

Panel Discussion: Utilizing the Internet for Teaching Japanese
パネルディスカッション： インターネットを使った日本語教育

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概要：インターネットは特に北アメリカでは定着してきた感があり、日本語教育におけるインターネット利用を再考する必要があるのではないだろうか。ここでは、日本語教育におけるインターネット利用の技術上、教育上の特色とともに、従来の教室におけるインターネットの有効利用、オンライン上のみ存在するクラスの実践報告を通して、今後の課題と可能性を述べていきたいと思う。

キーワード：インターネット、オンラインコース、教室活動、日本語環境、評価、4技能

Panel Abstract:

In North America, the Internet has established its presence in our daily personal life and academic life. Sometimes we communicate via email even from the same office taking advantage of asynchronous nature of the tool. We also access the WWW for quick information or even authentic materials for teaching. As the Internet becomes more available around the globe, it is time to consider the issues in utilizing the Internet for teaching Japanese Language classes. Language classes have different set of criteria from lecture classes from other disciplines and that reflects on the use of the Internet as well. The Internet is not only a vast pool of information but also a place to communicate with remote people. The nature of online communication has pedagogical implications to teaching Japanese. Both teachers and students will face user end multilingual computing issues. At this point, most teachers are likely to use the Internet to supplement or enhance traditional face-to-face language classes. What resources can we take advantage of and how can we develop materials? The Internet can be used for sharing materials, ideas and networking. And more and more teachers are asked to teach totally online Japanese class. An example of online delivered Japanese class and some practical advice for future online teachers will be addressed.

インターネットを使用した日本語教育の特色 Implications on Teaching Japanese with the Internet

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概要：インターネットを利用した活動やオンラインによる遠隔教育は、言語教育、特に海外における日本語教育においては歴史が浅いように思う。海外のユーザーの日本語環境が大きなバリアになっていたところがあったが、最新のOSの進歩のおかげで技術的なことを心配しないで、教育効果をあげることに集中できるようになってきたと思われる。ここでは、簡単に手に入るようになった生教材使用について、インターネットにおける同時性コミュニケーション、非同時性コミュニケーションと4技能の育成の関係、インターネット教材を自習用から抜け出して、教室で真のコミュニケーションの達成のために使うという点から将来への課題や希望について述べたいと思う。

キーワード：日本語環境、四技能、同時性コミュニケーション、非同時性コミュニケーション、生教材、評価

1. Introduction

It is common to see class activities that utilize the Internet or distance learning via online in general education field. However when it comes to language class, especially Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) class, it seems that they are just starting. This had a lot to do with difficulty in using Japanese script in non-Japanese operating systems. However this has changed dramatically recently. Now teachers can concentrate on curriculum goals using the Internet without worrying technical difficulties. We need to understand the nature of communication modes on the Internet in order to build four skills effectively. Authentic materials are plentiful on the Internet and we can utilize the Internet to realize true and meaningful communication. Therefore teachers need to be trained how to use and conduct assessment. In this presentation, current challenges and hopes for the future will be addressed.

2. We see the light at the end of the tunnel: Japanese computing became finally easy

For operating system level, multi-lingual computing is penetrating to the end user level. Today when you purchase a new computer (unless you look for and choose Windows Me), Japanese capability comes with no extra cost (Schneider, 2002). Windows XP and 2000 have built-in capabilities for multilingual function and with OSX, you can even have Japanese interface with the system purchased outside of Japan. For Mac, System 9.x, one generation before, comes with Japanese Language Kit that used to be a separate purchase.

For software-wise, true power of multilingual capability of those systems is not yet felt in full. Often Java applications on the Internet are more difficult even the user-end computer is Japanese capable. This includes online courseware (often called LMS, or Learning Management System, course shell or learning portal) such as WebCT and Blackboard. Although they are making upgrades and updates, no major courseware is yet to be completely multi-lingual capable. Perhaps we could try to look for courseware developed in Japan. The catch here is that the interface and help file are often in Japanese and that means even beginning level students have to maneuver courseware in Japanese. Warranties and support may or may not extend to the use outside of Japan.

However the improvements on multilingual computing here is from the operating system level and not an emulation that was done by third-party software in the past. Software developers will make versions that are compatible with newer systems. Japanese educators can finally concentrate on curriculum goals without worrying about technical difficulties with Japanese script.

