The Influence of Covid-19 on English Education 1:
Focusing on College-level Liberal Arts Curriculum in Japan

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to explore a proper education mode for college-level liberal arts curriculum in Japan during Covid-19 pandemic. This article is the first one of the research series. Due to a time gap in the online teaching mode between China and Japan, the authors believe policies and measures implemented in China can function as a reference for Japanese universities. To achieve the research aim, literature review method was adopted for this research. The major sources of documents are official websites of administrative departments, bureaus of education and universities. The summary of other information mainly refers to China Central Television or websites with high reputation. Policies and measures conducted in China's universities and colleges include a daily zero-reporting surveillance strategy, full lockdown policies, emergency drills, and health codes. Unlike China, Japanese students are recommended to monitor their health but not obligated to report on a daily basis. In addition, installing COCOA is not mandatory for students in most universities and colleges. After extension of the spring semester, universities and colleges tend to conduct online teaching. From June, there has been a tendency of restoring face to face teaching progressively.

Chapter 1 Research Background

（1）The research aim and significance

　　The aim of this research is to explore a proper education mode for college-level liberal arts curriculum in Japan during Covid-19 pandemic. This article is the first one of the research series.

　　In January 2020, Covid-19 broke out across China. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China （equivalent to MEXT）, as the national education administrative department, issued a document titled *Notice of the Ministry of Education on*

the Extension of the 2020 Spring Semester on January 27th. This document requires schools at all levels across the country to extend the opening date of the spring semester in 2020.[1] On January 29th, Ministry of Education issued another official document named *Ministry of Education: ensuring online learning with online platforms during extension period*. It requires all departments of the nation to make every effort to ensure that all students continue to study online from the scheduled opening date.[2] On February 24th, the Ministry of Education stressed that "in principle, students are not allowed to return to universities and courses are not allowed to restart until the pandemic has been effectively under control."[3] Therefore, when most colleges and universities reopen to students, it can be considered that the pandemic has come to the stage of being effectively under control. After gathering the reopening dates of 26 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions (31 in total in mainland China), the authors found that the reopening dates of spring semester in 2020 tended to be centering around 20th to 27th in April and 6th to 11th in May (Li Yihuan and Wu Jieting, 2020; Wuhan University, 2020; Liaoning Radio and Television Station, 2020).

According to the Ministry of Education, the general starting dates of universities in mainland China (except Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region) is from August 15th to October 10th. All schools start in phases and batches.[4] In other words, education in the universities has basically been restored to the usual face-to-face teaching.

On March 24th, MEXT issued a notice named *About the beginning of lectures in the universities for Reiwa 2nd Year*, allowing university courses to be switched from face-to-face teaching to online teaching mode.[5] As of now, education in Japanese universities has not ended online teaching completely.

From the above data, it can be concluded that Chinese universities started online teaching earlier and ended it earlier than their Japanese counterparts. The authors believe that, during this time gap, the measures by Chinese universities to ensure both safety from Covid-19 and usual teaching mode can be used as a reference for liberal arts curriculum in Japanese universities.

At present, regarding English education during covid-19, few studies have been found on Cinii. CNKI, similar to Cinii, offers 50 articles related to this topic but fewer than 10 articles on college English education. Therefore, the authors hope to explore a proper teaching mode for college-level liberal arts curriculum in Japan during Covid-19 pandemic with measures by Chinese universities as a reference.

(2) The research method

Literature review method was adopted for this research. The major sources of documents are official websites of administrative departments, bureaus of education and universities. The summary of other information mainly refers to CCTV (China Central Television) or websites with high reputation.

