

# 英語模擬国連の参加準備におけるシミュレーションとロールプレイについて

## English Model UN: Preparing, Participating and Reflecting

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本稿では、Model United Nations (MUN) のコンセプトについて説明し、MUNにおいてSUACの学生が経験したことを紹介します。日本で行う英語のMUN (JEMUN) に参加する多くの大学は、このイベントの準備のために専門のコースが設けていますが、SUACにはそのようなコースはありません。したがって、SUACの教師と学生は授業以外の空いている時間を見つけ出して準備をする必要があります。本稿では、まず、教師が使用する主なシミュレーションとロールプレイの方法についての説明をします。次に、JEMUNに参加した学生を対象に、JEMUNの印象とその経験について調査した質的研究の結果を示します。この調査の主な目的は、JEMUNが学生にとってどのような経験となり得たのかを調べることでした。もう一つの目的は、シミュレーションとロールプレイを使った準備が学生から肯定的に捉えられているかどうかを判断することでした。結果として、JEMUNに参加することは大きなチャレンジであったにもかかわらず、その経験が学生にとって間違いなく肯定的なものであることが分かりました。

In this paper the author explains the concept behind Model United Nations (MUN) and then describes the experience of Shizuoka University of Art and Culture (SUAC) students at a high-level all-English MUN in Japan. While many universities that send students to participate in this Japanese English MUN (JEMUN) have dedicated courses to prepare them for the event, SUAC does not. Therefore, teachers and students are required to prepare for the event on their own time outside of a regular course. This paper will illustrate the methods, primarily extensive simulation and role-play, teachers use to prepare SUAC students for JEMUN. Then, the paper will describe the results of a qualitative study that investigated student impressions of, and learning at, JEMUN. This research was undertaken primarily to determine the positives and negatives of the overall experience. An ancillary goal was to determine if the simulation and role-play techniques were seen as effective by students in preparing them for JEMUN. Results suggest that, despite significant challenges, the overall experience of JEMUN has indeed been positive for students. Participants cited an increase in content knowledge, a better ability to express their opinions and a readiness to take an alternative perspective as examples of positives of the experience.

### Introduction

In late June 2012, a group of five Shizuoka University of Art and Culture (SUAC) students, along with two instructors serving as faculty advisers, participated in an inter-university English Model United Nations (MUN) at Kinki University in Osaka, Japan. That first group had an overwhelmingly positive experience and SUAC students have been stalwart and active participants in English MUN events every year since. In June 2018, eighteen SUAC students were among the 316 students - 224 Japanese and 92 international - who participated in the inter-university English JEMUN (Japan English Model United Nations) at Kindai University in Osaka.

The purposes of this paper are the following:

1. to briefly explain the MUN
2. to illustrate how SUAC students prepare for the event
3. to describe the results of a study that qualitatively investigated student learning at JEMUN

MUN events are “experiential learning programs that provide students with a better understanding of the inner workings of the UN and a forum to hone skills in diplomacy, negotiation, critical thinking, compromise, public speaking, writing, and research” (Haack, 2008).

MUN events are held throughout the world in multiple languages, including Japanese. However, the MUN that SUAC students participate in is conducted entirely in English hence the name JEMUN (Japan English Model United Nations). One important feature of MUNs is that they are run entirely by students themselves. Teachers are designated as faculty advisers and offer support and guidance only when necessary. The student leaders, referred to as ‘Chairs,’ make sure the conference runs smoothly by keeping to a strict schedule and enforcing UN procedural rules. A big part of enforcing the rules involves ensuring that delegates follow actual UN procedure and use the correct UN language. This requires that all participants be familiar with UN procedures and language. How the advisors familiarize the SUAC participants with UN procedures and language and prepare them for the conference will be discussed later in this paper.

All MUN events are simulations of one part of the actual United Nations process. Most students assume the role of the ambassador of an assigned country, referred to as a “delegate,” to the United Nations and debate issues ranging from world conflict and international security, to human rights and the 17 SDG’s. Through these exchanges, delegates are able to develop and refine skills such as collaboration, decision-making,

critical thinking and verbal communication. Participants must research the position of their assigned country on various issues and advocate for the position of that country. They then seek ways, through diplomacy and negotiation, in which the world community can collaborate to deal with various global issues in a multilateral way. Young people from diverse backgrounds participate in these educational exercises to experience first-hand decision-making and diplomatic work.

Participants at JEMUN experience an entirely authentic simulation of first-hand decision-making and diplomatic work at the United Nations. According to Yashima (2009), participation in an MUN can be useful in promoting an "international posture" and developing important skills increasingly coveted in the twenty-first century. MUN events are ideal for universities, like SUAC, that have an interest in promoting global education and strengthening the English skills of its students. JEMUN is a rare opportunity to expose students to peers, not only from Japan, but from countries and cultures all over the world with many different styles of learning and communicating, all without going overseas.

JEMUN takes place over three very intensive days in which delegates represent, and advocate for, the views and policies of their assigned country. During official activities at JEMUN, students are addressed, not by name, but as the delegate of their assigned country for the entire event. For example, a student from Japan may be assigned to represent "Columbia." At all times, they must advocate for and promote the views and policies of Columbia, even if those policies disagree with their own personal views. They will be addressed as "the delegate from Columbia" during the event. This can be very illuminating for students. As they participate in these MUN activities, the student delegates are simultaneously participating in imagined communities of practice outside the normal learning context (Wenger, 1999).

