

PARTICIPANTS' NET PROMOTER SCORE ON THE STUDENTS MEET INTERNATIONALLY THROUGH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

Since 2020, we have been conducting the Students Meet Internationally through Language Education project, which offers students opportunities to participate in intercultural communication using online tools. In the academic year 2022, seven universities, 15 senior high schools, and two elementary schools from six countries will join the project. To evaluate the significance of the project, the organizers asked participants to answer a simple questionnaire. This paper reports the results of the investigation and demonstrates the efficiency of the project.

KEYWORDS

Intercultural education, Online meeting tools, Net promoter score, Participants' evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, online communication via the Internet has become popular. In addition, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, online meeting tools such as Zoom, Webex, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams have become common tools among not only businesspeople but also teachers and students. Although globalization makes us teach our students a sense of globalism, we cannot move internationally during the pandemic. Therefore, utilizing such online meeting tools will have a significant impact on realizing intercultural communication education.

The workshop initiative for language learning (WILL) started the Students Meet Internationally through Language Education (SMILE) project in 2020. The project focuses on intercultural education classes between overseas and Japanese schools and provides a typical curriculum from preparation through reflection (see Figure 1). It also offers a SMILE coordinator who supports teachers in matching schools, arranging meetings, and performing each series of activities using teaching materials. Furthermore, the project helps participants by offering a web application titled Dialogbook, which records students' activities (Iio and Wakabayashi, 2020; Wakabayashi et al., 2022).

Introduction	Preparation			Internet Face-to-Face Communication			Wrap-up
Foundation	Element 1	Element 2	Element 3	1 st Collaboration Class	2 nd Collaboration Class	3 rd Collaboration Class	Review the achievement
Set up and share a clear image of the goal of this course	Prepare the contents and skills needed for your talk	Think of the questions you will ask	Confirm that you can use WebEx/Zoom	Topic "Introduction of yourself and your school"	Topic "What is popular among Students"	Topic Varies	Check the contents of Dialogbook

Figure 1. Overview of the prototypical course

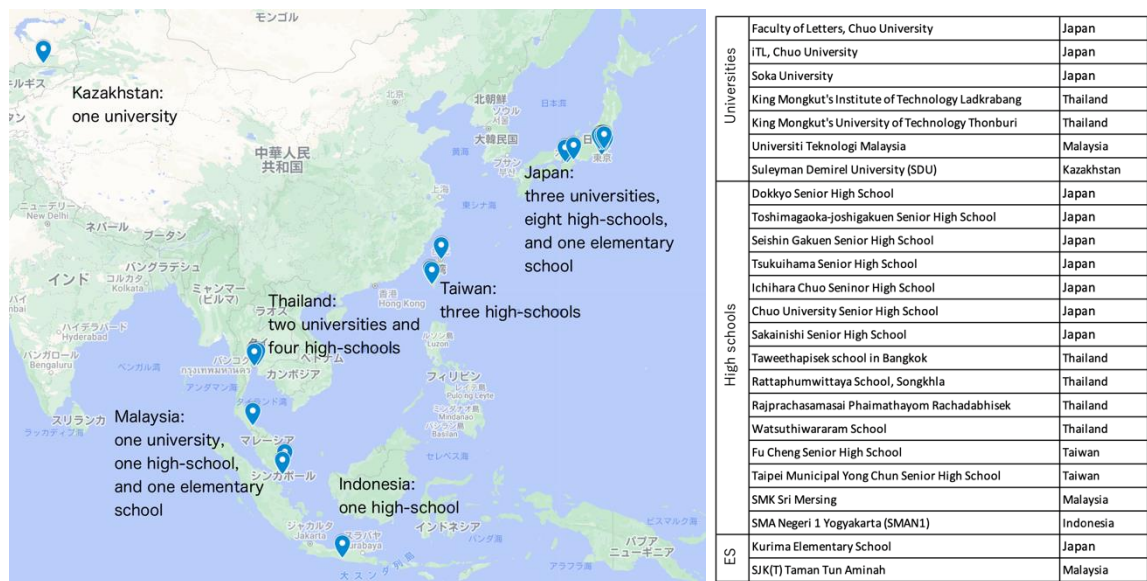


Figure 2. The map (left) and the list (right) of the schools participating in the SMILE project in AY 2022 (Iio, 2023)

