

## VIRTUAL EXCHANGE PROJECT SUMMARY

A Virtual Exchange Project was conducted between The University of Missouri-Kansas City, and Kaichi International University. Participating in the exchange were Professors Jody Friberg from Kaichi International University, Professor Stephen Holland-Wemp, and students from English 225—0017 at Applied Language Institute, University of Missouri-Kansas City, and students from Kaichi International University enrolled in English Speaking BII (i) class. The theme of the exchange was “Community Issues of Concern to You.” Given constraints related to the time difference between America and Japan, it was decided that email would be the best means of exchange. Students from both universities were tasked with researching a community issue of concern in their respective countries, gathering research to add context to and support the issue, and then sharing what they learned with their peers abroad through email. Detailing the issue of concern, students from Kaichi International University using both empirical and analytic research, answered questions 1. What is a community issue you are concerned about? 2. Which part or parts of Japan are affected by the issue? 3. Who is involved in the issue? 4. What do you think was the cause of the issue? 5. What are the dangers or problems posed by the issue? 6. How can the issue be resolved? Answers to these questions as well as research gathered by Kaichi International University students was forwarded to peers from English 225-0017 at UMKC. Students at UMKC per mine and Professor Wemp’s exchange agreement, were required to read and respond to the community issues of concern presented by KIU students. In turn, upon conducting research to explain and substantiate their community issue of concern in America, students from English 225-0017 UMKC, sent emails to BII (i) students, which BII (i) students were obliged to study and respond to. Students working together through the exchange garnered considerable knowledge related to community issues occurring in each other’s countries they had been previously unaware of. Moreover, they established greater intercultural awareness, as well as improving cross-cultural communication skills. Not to mention securing better knowledge of syntax, orthography, and lexemes used in a strictly academic context well beyond the norms of prescribed English language education in Japan. The exchange lasted one week, after which time email correspondence with English 225—0017 students was collected by me and graded based on content, punctuality, formality, and supporting evidence. A “Video Presentation” was also required in which students were to explain briefly in a 4-to-5-minute presentation, what theirs and their UMKC peer’s community issue was, and what the similarities and differences between the issues were. Grading was conducted using a rubric with descriptors explaining what students were accountable for. Comments were made in the rubric regarding students’ level of achievement for each of the descriptors, with an overall grade for the project noted at the top of the rubric.

Concluding this project was a Virtual Exchange Project Questionnaire created by Prf. Jody Friberg to ascertain on what level students from BII (i) class felt engaged in the exchange. Questions included 1. To what extent do you think the Virtual Exchange Project with UMKC benefited your English? 2. To what extent do you think the Virtual Exchange Project with UMKC improved your knowledge of community issues in America? 3. To what extent do you think the Virtual Exchange Project improved your knowledge of community issues in Japan? 4. To what extent was English used by you to conduct research related to your community issue of interest? 5. To what extent was conducting research necessary to learning more about your community issue of interest? 6. What aspect of the Virtual Exchange Project did you find to be most difficult? 7. If you had to do the Virtual Exchange Project again, what would you like to do differently? 8. Would you recommend future BII (i) students participate in a Virtual Exchange

Project as a means of furthering English language study and developing cultural awareness? The table below represents students' answers.

| Questions   | Student Responses   |   |  |  |
|---|---|---|--|--|
|   | Benefited a lot   | Benefited somewhat  | Benefited very little  | It didn't benefit my English at all  |
| 1. To what extent do you think the Virtual Exchange Project with UMKC benefited your English?   |   |   |  |  |
| <b>Student response:</b>  | 5   | 1   | 1  | 0  |
| 2. To what extent do you think the Virtual Exchange Project with UMKC improved your knowledge of community issues in America?   | It improved my knowledge a lot  | It improved my knowledge somewhat   | It improved my knowledge very little   | It didn't improve my knowledge at all  |
| <b>Student response:</b>  | 1   | 5   | 1  | 0  |
| 3. To what extent do you think the Virtual Exchange Project improved your knowledge of community issues in Japan?   | It improved my knowledge greatly  | It improved my knowledge somewhat   | It improved my knowledge very little   | It didn't improve my knowledge at all  |
| <b>Student response:</b>  | 1   | 5   | 1  | 0  |
| 4. To what extent was English used by you to conduct research related to your community issue of interest?  | I read or listened to a lot of English while conducting research related to my community issue. | I read or listened to English somewhat while conducting research related to my community issue. | I read or listened to very little English while conducting research related to my community issue. I resorted mostly to reading or listening to Japanese | I didn't read or listen to any English while conducting research related to my community issue. I resorted entirely to using Japanese. |
| <b>Student response:</b>  | 1   | 4   | 1  | 1  |
| 5. To what extent was conducting research necessary to learning more about your community issue of interest?  | I felt it was very necessary to conduct research.   | I felt it was somewhat necessary to conduct research.   | I felt it was not really necessary to conduct research.  | I felt that conducting research was not necessary at all.  |
| <b>Student response:</b>  | 5   | 1   | 1  | 0  |
| 6. What aspect of the Virtual Exchange Project did you find to be most difficult?   | The amount and level of difficulty of the English.  | Maintaining communication with UMKC peers.  | Conducting research related to my community issue of interest.   | The Final Task Output Video Presentation.  |
| <b>Student response:</b>  | 2   | 1   | 2  | 2  |
| 8. Would you recommend future BII (i) students participate in a Virtual Exchange Project as a means of furthering English language study and developing cultural awareness? | I would highly recommend future BII (i) students participate in a Virtual Exchange Project.     | I would somewhat recommend future BII (i) students participate in a Virtual Exchange Project.   | I am not really sure it is necessary to involve future BII (i) students in a Virtual Exchange Project.   | I would definitely not recommend future BII (i) students become involved in a Virtual Exchange Project.                                |
| <b>Student response:</b>  | 5   | 2   | 0  | 0  |
| 7. If you had to do the Virtual Exchange Project again, what  | <b>a)</b> More time to spend research and doing something like Zoom or Google Meet.             | <b>b)</b> Instead of we searching about Japan's community issue, we should                      | <b>c)</b> I want to have a conversation by using Zoom, etc.  | <b>d)</b> I need a longer preparation period.  |

|                                   |  |   |  |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| would you like to do differently? |  | search their community issue tell them what we learned from the search and ask them to add more information about it. |  |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|--|