages Model suggests four possible reasons that bear on the decision to import a foreign model: theoretical, practical, quick fix, or phoney:

Is it used to illustrate a theoretical solution to improve the situation at home, or to innovate reform? Is the foreign education policy or practice discussed as a realistic and practical solution, or as a ‘quick fix’? Or is it used in the decision-making process as a ‘phoney’ solution to ‘scandalise’ or ‘glorify’ current practices at home? (Ochs and Phillips, 2004, p.10-11)

Given some of the impulses discussed in the previous section, it could be construed that the decision to open the ICL was a quick fix, or phoney decision. Rather than tackling the problems that were the causes of dissatisfaction with the English curriculum, was this just an attempt to paper over cracks? Was the purpose to create an image or façade of internationalization for parents of prospective students, rather than something that would genuinely benefit students?

While the respective incentives of each stakeholder can be interpreted in this way, the most basic reason for the decision was the fact that a space already existed on the campus and was not being used. For this reason, it can be said that ultimately the decision to establish the ICL was made for practical reasons. As noted in the literature review, self-access centers operate on a principle of autonomous learner participation. Therefore, once the decision was made to open the ICL in the autumn semester, the major concern for all stakeholders was how students could be attracted to the space, and motivated to continue to use it:

Before we had the space called English café there, but actually if we go there we could just see some students eating or sleeping or chatting with their friends in Japanese ... So we really wanted to change this atmosphere when we opened the ICL and we worried how we can get students to go there. (Interview A)

Stage III: Implementation

The ICL was officially opened in September 2014, for the start of the fall semester. The room was divided into two sections: a lounge area with sofas, computers in private booths, a selection of English language magazines and television screens that stream English language content; and a study area with a whiteboard and round tables to accommodate small group classes.

The first semester was something of a trial period in which the aim was to promote the space widely on campus and gauge how many students could be expected to participate in classes and events. From the start of the 2015 academic year, plans would be consolidated.

Three activities were trialed in the first semester. First, a native English instructor was hired part-time to provide English communication classes three evenings a week. These classes were extra-curricular, but were provided for free and were open-access. At first these classes were quite unstructured, as it was difficult to gauge how many students would be interested and whether they would keep attending. There were numerous challenges as the instructor noted:

I didn't know how many students were going to be there week to week. We had lots of students show up for the initial introduction classes, and then far fewer actually coming to the lessons, and also a real mixture of levels in the classes which made it more difficult to prepare for... there was no real way to prepare for it in the beginning. (Interview C).

Once it was clear that there were enough students to make it viable to run the classes, a curriculum could be developed and these challenges were dealt with:

We ironed those things out and there is more structure now as well, and that helps students because they know what to expect as well. Now we have split it into three levels so we have a beginner class that is really for beginners... Separating the beginners and the intermediate has encouraged more students to keep coming. Interview C).

Secondly, a committee of student volunteers was formed and initially tasked with arranging themed lunchtime events and parties. Over time, these events have become more ambitious and frequent and include a weekly English lunch, lessons run by students, an annual speech contest and excursions to sightseeing spots in Tokyo where students volunteer to assist tourists. The committee has also gradually taken over the responsibility of recruiting students to the ICL, and taken control of the space, making requests to the university administration about how the space is used:

They really wanted to have a place to learn by themselves: collecting and eating and learning together like that. So their first request was to use the ICL only for themselves, without other students. A space only for ICL students... Then they said they want to have someone always in the ICL to help for English or learning English, like a staff member. (Interview A).

Thirdly, online conversation lessons were provided on computers in the center. Students could sign up for these and access these lessons via a video conferencing software platform. However, these did not prove to be popular and were phased out from the 2015 academic year.

Referring back to the third stage of the model, the transition from decision to implementation is met with support and resistance. In this case, the establishment of the ICL happened quickly and with little resistance. In a sense, this was possible because the motivations of the three major stakeholders supported each other. Before the ICL was established, without the mutual benefits that were garnered from it, their agendas each faced significant resistance within the university. Reforming the university English curriculum for example, to create smaller, more communicative classes has met with resistance to treating English differently from other university classes, and as a result institutional constraints limit and shape what is possible within university language classes.

However, these barriers do not apply in the context of the ICL, where greater freedom and flexibility are allowed, due to the classes being held outside of the curriculum, and this was made possible because of the agendas of the other two stakeholders. Likewise, the admissions

office and international exchange center were constrained in their ambitions to attract internationally minded students or to promote exchange programs, but were able to further these aims through their mutually supportive agendas.