In the academic year (AY)¹ 2020, the four senior high schools participated in the project. Two pairs of schools engaged in intercultural communication. In the AY 2021, the following year, the project included eight schools, including four universities and four senior high schools. This year, seven universities, fifteen senior high schools, and two elementary schools from six countries joined the project (Iio et al., 2023). More than 500 students participated in the project this year (see Figure 2); therefore, the WILL asked them to answer a simple questionnaire to confirm the efficiency of the project.

After collecting the answers, we calculated the net promoter score (NPS) (Reichheld, 2003) based on the answers to Question 3. The NPS is a measure of customer mindset and a predictor of sales growth. Although the SMILE project has not been a commercial activity thus far, it can be used as a key indicator of acceptability by the participants (students and teachers) in the project.

Section 1 briefly introduced the SMILE project. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the literature review. Section 3 provides a brief description of the investigation and the results of the questionnaire. Finally, Section 4 concludes the paper.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before providing an overview of the project evaluation, this paper describes related work, particularly from the perspective of international communication education and evaluation case studies using the NPS.

¹The Japanese academic year starts from April and ends in March of the following year.

2.1 Importance of intercultural education

As internet communication technologies have improved, the significance of cross-cultural education, which enables students to engage in intercultural communication, has steadily increased. Several pedagogical methods have been proposed to provide such education. One well-known method is content- and language-integrated learning (CLIL), which is expected to foster intercultural understanding. For instance, Yang (2021) showed that content-driven CLIL learners obtained slightly higher cultural quotient scores than their language-driven CLIL English major peers.

In addition, collaborative online international language (COIL; Appiah-Kubi, 2020) is a typical method of learning international communication in English. However, COIL programs are led mainly by Western communities (Rubin, 2017). Because several Western languages, such as European languages, are similar to English, learning English is relatively easy. However, Eastern languages, including Japanese, are significantly different from Western ones. Therefore, learning English may be more difficult for Eastern students than for Western students. That is the reason why WILL started the SMILE project.

2.2 Evaluations using NPS

Originally, the NPS was proposed as a tool for commercial businesses to evaluate products and services. However, as previously mentioned, it can be used to assess educational services.

Kara et al. (2021) calculated the NPS for students' likelihood of recommending academic programs. Because they considered the application of the NPS in higher education to be limited, they calculated the score and performed deeper investigations. Lucero (2022) proposed using the NPS to assess accredited continuing medical education or continuing education. She also concluded that NPS is a valid indicator of the intention to act.

Wassen (2019) reported an interesting case in which the NPS was used to assess parental satisfaction with the education of students with autism. Furthermore, the NPS has been used in several cases to assess student satisfaction with higher education, including at a state university (Kara and Zeren, 2022), among engineering students (Cruz et al., 2019), and in virtual learning environments (Gamarra-Moreno et al., 2021).

3. INVESTIGATION

This section briefly describes the investigation and results of the questionnaire.

3.1 Overview of the Investigation

As described previously, to confirm the efficiency of the SMILE project, the WILL asked participants to answer a simple questionnaire to evaluate the project. The questions used in the questionnaire are listed in Table 1. The questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms as an online questionnaire.

Table 1. Questions in the questionnaire

Questions	Options
Q1. What is your affiliation?	each affiliation
Q2. Are you a teacher or a student?	teacher or student
Q3. Do you recommend this program to your friends and colleagues?	10: willing to recommend ~ 0: not at all
Q4. Let us know the reason for your evaluation in the previous question. (It is okay to write your opinion in your local language.)	open question

The answers to the online questionnaire were collected from 24th November 2022 to 31st January 2023, with 404 answers.

3.2 Investigation results

This section explains the investigation results. Figure 3 shows the results for Questions 1 and 2. Figure 3 (left) shows a bar chart illustrating the number of answers from each school, and Figure 3 (right) shows the 392 students and 12 teachers who answered the questions.