Chapter 2　A General Introduction of Measures Taken by Universities in China

（1）The first and second semesters

Taking the academic calendar of Peking University as an example, the authors will briefly introduce the whole school year for undergraduates in mainland China from 2019 to 2020.[6] Peking University has two semesters in a year. The semester which begins in Autumn is called the first semester, and the semester which begins in spring is the second semester. The first semester was from August 17th, 2019 to January 12th, 2020, which was the beginning semester of the entire academic year. The winter vacation was from January 12th to February 16th, 2020. The second semester was from February 17th to July 5th, 2020. The summer vacation started from June 22nd. Graduation ceremonies were held between June 30th and July 1st. It must be noted that Chinese university students generally live on campus rather than near universities. Since university dormitories are located inside the university and are under unified management, Chinese universities require students to return on certain days to register for the new semester before courses start. It is usually called the registration day.

By comparison, we can see two differences between Chinese and Japanese universities. First, the first semester in China starts after the summer vacation instead of April, as it does in Japanese Universities. Second, the graduation ceremony of Chinese undergraduates is held between the end of June and beginning of July, while Japanese universities generally conduct it in March.

（2）Measures for reopening the spring semester

In March 2020, *Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Covid-19 for Colleges and Universities* （hereinafter referred as the Guide） was completed and published by the Leading Group for Covid-19 established in the Ministry of Education. *The Guide* includes basic knowledge about Covid-19, the establishment of prevention and control work system in universities, the rules and preparations for the registration day, the day when courses begins and after. The book was designed as a pocket book for students and teachers. The rules are summarized as follows.[7] Students are required to keep in touch with their supervisors and report their whereabouts and health conditions at home. Universities gather the information and determine the registration day. 14 days before the registration day, teachers and students need to report their whereabouts and health condition by health codes or other inquiry applications. Referring to the information, universities create a list of students returning to school in batches. On the registration day, going through a detection area at the university gate, students fill in a form for their health status, show their student ID, submit a certificate for returning to the university and have their body temperature measured. Figure 1 shows the detection area. Since *the Guide* requires students not to go outside campus, the university gate is considered a vital part of the whole prevention and control work

system. After courses start, students are still required to report their health status, even if everything is fine. This is called the daily zero-reporting surveillance strategy. Teachers and students within teaching areas should always wear masks and teachers must avoid close interaction with students. It is recommended that teachers go online for individual counseling and thesis guidance.

Figure 1. The detection area at a university gate （From https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=16738077 16855499524&wfr=spider&for=pc. Accessed July 30th, 2020.）

Henan province is bordered by Hubei province, which is the most severely affected province by Covid-19 in China. In 2019, there were 141 colleges and universities in Henan Province, ranking 4th in the country among 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions in mainland China.[8] The authors will introduce the implementation of *the Guide* in Henan province and Henan University.

According to data provided by the education department of Henan province during an interview on April 17th, 2020, as of 2019, there were a total of 2,279,600 students in Henan province.[9] In the interview, the person in charge pointed out that before the registration day, all universities should have full access to whereabouts and health conditions of teachers and students. Teachers returning from Hubei, Wuhan and other places should be organized to take nucleic acid tests. On the registration day, students return in phases and batches. Temperature detection areas must be set up at the school gate. In principle, students are not allowed to leave campus once they are back. The education department of Henan province requires universities to arrange courses at different periods, and it is more desirable if courses can be conducted for small groups of students. Temperatures of teachers and students must be taken before they enter classrooms. Distance between seats and the use of masks must be ensured.[9]

The vice president of Henan University also introduced specific measures taken by the university in this interview. During the winter vacation, the university created a personal information file for every individual teacher, student and staff. The university has accurately grasped the detailed health information of 4,729 faculty members and 47,170 students （including international students）. Students return to campus in phases and batches. They need to provide certificates of good health conditions for

14 consecutive days by inquiry applications such as 'health codes' before returning to school. On the registration day, their certificate will be confirmed again before the students receive their 'campus health codes'. The campus health code is for entering classrooms, libraries and canteens. In addition, temperature detection machines have been installed at the entrance of teaching buildings. There are also prescribed routes to follow once people enter the building. After courses begin, Henan University implements small group teaching, keeps distance between seats, and encourages teachers to adopt a blended teaching mode and to guide students for independent learning.[9]