3. Development of four skills with the Internet communication modes

The goals of typical introductory-level Japanese classes are to develop four language skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading) and the fifth culture skills. The Internet is not only a vast pool of information but also is a place to communicate with remote people. Since acquisition of Japanese language is ultimately an acquisition of communication skills in Japanese, features of online communication have a lot to do with pedagogical implications in utilizing the Internet for teaching Japanese.

3.1 Traditional communication modes

As you can see in Table A, traditional, face-to-face class is conducted real-time (in a synchronous mode) in one location. Speaking and listening are probably easiest to practice in this manner. Writing and reading can be done also in class, but also could be assigned as homework for later (in an asynchronous mode) to give learners more time. In normal circumstances, asynchronous speaking and listening are limited to recording and listening to recorded messages.

Table A: Four Skills and modes of communication in off-line, traditional communication

	synchronous	asynchronous
Speaking	Talking in person, Talking on the phone	Leaving message in an Answering Machine/tape recorder
Listening	Listening in person, Listening on the phone	Listening to message in an answering machine/tape recorder, Listening to TV/Radio
Reading	N/A	Reading newspaper, book, magazine, journals etc.
Writing	N/A	Writing letter, diary, notes of various kind

As you can see, traditional communication is rather clear: oral/aural skills in synchronous mode and written skills in asynchronous mode. For this reason, face-to-face class tends to take advantage of class interaction time in oral/aural skills.

3.2 Internet communication modes

On the contrary, online communication, at the present stage, is rather heavier on written language (writing and reading). Communicating synchronously in writing and reading is often done on the Internet as chat or MOO (a kind of MUD, Multiple-User Dungeons/Dimensions; MOO stands for MUD, Object Oriented). Synchronous written tools are often Java applications and some are not yet Japanese capable. However as described earlier, this will change in the near future. For those reasons, supplementing online communication mode with traditional class (as enhancement) will complement well to balance the practice of four skills. That also means the challenge of online only class (as a delivery tool). Shinagawa (2002) uses iVisit to overcome this challenge.

Table B: Four Skills and modes of communication in online communication

	synchronous	asynchronous
Speaking	Talking in audio/video conferencing	Recording sound/video file
Listening	Listening in audio/video conferencing	Listening to sound/video file
Reading	Reading messages in Chat, MOO	Reading e-mail/discussion list, Bulletin Board, Reading web page
Writing	Writing message in Chat, MOO	Writing e-mail/discussion list, Bulletin Board, Writing and developing web page

Although all cells are filled, you can see the availability and frequency are varied. In online environment, it is more common to find asynchronous communication than synchronous communication. Although it is getting more common, audio/video conferencing is not available as an everyday event. It is also likely to find web pages without sound/video files than with them. It is clear here that online communication is easier written than oral/aural. This can cause imbalance of building all four language skills as objectives until the technology catches up and we can expect high bandwidth. Speedier connection will enable audio conference more comfortable. Video conferencing will add more true feeling to the communication and give an authentication tool to online only class. It will also give visual clues that help with communication strategies as well as learning culturally specific extra-linguistic features.

4. From self-study materials to possibility of authentic communication

Serving as a place to distribute materials, the Internet hosts many self-study materials by taking advantage of asynchronous nature of the Internet. They are meant for learners with no formal class to take, to assign as homework for scheduled class, or supplement class work without teacher's and fellow learners' presence. An example for Japanese would be Omoto's written language and vocabulary site (Omoto 2002). Using the interactive feature of JavaScript and more complex programming, these sites can give immediate feedback and learners get as many chances to practice as they wish at their own pace. If they are used in classroom situation, each student needs a computer of his/her own. However as the survey conducted in Northern California indicates (Omoto, Fukai and Schneider, 2002), not every class has such a luxury. This result brings up the issue of developing more materials with a different focus. Activities need to be creative so that small groups of students can share a computer. This situation may seem discouraging at first, but we can take advantage of it in order to promote cooperative learning. In other words, creative and careful planning of tasks for group work allows students to work with peers collaboratively, which possibly facilitates scaffolding among peers. That is claimed to have a positive effect on learning. Cyber Map Exercise III (Schneider 2002) is an online material that has classroom use in mind and some activities are meant to be used by pair or small group of students.