Stage IV: Internalization/ Indigenization

Criteria for attainment of this fourth stage of Phillips and Ochs model include synthesis, absorption or impact on the existing system. In order to evaluate these impacts, semi-structured interviews were conducted as a follow-up to the initial study, two years after the ICL opened. Two themes that emerged from these interviews were the effect of the ICL on student motivation to study English, and to study abroad.

Motivation to study English

On average between twenty and thirty students a week join the English classes and events in the ICL, and there was some concern that this was not enough, and that more could be done broaden the appeal of the ICL and engage students:

I hope that more students are interested in the ICL or English or the opportunities, because we prepare opportunities, but the students don't respond very much to our action. I think we can do more. (Interview D).

However, there was recognition that the student committee had a positive impact on maintaining the motivation of the group of students who use the ICL:

The committee is really important for ICL. Because the students ... how do you say that? This is really difficult to keep their motivation for learning English because English is a language and today if I learn ten words, probably tomorrow I will not use these ten words. When they join the group they have an opportunity to use English with their senior or when they go to a volunteer activity. The opportunity is really important. (Interview A).

As well as motivating each other, individual students show the self-motivation to take charge of their own learning that self-access centers aim to promote:

The biggest stand out student in terms of utilizing my being there would have to be K. He was already one of the best students in terms of ability, on top of that he is very motivated and if no-one else is around when he shows up he is always ready with a list of specific things he wants to talk about like grammar points or vocabulary or some other problem. There is him, and one or two others like that. (Interview C).

However, for the majority of students this is not the case:

A lot of them are still quite intimidated by learning English. Without a teacher there I don't know how many would be there off of their own backs. (Interview C).

Therefore, while some students show the characteristics of self-motivated, autonomous learners and are attracted to the space, it is questionable whether the ICL as a conversation lounge actually develops these characteristics in students. Perhaps if the space had dedicated full-time staff, or a library of self-study materials as traditional self-access centers do, learner autonomy would be promoted more effectively. Nevertheless, it has become a gathering place for students with an interest in English, and as a social space, it has created an atmosphere in which they motivate one another.

Motivation to study abroad

Data on the number of students studying abroad each year was made available as a result of one of the interviews, and is shown in table 4:

Table 4. Annual student participation in study abroad programs (university's own data used with permission)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Long-term university exchange Programs (up to 1 year)	1	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	1
Independently arranged study abroad (2 to 6 months)	3	4	5	0	2	1	6	7	3
Short-term programs (up to one month)	1	3	4	4	16	9	4	20	17
Total	5	8	11	6	19	13	11	28	21

While participation in long-term exchange programs remains limited to one or two students a year, the table shows a notable rise in the number of students participating in short-term study abroad programs of up to one month since the ICL opened in 2014. However, given that there are only two years showing this increase, those interviewed were hesitant to attribute this rise to the effect of the ICL:

Many students go and went abroad who are studying in ICL. It means if someone comes to the ICL they are interested to go abroad. But the number of students ... although the number of students studying abroad increased in the last two years, I cannot say if it is really because of the ICL. (Interview A).

We should take into consideration that the number of students studying at this campus increased since 2007, so perhaps we cannot say if the ratio is larger. (Interview D).

Changes in the data over a longer period are needed before a positive effect on the number of students studying abroad can be claimed as a result of the opening of the ICL. However, what can be claimed is that the ICL has given students who are interested in studying abroad a place to meet and gather information from one another:

After I enrolled in the university I found out about that ICL system. I thought it sounds good, so I tried to go. And I can practice conversation there and develop my English. Also, I was able to share information about how to go abroad or how to improve English skills. There are motivated students in the ICL so they made me more motivated ... I wanted to go abroad but I just didn't know how to go abroad. After I went to ICL I met one older student, and he taught me a lot about how to go abroad, so then I went to the Philippines last year. (Interview E, sophomore student).

Discussion

Utilizing Phillips and Ochs model of four stages of policy borrowing in education as a lens through which to view qualitative data about the establishment of an international communication lounge provided some insights into the broader questions about internationalization that preface this study, and certain conclusions can be drawn about them.

What role does a self-access space for language learning and international exchange play in the internationalization of a university campus?

