

Renée Sawazaki Strengthening Ties Between Surugadai
University and California State
University, East Bay

English for specific purposes (ESP), namely academic and professional, is a fast growing area in the field of foreign language education. In recent years, a growing body of textbooks, conferences, and special interest groups within professional organizations can be found for ESP studies. As a specialist in foreign language education who was transferred within Surugadai University to the newly created Faculty of Contemporary Culture's Tourism and Hospitality Program in 2009, I found myself in the position of needing to gain specialty knowledge in both the tourism and hospitality industry, as well as study recent language education trends for ESP. Applying for a sabbatical in 2010 to conduct these studies prior to being assigned lecture courses such as Tourism and Foreign Language for both English and French (観光と外国語II/IV) and a seminar course (演習I/II) proved to be ideal for the necessary preparation.

During a 2008 visit to California State University, East Bay (CSUEB), just after my departmental change had been confirmed, I was introduced to a hospitality specialist, Gary Freund, who was teaching classes in the Intensive English Program at CSUEB. He was doing exactly what I was expected to do from 2011: Teach non-native English speakers the basics of English for the tourism and hospitality industry, as well as helping them gain hands-on experience in the field. A timely introduction to Mr. Freund opened the way for me to study for a year under his tutelage and as a visiting scholar in the California State University, East Bay's Department of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism (HRT). Surugadai University and CSUEB have been partner institutions since 2007. Although Surugadai University students have been studying at CSUEB since that time, no scholarly exchange had taken place until that time. It is my hope that other scholars will be able to conduct studies at their partner institution in years to come.

I focused on three primary areas during this one-year research period. First of all, this opportunity provided me with the chance to learn about this partner institution's unique approach to teaching hospitality, recreation and tourism, and to share its approach with fellow Surugadai University specialists in these fields. The Department of HRT's program is the only American hospitality program that can be completed completely on-line. The faculty, who are either practitioners or researchers with former professional experience, work hard to ensure that the students engage in deep discussions on-line, have opportunities to meet on-campus, and engage in professional skills-building projects.

Not only did I learn about how to create a successful university program and about course design, but I also learned a great deal about off-campus studies. Exposing students to workplace practices and networking with professionals is an integral component of the Department of HRT's program. Faculty support students' engagement in the following areas: Part-time job and internship placement, company visits and job shadows, and study programs and conference participation in professional organizations. By talking with professors about how they set up these activities and by also being invited to attend company visits and professional association functions, I learned firsthand just how to incorporate these activities into classes at Surugadai University.

A third area of my studies involved learning about the tourism and hospitality industry in the San Francisco Bay area and greater northern California. After having experienced how the faculty set up visits with professionals, I conducted several on my own. In addition, I recorded tours and collected brochures at famous sight-seeing spots with the vision of using this data to make English language learning materials.

Most teachers of ESP either have experience in the specific field or are a specialist in English language education. It is quite rare to have experience and knowledge in both. I feel extremely fortunate to have been given the opportunity to create a balanced foundation in order to benefit Surugadai University students.