Another dimension of the Internet is a place of communication in itself. Students can get the taste of real communication while still in class. Again taking advantage of the asynchronous nature of the Internet, many teachers have attempted to set up an email exchange project with Japanese students. This is an easy way to achieve Community standards in the National Standards. Using the global nature of the Internet, we could expand this to Japanese classes around the world. If we can set up such a relationship, you may get to utilize synchronous communication. Time difference between JFL class and Japan are often challenge to make synchronous communication. As more software becomes available and connection speed improves, audio/video conferencing will become easier to implement to provide space for real communication.

5. Authentic materials/communication and assessment

The use of authentic materials has been important for foreign language instruction at all levels. The Internet makes obtaining authentic materials easy and real communication with native speakers or other non-native speakers outside of class possible.

5.1 Challenge in reading and helper tools

As illustrated in the previous section, reading (asynchronous, written) practice from Web pages written in Japanese is most available and seems to be most frequently used. From the survey study conducted in Northern California, teachers pointed out many newspaper sites to use in class (Omoto, Fukai and Schneider, 2002). The use of authentic materials has been important for all levels, but as we all know, reading in Japanese poses more challenge than Romance language counter parts. There are online tools to help comprehension such as Reading Tutor (<http://language.tiu.ac.jp/>), Rikai.com or online reading helper tools that are developed for Japanese school-age children.

5.2 Activities using authentic materials and communication and their assessment

Even using those tools, reading newspaper is reading newspaper. Considerations need to be made with authentic materials regardless of online or traditional printed materials. Even with easier

materials, teachers need to provide more than traditional comprehension check or translation activities for beginning levels. Teachers need to set up clear objectives that are based on curriculum goals and concrete tasks to work with authentic materials. Blaz (2000) provides how teachers can do reading assessment:

- Scanning to find information before reading;
- Scanning to find information while reading;
- Using various cues for word meaning in context;
- Keeping a list of key words;
- Underlining familiar words or a particular verb tense;
- Looking up unfamiliar words in a dictionary;
- Making an outline or graphic organizer while reading; and
- Underlining the main point or most important information.

The example from CASLS Level VI Assessment Sample covers simple scanning assessment in English. Teachers need training in how to incorporate authentic materials and assessment of the task.

6. Conclusion

Technology is advancing everyday and user-end computer issues with Japanese are just about solved. Students, generations to come, will come equipped with "native fluency" in dealing with the Internet technology. The Internet provides plenty of authentic materials and real communication opportunities. Online materials can facilitate self-study, but also need to facilitate collaborative learning. Teachers now can concentrate on curriculum goals rather than technology and they will need more training dealing with authentic materials and communication in class.

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日本語教育に於ける教室でのインターネットの活用 Utilizing the Internet for classroom teaching

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概要: 本稿では、(1) インターネット上に設置した学習者用の自習のためのウェブページと(2) インターネットを利用した学習者主体のプロジェクトという2点に焦点を絞り、それぞれに於ける問題点とその解決法を学習者に対して行ったアンケートを通じて論考したい。

キーワード: 自習用ホームページ、ITリテラシー、日本語環境、グループプロジェクト、教室活動、評価

1. Japanese language education and the Internet

In this paper, I will discuss how to utilize the Internet for classroom teaching by focusing on two different approaches. The first approach is to set up practice pages to enhance and supplement classroom instruction and the second approach is to utilize the Internet in classroom activities. Since distance learning using the Internet and hybrids between distance learning and face-to-face learning cannot be applied at all institutions due to technical and financial reasons, I will talk about these two approaches, especially the latter. In addition, some technical difficulties involved in utilizing the Internet will be discussed. Although students may know more about computers and are practically "Internet-ready," this does not mean they know more about Japanese computing than language educators. Dealing with Japanese fonts throughout the system may be difficult, and so we have to guide students in order to fully utilize and take advantage of the Internet. We have to be careful not to make our Japanese language class into a Japanese computing literacy class. In this paper, I would like to discuss how a small survey would help language educators know what to expect from students concerning Japanese computing and how to keep motivating students to use the Internet in order to improve their Japanese skills.

2. Online Practice page: make students familiar with and aware of the practice page

I have created several online practice pages, and the practice page to enhance speed-reading skills has been successful. Selective reading skills, such as skimming and scanning, are essential skills in the process of becoming advanced readers. In order to measure improvement, I gave the exact same test twice in the beginning of the semester and twice at the end of the semester for a year. After giving these four examinations, I realized that the students who used the interactive website showed much more improvement in their speed-reading skills. (Omoto 2000) However, this page was used where students were constantly exposed to speed-reading exercises in class, and I personally demonstrated and showed students how to use this page.