（3）Measures for reopening the autumn semester

On August 15th, a representative from the Leading Group for Covid-19 established in the Ministry of Education provided authoritative information on policies for the fall semester during Covid-19 pandemic in an interview. The representative pointed out that in order to 'guarantee usual education and teaching mode', mandatory distancing measures, such as each student's seat maintaining 1 meter's distance from other seats around, will not be applicable in the fall semester. At the same time, the following measures have been added: at the school gate, health codes must be confirmed before allowing students and faculty staff to enter. Students and faculty staff returning from high-risk or medium-risk areas must present the nucleic acid test report issued within the previous week.[10] According to *Technical Plan for the Prevention and Control Work System for Covid-19 in Autumn and Winter for Universities and Colleges*, teachers and students are allowed not to wear masks once they return to campus. At the same time, the lockdown policy has been removed, but students are still required to minimize trips outside campus.[11] In addition, universities and colleges should continue to implement the following measures: first, teachers and students provide a report to the school of their health status and whereabouts for 14 consecutive days before courses begin; second, daily zero-reporting must be implemented; finally, emergency drills are required before the registration day.

Wuhan is the most severely affected area in China, so the day when courses began in Wuhan University received widespread attention. On August 24th, the first batch of 9184 Wuhan University undergraduates returned to classrooms. As of August 25th, more than 15,000 students had returned to Wuhan University. CCTV（similar to NHK）has produced a nearly 25-minute program named *Wuhan University students back to classroom!* for this big event.[12] The program presented the detection area at the school gate where the staff were verifying students' health codes, and in a lecture room, students attending a class with masks. The host also interviewed the vice president of Wuhan University live for measures being taken. The following is a brief introduction of them. The overall goal of Wuhan University is to ensure usual teaching mode while maintaining the lowest risk of Covid-19. In order to prevent imported infections, the lockdown policy is still being implemented. The school gate is, as in spring semester, an

important part for the whole prevention and control work system. On the registration day, students go through the detection area at the school gate for temperature check and disinfection of belongings and then finally receive the Wuhan University health code, as shown in Figure 2. From the day courses begin, Wuhan University continues to implement the daily zero-reporting strategy. Students are required to show their health codes and receive temperature checks when entering teaching buildings, libraries and dormitories. As shown in Figure 3, all students are wearing masks in the lecture room without distancing from their classmates. The library ceased to be open to the public and adopted a seat reservation system for students. At the same time, it has also been equipped with anti-pandemic supplies such as book sterilizers.

Figure 2. A student receiving their Wuhan University health code
（Accessed August 30th, 2020. From http://tv.cctv.com/2020/08/25/VIDE8GM8flLJJYXjT7bEj4DK200825.shtml?srcfrom=shenma）

Figure 3. Students in the lecture room
（Accessed August 30th, 2020. From http://tv.cctv.com/2020/08/25/VIDE8GM8flLJJYXjT7bEj4DK200825.shtml?srcfrom=shenma）

（4）Health codes and other inquiry applications

From the measures by colleges and universities mentioned above, the health code seems to be one of the essential strategies. It serves as a pass for college students to return to campus and to enter teaching buildings and other public places on campus.

The health code is a two-dimensional code of personal health status generated by signing up through applications. Please see figure 4 and figure 5 for details. People are assigned a color code, green, yellow or red, indicating their health status. Green indicates good health condition. Yellow means the need for quarantines for 7 days and red for 14 days. The health code is an innovative system by local governments to efficiently promote people's return to work and schools（He Xinrong and Hu Jiefei, 2020）. According to the data, as of February 26th, the number of Tencent's health code users had reached 700 million.[13]

In addition to the health code, it is also possible to inquire location history through mobile phone text messages. As shown in Figure 6, when a student enters "CXMYD#0974" and sends it to the telecommunications company, the student will receive travel information that he has visited Guangyuan City, Sichuan Province within the past 14 days.