It can be concluded the main impact of the ICL becoming “internalized” on the campus has been to bring together students with an interest in languages and study abroad, where they motivate each other and exchange information. Indirectly, the agendas of the three major stakeholders have created a cycle of attraction: Students with an interest in languages and foreign cultures are attracted to the university by this prominent international space; they are provided with classes to improve their English communication skills and a social environment that encourages them to communicate, and become interested in studying abroad. This in turn raises the international profile and visibility of internationalization on the campus, which is an attractor of new students.

The visual representation of Phillips and Ochs model (figure 1) also represents policy borrowing as a cycle, in order to illustrate the fact that once a system or program becomes internalized or absorbed, then in turn it becomes a catalyst for new impulses for change. These impulses can be the new knowledge and skills that administrators have gathered from the establishment process, and also new internal dissatisfactions, as they look to broaden the appeal of the ICL and increase student participation in classes and events, or develop the facilities to support autonomous learning more effectively.

To what extent has the ICL come to meet the differing purposes of university administrators and students, and what contrasting notions about internationalization does this suggest about each of them?

Insights relevant to this question emerged from the interview data, as all interviewees were asked why they thought it was important for the university to be more international. Their answers provide insights on their differing viewpoints as stakeholders. For the administrator who works closely with students on a day-to-day basis in the ICL, internationalization of the university gives students a more broad-minded way of thinking, and is linked to cross-cultural understanding:

This goes for all universities in Japan I think, but after graduating university they really need the way to think about something... I want them to have a skill to think about something not only for the Japanese person, but for everybody. The ICL is really helpful for that kind of thinking. Like, many students are there and many countries students are there and they have an opportunity to talk with them. Many students haven't been to somewhere outside of Japan in our university. Learning other countries language is not only the way to understand what do you say, but also why do you think so. (Interview A).

For the representative of the admissions office the benefits of internationalization are more closely related to the employability of students, who need direct experiences, in order to develop their identity:

Interviewee: The ultimate goal of university is that finally we have to work ... job-hunting. So the activities of ICL should become the advantage for students when they are job-hunting.

Interviewer: So you would like the ICL to support students, for example for TOEIC?

Interviewee: TOEIC is important but it is more important for them to understand other countries' cultures and they can get their Japanese identity as well. In the future we have to work with the other countries so we have to get used to the circumstances or situation. We should challenge them to have more experiences. (Interview B).

For the professor who heads the international exchange center, internationalization is of intrinsic value as a learning experience:

It is basically a very natural thing to me. It is a basic thing to be open. Globalization means normalization for me. It is very natural ... If you see people, you learn. If you see different people you learn more. So as university students or teachers or staff, an opportunity to see a more global world is a learning opportunity, so why not? ... If they speak and understand English, they can get more opportunities, they can understand more deeply how the others see the world. So it is just important. It is very natural for me. (Interview D).

While the perspective and emphasis of each stakeholder is slightly different, there is a common theme running through the three quotations and they are all essentially saying something very similar: All of them view internationalization as an asset to students in the future, not simply in terms of gaining language skills or higher test scores, but through experiences that broaden their perspective and give them a stronger understanding of their identity in the world.

Conclusion

The question in the title of this paper, “conspicuous internationalization?” was the spark for undertaking this research, and essentially it is a question of whether this communication lounge was developed to internationalize the university campus or just to give the appearance of internationalization: a kind of *tatema* internationalization to appropriate a Japanese term for contrasting a person's true feelings with displayed behavior. A narrative was constructed through Phillips and Ochs model of education policy borrowing, which gave insights into the impulses, decision-making, implementation and internalization of the ICL. While some of the impulses for this may have been superficial: to create a highly visible international space on the campus; the ICL has developed into a hub for students who are attracted by internationalization, where they can improve their language skills, gather information about studying abroad, and motivate one other.

This narrative is limited by the subjectivity inherent in a participant observer approach, yet it is an approach that has generated a rich, qualitative description of the process, which would be useful to other university administrators in Japan or elsewhere interested in developing similar spaces. Although it has been possible to map out the complete cycle of the establishment process in the two-year period covered by this study, the conclusions are somewhat tentative, and potential areas for future research would be to look at the longer-term effect that this space has on study abroad rates or actions that are taken by administrators to promote autonomous learning. Furthermore, as demographic changes in Japan start to affect universities in Japan more severely, the strategies and stances that are taken towards internationalization will be an interesting area for future research.

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