The introduction of the three different Japanese scripts, Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji, can be very time-consuming. Since memorizing the characters can be difficult for students who do not have any previous experience studying any other Asian languages, it is best if one can learn them at home. I have gif animated the characters to show their stroke order, and the students can learn these three different scripts by accessing the educational website. They can also listen to the pronunciation of the character if they want to. I have also set up a vocabulary exercise page where students can test their knowledge of vocabulary. However, just mentioning the existence of the practice page to the students is not sufficient enough to motivate students. We have to take them to the computer lab and familiarize them with the practice page. It sounds very contradictory that an online practice page should be accessed and used when students want and need it, and that we should not use class time to use the practice page. However, my survey showed that students would not use it actively unless they knew how to navigate the practice page, although it can be very effective in improving their Japanese.

I usually take students to the language lab to teach them how to use Japanese word processing applications and how to use the search engine on the Internet in Japanese. I also teach them how to

use power point for presentations in Japanese on an online practice page. I have realized it may be a good idea to introduce the online practice page to the students at the beginning of the semester. In figure 1, 40 first year Japanese students answered my survey and to my surprise, 27 students never used the online practice page.

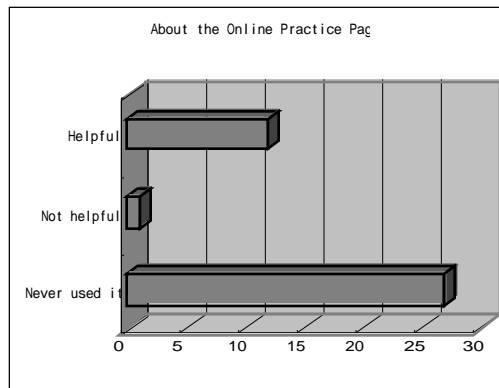


Figure 1

I asked 40 first year students to see if the online practice page helped them at the end of summer session in 2001. I mentioned the online practice page almost everyday, but I never took them to the language lab to familiarize them with the online practice page. After this, I decided to take students to the lab to familiarize them with online practice pages that we have created or the practice pages already supplied by other Japanese educators. For example, I asked third year Japanese students to use professor Kawamura's reading tutor in order to prepare for vocabulary quizzes. They have to supply definitions or explanations of vocabulary items in short Japanese sentences, and the reading tutor has the very useful function of paraphrasing or defining Japanese words in Japanese. The third year students were actively using Professor Kawamura's reading tutor and some students even used it in order to supply other students with unfamiliar vocabulary items in their presentations. So it may be a good idea to familiarize students with an online practice page even if it is easy to use.

3. Classroom project: Japanese Computing

Although the Internet can be very influential and is an effective learning tool for language learners, it is still a bit difficult to make self-study pages since language educators do not have enough time to learn about computers and make websites. So it may be a good idea to integrate the Internet with project work in the classroom. In addition, if classroom instruction is closely connected to a classroom project, students must utilize the Internet, and therefore educators do not have to worry about students not utilizing the Internet.

We can ask students to review their favorite Japanese web page and make a presentation based on their discovery of that site. Also, we can ask students to introduce a good Japanese language-learning page or Japanese culture page. In this way, language educators do not have to build web pages on their own. Students will explore, learn about Japanese culture, make presentations from what they have learned and exchange ideas and opinions.

The E-mail exchange project between Japanese and English speakers is well known and considered to be effective. Through this project, students will exchange ideas and opinions, thereby enhancing their Japanese outside of class. Also, students will prepare a comparative survey that asks perceptive questions of Japanese speakers and their fellow English-speaking students. They can make presentations based on the results.

Before tackling any of the classroom projects mentioned above, we may first want to know if students know enough about Japanese computing in order to fully take advantage of the effectiveness of the Internet. At the University of California, Berkeley, we did an E-mail exchange project with Keio University. Students asked various questions of the students at Keio University and their fellow Berkeley students, then compared the results and made a presentation based on these results. Although E-mail exchange seems simple enough, E-mail exchange in Japanese can be very problematic. (Uehara, Schneider and Omoto 2001) Therefore, I surveyed the students before starting

this project. The survey was done in the fall semester, 2001. Since E-mail projects involve the constant exchange of E-mail between students, I wanted to know if they had a computer and what operating system they used. Since the difficulty of using Japanese depends on the operating system (Omoto, Fukai and Schneider 2002), I wanted to see what the students were using. The results are shown in figure 2.