Figure 4. The green health code
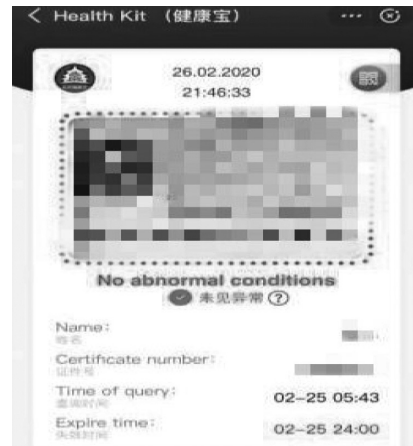（Chinese version）

Figure 5. The green health code
（International version）

Since students come from all over the country, how to obtain prompt warnings about Covid-19 on the way back to school has become very important. Covid-19 Patient Trip Data shown in Figure 7 and Figure 8 are two common inquiry tools. Students just need to enter the date and the train or flight number at the homepage, and it will notify them in case of a match. Students can also use the Personal Covid-19 Map for risks in their surroundings. Figure 8 shows a student's map in a certain area in Shanghai. The places marked with a red virus symbol indicates Covid-19 patients. Students can avoid approaching those areas.

In short, the cloud technology such as the health code visualizes Covid-19. It helps students to travel safer, and enables a more accurate and efficient prevention and control work system for universities and colleges in the coronavirus fight.
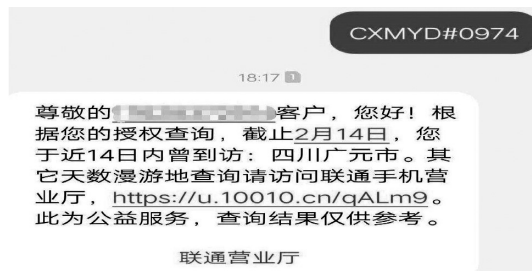

Figure 6. Inquiring whereabouts through mobile phone text messages
（From https://www.sohu.com/a/373322044_707611. Accessed July 10th, 2020）

Figure 7. Covid-19 Patient Trip Data
(From http://2019ncov.nosugartech.com/
search.html. Accessed July 10th, 2020)

Figure 8. Personal Covid-19 Map
(From http://5b0988e595225.cdn.sohucs.com/
images/20200211/a3e7eba3caa94f67bc754bcd
b7687c46.jpeg. Accessed July 10th, 2020)

Chapter 3　A General Introduction of Measures Taken by Universities in Japan

（1）A summary of the extension of the spring semester and teaching modes

Since MEXT announced on March 24th that courses were allowed to be switched from face-to-face teaching to online teaching, it has conducted five surveys on the extension of the spring semester and teaching modes on national universities, public universities, private universities and technical colleges.[14]

The first survey was conducted on April 23rd, with a total of 804 universities and colleges participating in the survey. The findings on the extension of the spring semester show that universities and colleges that have extended their starting days take up 88.7%, and the rest have already started courses. The findings on teaching modes show that 59.5% of universities and colleges are implementing online teaching, with 1.4% not implementing online teaching. The rest are still under discussion on whether to implement online teaching mode.

The second survey was conducted on May 12th, with a total of 1046 universities and colleges participating in the survey. The findings on the extension of the spring semester show that universities and colleges that have extended their starting days take up 88.9%, and the rest have already started courses. The findings on teaching modes show that 67.7% of universities and colleges are implementing online teaching, with 1.1% not implementing online teaching. The rest are still under discussion on whether to implement online teaching mode.

The third survey was conducted on May 20th, with a total of 890 universities and colleges participating in the survey. The findings on the extension of the spring

semester show that universities and colleges that are still extending their starting days take up 2.9%, and the rest have all started courses. The findings on teaching modes show that 90.0% of universities and colleges are implementing online teaching, with 6.8% implementing blended teaching. And 3.1% are conducting face-to-face teaching mode.