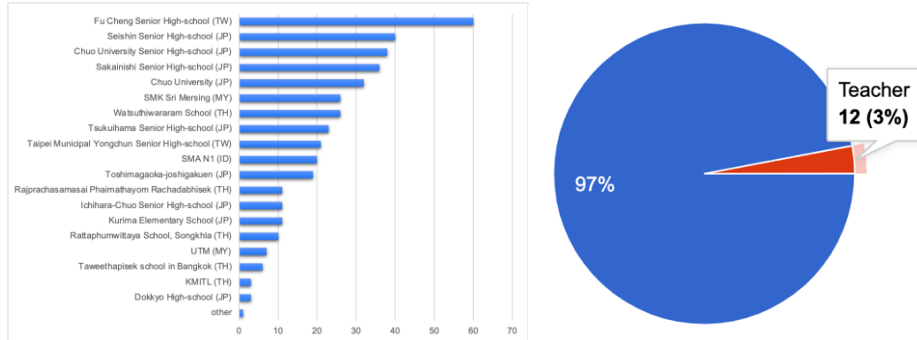


Figure 3. Results of Questions 1 and 2

Figure 3 (left) shows that several answers were collected from Japanese schools and schools in their counterpart countries. Although more than half of the participants were from Japan, several participants in the project from overseas schools answered the questionnaire (see Table 2).

Table 2. Number of answers from each country

Country	Number of answers	% of answers
Japan	213	52.7
Taiwan	81	20.1
Thailand	53	13.9
Malaysia	33	8.2
Indonesia	20	5.0
other	1	0.3

The results of Question 3 are shown in Figure 4. Based on these results, we calculated the NPS of the project. The NPS was calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from that of promoters. Promoters were defined as those who answered Question 9 or 10. In contrast, detractors are defined as customers who answered Question 6 or lower.

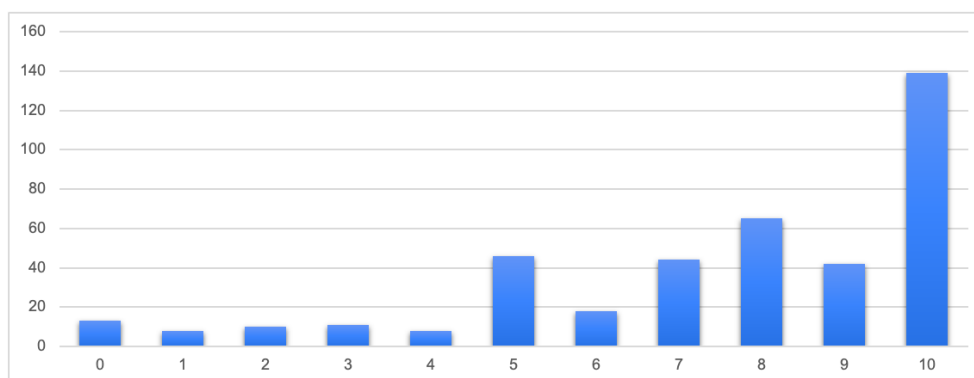


Figure 4. Results of Question 3

In this case, the number of promoters and detractors was 181 and 114, respectively. As previously described, the total number of responses was 404. Therefore, the NPS was calculated to be 0.166. NPS ranges from -1.0 to 1.0. In general, the positive NPS could be interpreted to imply that the customers who evaluated the products or services were satisfied, and the products were accepted by the customers.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This study introduces the SMILE project, an online intercultural education program, and reports the results of an assessment using the NPS as a case study. In the AY 2022, more than 500 students from seven universities, 15 high schools, and two elementary schools participated in the project. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire, and 404 responses were collected. The NPS was calculated from the results of 11 responses on a scale of 0 (not likely to recommend) to 10 (willing to recommend) to question “Q3. Do you recommend this program to your friends and colleagues?” We obtained an NPS value of 0.166, which is a relatively better score.

A deeper analysis of the assessment data, such as aggregating values by country, will be performed in future studies. In addition, we obtained 291 answers to Question 4, which asked the reason for selecting the answer to Question 3, even though it was not a mandatory question. It is an open-ended question and is not easy to analyze; however, it can provide attractive findings through text-mining approaches.

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