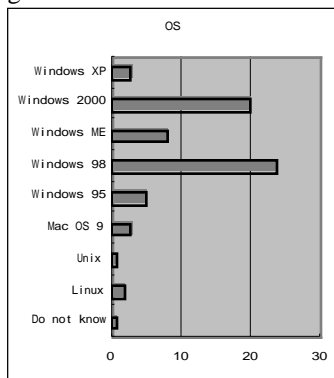


Figure 2

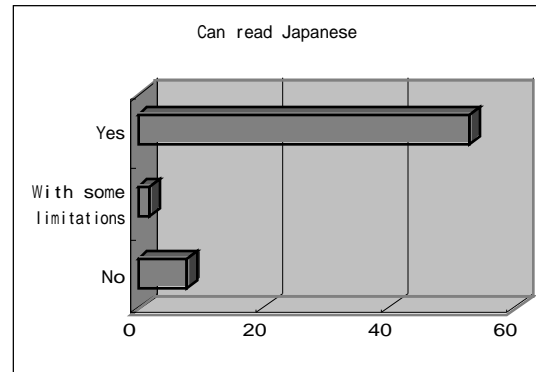


Figure 3

In figure 3, whether students can read Japanese is shown. Since we introduce how to use a word processor in Japanese in second year Japanese, most of the students in class were familiar with how to make their computers Japanese enabled. However, there were some in-coming students who did not take Japanese at the University of California, Berkeley. Furthermore, we asked students if they can write Japanese and the result are shown in figure 4.

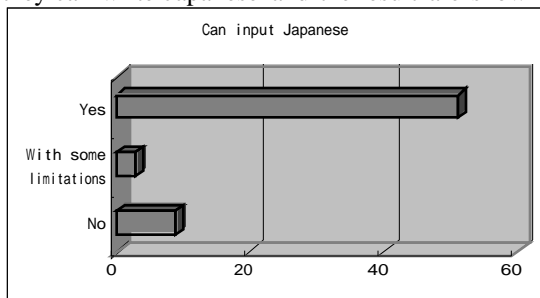


Figure 4

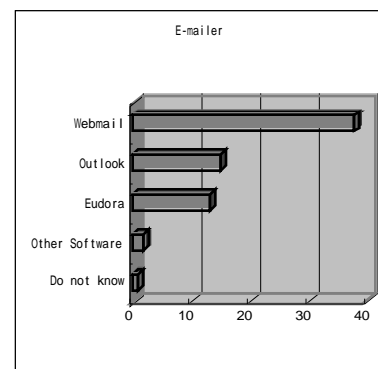


Figure 5

Since it was an E-mail exchange project, I wanted to know what E-mail programs the students use daily. 38 students were using webmail, such as hotmail, yahoo and so on. Some webmail services do not allow one to input Japanese, so when I took the students to the computer lab, I made sure to use webmail services that allow users to input Japanese correctly. As can be seen, knowing the students' computer needs before going to the computer lab saves class time. Also, the teachers can guide students in the right direction and handle problems more efficiently.

3.1 Classroom project: Online newspaper project.

Creating newspapers in Japanese can be a very effective classroom project, and it can help students achieve goals described in the national standards guideline. In addition, this project was tested at several different institutions to see if it could help students improve their Japanese skills. (Ishida and Omoto 2002) In the spring semester of 2002, I asked students to create an online newspaper and then conducted a small survey in the beginning of the semester. Since I needed to know their computing needs, I asked them about their computing situation. Although I had asked similar questions in the fall semester, some students were new and I needed to know if they knew how to make a webpage. There were 62 students in the class and 57 of them replied. Only 5 students could not read Japanese on their computer and 4 students could not input Japanese. 53 students had access to the Internet from home, but 5 students did not. Since some of the students could not access from home, we directed them to both the Macintosh lab and the PC lab.