The fourth survey was conducted on June 1st, with a total of 1069 universities and colleges participating in the survey. The findings on the extension of the spring semester show that universities and colleges that still extending their starting days or have suspended their courses take up 0.3%, and the rest have all started courses. The findings on teaching modes show that 60.1% of universities and colleges are implementing online teaching, with 30.2% implementing blended teaching. And 9.7% are conducting face-to-face teaching mode.

The fifth survey was conducted on July 1st, with a total of 1069 universities and colleges participating in the survey. The findings on the extension of the spring semester show that all the universities and colleges have already started courses. The findings on teaching modes show that 23.8% of universities and colleges are implementing online teaching, with 60.1% implementing blended teaching. And 16.2% are conducting face-to-face teaching mode.

From the findings above, it can be implied that universities and colleges tend to extend their starting days. Comparing the second and third survey, universities and colleges that have extended their starting days restart school from 13th to 19th in May. With universities and colleges restarting courses, 90% chose to implement online teaching and 6.8% were blended teaching mode. Coronavirus emergency was declared over in Japan on 25th in May.[15] From the fourth survey conducted on June 1st, the percentage for online teaching mode dropped to 60.1% while blended teaching mode rose to 30.2%. After one month, in the fifth survey, the percentage for online teaching mode continued to drop to 23.8%. Blended teaching mode, on the other hand, rose to 60.1%. It can be implied that the pandemic has been gradually brought under control, and universities and colleges across the country are progressively resuming face-to-face teaching mode.

⑵ An overview of measures by universities and colleges in Chugoku region

Since the authors' university belongs to Chugoku region, this research will focus on 7 universities and colleges in this area.

Hiroshima University is a national comprehensive university located in Hiroshima prefecture. Hiroshima University started online teaching from April 8th. After issuing *Hiroshima University's Policy to prevent spread of Covid-19* on April 22nd, it has been updated three times (Hiroshima University, 2020). From Table 1, it can be implied that since July 1st, the teaching mode and policy for entering campus have been resuming to normal under certain conditions. In addition, the official website provides a health status confirmation questionnaire/movements record sheets for students. In

case of emergency, students need to report to their supervisors and then from their supervisors to higher authorities.

Shimane University, with one campus in Matsue city and another in Izumo city, is a comprehensive national university located in Shimane prefecture. Shimane University started online teaching from May 7th. Notices on measures for Covid-19 was released in April and July, with *Shimane University's Policy to prevent spread of Covid-19* issued on September 1st (Shimane University, 2020a). The authors made a summary in Table 2. In addition, the official website provides a health status confirmation record sheets for students. A notice on the importance of installing COVID-19 Contact Confirming Application (COCOA) developed by Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare was put on the official website on June 22nd (Shimane University, 2020b).

Table 1. A brief summary of *Hiroshima University's Policy to prevent spread of Covid-19*

Date	Range of restric- tion	Teaching mode	Rules for entering campus	Others
Apr. 22nd	A wide range	Online teaching	Banned in principle	
Jul. 1st	A certain range	Online teaching in principle, with face-to-face activities resumed progressively; Face-to face courses conducted at large lecture hall and students taking courses every other week.	Banned if no masks	Certain subjects can conduct face to face tests. Absence for face-to face classes due to health problems can be excused.
Aug. 12th	Idem	Online teaching in principle, with face-to-face activities resumed progressively;	Masks required in principle; If outside and a distance of 2 meters from others, masks are not mandatory.	
Sep. 3rd	Idem	Idem	Idem	

Table 2. A summary of Shimane University's measures and policy for Covid-19

Date	Range of restriction	Teaching mode	Rules for entering campus
Apr.13th	A certain range	Online teaching	
Jul.1st	Idem	Idem	Masks are mandatory. (Matsue campus) Students can enter classrooms and laboratories with permission beforehand. (Izumo campus) Banned in principle
Sep.1st	Idem	With online teaching mode as mainstream, courses can switch to face-to-face teaching with permission.	Allowed with sufficient infection prevention measures

The University of Shimane is a comprehensive public university located in Shimane prefecture. It has one campus in Hamada city, one in Matsue city and one in Izumo city. Courses at The University of Shimane restarted in 11th May, with online teaching as the main teaching mode. *The University of Shimane's Policy to prevent spread of Covid-19 in education, research and others* was issued on June 11th (The University of Shimane, 2020). Because one student from Izumo campus contracted Covid-19, in the updated version released on August 6th, stricter policy was made regarding part-time jobs and the installation of COCOA for students from the Izumo campus. Please refer to Table 3.

Table 3. A summary of *The University of Shimane's Policy to prevent spread of Covid-19 in education, research and others*

Date	Teaching mode	Rules for entering campus	Others
Jun.11th	Mainly online teaching	Allowed with sufficient infection prevention measures	Online teaching mode or assignments are available for students who cannot attend face to face lectures.
Aug.6th	idem	idem	Regarding part-time jobs: (Hamada and Matsue campus) students refrain from high risk workplaces (Izumo campus) Students with part-times jobs report to TAs, install COCOA and banned from high risk workplaces

Hiroshima Shudo University is a comprehensive private university in Hiroshima prefecture. The university conducted online teaching in principle and released *Hiroshima Shudo University's Policy to prevent spread of Covid-19* on June 1st, which was updated on July 10th (Hiroshima Shudo University, 2020a). The official website also provides *a health monitoring and whereabouts record sheet* for students to conduct daily health check and keep a detailed record of their routine. To support students in online learning, the university released *A manual for online teaching software* on April 24th (Hiroshima Shudo University, 2020b). The manual offer instructions for six kinds of software such as Zoom and Moodle step by step with pictures and texts.

National Institute of Technology, Matsue College is a national technical college in Shimane prefecture. Face to face teaching was conducted during the first one week but then suspended until May 18th. The college switched to on demand teaching mode until August 5th. After summer break, which is from 6th to 30th in August, students were allowed to return in batches. The college has decided to conduct face to face teaching in the next semester. The official website provides *a health checklist and record sheet*. On July 6th, A notice was released requiring all students to install COCOA for Covid-19 prevention during face to face courses. For those who are too upset to return, the college, in the *Policy to prevent spread of Covid-19 release* on July 28th, has reassured them that their school had implemented sufficient infection prevention measures (National Institute of Technology, Matsue College, 2020).

Chapter 4　Summary

The authors first introduced policies and measures conducted in the first and second semesters in China's universities and colleges. In the first semester, all universities and colleges extended their starting day and switched to online teaching across the nation (Huang Ronghuai et al., 2020). When courses were taken online, universities and colleges implemented a daily zero-reporting surveillance strategy requiring students to report their health status even if everything is fine. Since students generally live on campus and dormitories are located inside the university, full lockdown policies are being implemented after students' return. Emergency drills must be conducted before the registration day when students return and register for the new semester. Universities and colleges tend to allow students back in batches. On the registration day, at the school gate, everyone follows the rule of presenting their health codes and having their temperature measured. Even after courses begin, health codes, measuring temperature and daily zero-reporting system remain routine.

About 90% of Japanese universities and colleges extended their spring semester. Unlike their Chinese counterparts, Japanese students can choose to live near the campus. They are recommended to monitor their health but not obligated to report on a daily basis. In addition, installing COCOA is not mandatory for students in most universities and colleges. After extension of the spring semester, universities and colleges tend to conduct online teaching. From June, there has been a tendency of restore face to face teaching progressively.

This research is the first one of the research series aiming to explore a proper education pattern for college-level liberal arts curriculum in Japan during Covid-19 pandemic. As the beginning of the research series, this article mainly focused on policies and measures before and after the starting day of new semesters, instead of those for curriculums. In the following article, the authors plan to collect sources regarding adjustments in terms of teaching modes, textbook adaption and evaluation in Japan and China during Covid-19 outbreak.

Notes

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