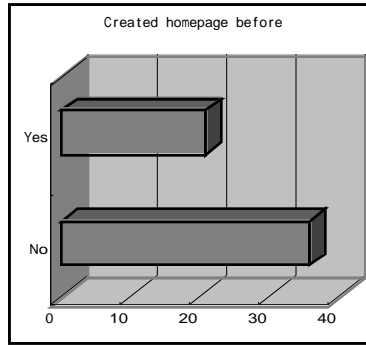


Figure 6

As shown in figure 6, most of the students did not know how to make a webpage, so I decided to hold a workshop dedicated to webpage making, based on this small survey. Since making a homepage in Japanese requires different skills, a workshop was useful even for those who already knew how to make a webpage in English.

3.2 How to motivate students

I have realized that motivation is the most important factor in order for this newspaper project to be successful. When I started this project, it was not necessarily related to what was taught in the classroom, and the weight of this project in the actual grade was very low. Over the years I have increased its weight in the percentage of the grade and made this project as closely linked to what I am teaching in class as possible. (Ishida and Omoto 2002)

In a small survey, I asked the students at the end of the semester in spring of 2002 if the project was rewarding and motivating. 52 students replied. As shown in figure 7, 26 students felt it was rewarding, and 21 students felt it improved their Japanese, as shown in figure 8.

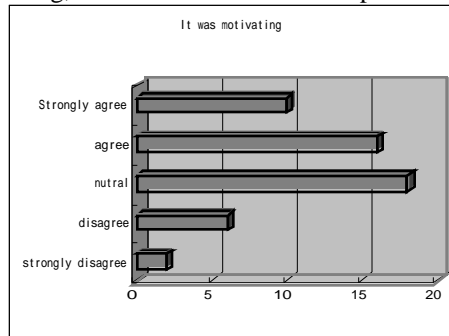


Figure 7

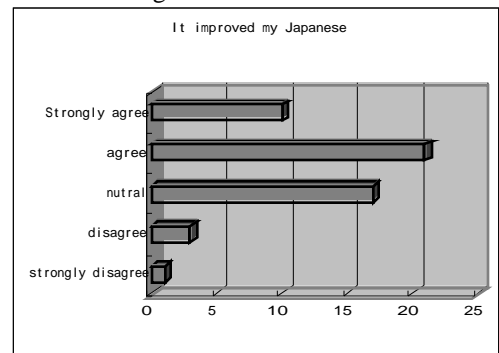


Figure 8

However, as shown in figure 9, 20 students thought 18% of the final grade for this project was high. Since this project was strongly tied in to classroom instruction involving reading Japanese newspapers and speed-reading, and it was connected not only with making newspapers by collaborating with the fellow students and publishing them online, but also with making a presentation based on the newspaper, 16 students thought 18% was not high. Additionally, as shown in figure 10, the students did not think this project was particularly difficult. If it is closely connected to classroom teaching and if we can take care of the students' computing needs early on, students can manage to create a newspaper and publish it online without any difficulties.

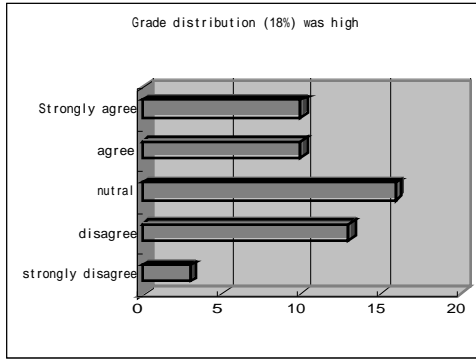


Figure 9

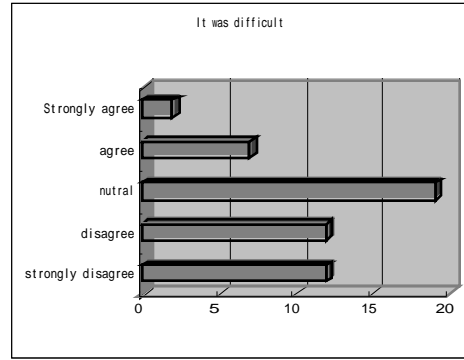


Figure 10

4. Conclusion

Online practice pages on the Internet can be very powerful learning tools for students, but we have to guide them in how to use it effectively. We simply cannot expect students to use online practice pages when we simply set them up and tell them to use it. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for both teachers and learners to know their students' computing needs before starting classroom projects. If we get feedback on the classroom project, we can make improvements.

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