All delegates belong to one committee and one regional bloc. The committee is related to the theme of that MUN (for example "A Healthy not Hungry World") and the regional bloc is based on the geographic location of their assigned country. For example, a student may be assigned to represent "Kenya" and be placed in the "Closing the Financial Services Gap" committee. That student would also belong to the "Africa" regional bloc. The committee and regional blocs take turns meeting over the course of the three days. The "Closing the Financial Services Gap" committee might meet for one hour to share information and discuss issues. After that, delegates might meet in their regional blocs (Africa,

Asia etc.) for another hour to gather and share information, find any common issues they all face and discuss the issues raised in their committees. At JEMUN, one room typically has five committees and five regional blocs with about twelve delegates on each for a total of 60 or so delegates. JEMUN and other MUN events usually have several rooms working simultaneously with many hundred participants.

Student delegates are always notified of their assigned country, their committee and their regional bloc well in advance of the MUN. This is to allow delegates to do the extensive research about their countries' policies and positions on the topics under discussion at the event. In order to productively participate, delegates must learn their country's positions and learn to articulate those positions in English in their committee and regional bloc at the MUN. It can sometimes be challenging for student delegates to advocate the positions of their assigned country if they personally disagree with those views. For example, a student may be assigned to represent a country that does not have a democratic system of government and pays lip service to the human rights of its own citizens. By requiring student delegates to research, understand and, ultimately, champion positions they may find distasteful or even abhorrent is one way in which MUN simulations offer active learning and active thinking opportunities to students. This contributes to deep learning by giving students concrete experience and active experimentation (Kolb, 1994).

By the end of the conference, each committee produces a non-binding written resolution suggesting some steps to address the problem under discussion at the event. The ten or so delegate members of that committee, representing their assigned country's positions, must contribute to and agree upon all the language in the resolution. It is important that all resolutions reflect the positions of all the members of that committee as they are its sponsors. For example, a delegate from a country with very conservative and patriarchal policies on the "Promoting Female Education" committee would have to very carefully vet any language in the resolution their committee writes. Next, the committee members explain their resolution to the other delegates in the room. Finally, delegates vote to adopt or reject the resolution at the end of the conference. As should be evident, discussion, debate, negotiation, ability to articulate one's position and compromise are all very important skills that participants develop during the conference. Hazelton (1984, 98) states that students "learn valuable lessons about political bargaining, the difficulty in reaching a decision, the need for coalition building, persuading others to follow one's interests and

fending off hostile interests, and the need for pragmatism.”



SUAC student reading her speech at JEMUN

## Preparation

The theme of the the 2018 JEMUN conference focused on sustainable development goal 2 - Zero hunger and sustainable development goal 3 - Good health and well-being. The SUAC JEMUN team is usually composed of a mix of first-timers and returning participants. For example, in 2018, there were eleven first-time participants and seven returning participants. Returnees are a useful resource and can be very helpful in answering questions and calming nervous peers who will be participating for the first time. Based on experience, however, it is unrealistic to rely solely on more experienced classmates and self-study to prepare for such an intensive and stressful event. As such, each year teachers organize and run six JEMUN prep sessions in the weeks before the actual event to help prepare students. The prep sessions are actual simulations of an MUN in which each student role-plays being a delegate of their assigned country. Some of the goals are to:

- Explain the procedures and procedural language of the MUN.
- Make sure students understand the different committee topics, especially their own assigned committee.
- Ensure that students research their assigned country's positions on the issues to be discussed at the MUN.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice articulating their assigned country's positions.

All prep sessions follow the same methodology whereby the classroom is configured in the MUN style with the instructor, serving as the "chair," at the front and all students, as country delegates, sitting in assigned seats corresponding to the country they are representing.

As noted above, all of the sessions are simulations of the actual MUN and students are addressed, not by name, but as the delegate of their assigned country from the beginning of the very first simulation. For example, a student is addressed as "the delegate from Canada" rather than "Naaki." The prep sessions promote holistic learning and require students to interact and collaborate in order to play an effective role at the actual MUN event. Tasks in the prep sessions are scaffolded and systematically designed to go from easier to more difficult over the six sessions as students gain in knowledge and confidence. In the first few simulations, instructors explicitly teach the flow of an MUN, the rules of procedure and formulaic procedural phrases. This is to familiarize student delegates with the language they will actually hear at the event. At the beginning of each session, roll call is taken by the teacher (acting as the chair) and students, as country delegates, raise placards with the name of the country they are representing to indicate they are present. The teacher then goes over the schedule and goals for the session. Students are free to ask questions but they must raise their placards and be acknowledged by the chair before being allowed to ask their question. The chair will then respond to any student comments or questions. All tasks are broken down into clear and achievable parts and presented to student delegates with support that is slowly removed over the weeks. This is part of the principle of scaffolded instruction in which assistance is slowly removed as students gain in knowledge and confidence. Wood (1976) describes scaffolding as "providing assistance to students to help them achieve what otherwise would be too difficult for them."

An example of the scaffolding used in these sessions is that procedural terminology is introduced piecemeal over the six meetings, rather than all at once, so students are not overwhelmed by so many new and unfamiliar terms. Also, information about how and where to find resources, the explicit teaching of content vocabulary related to the MUN agenda, how to write a position paper (a summary of a country's position on the issues to be discussed at the event) and how to effectively negotiate, are all gradually but methodically introduced. Pronunciation and intonation of procedural terminology and country names may also be corrected in the prep sessions. Another example of scaffolding being slowly removed is that the role-play cards students receive for each prep session contain less and less explanatory information as the sessions go on. The purpose of this is that, as students become more comfortable in the sessions, they require less assistance carrying out their role-play tasks.

Kirschner et al. (2006) found that structured scaffolded

learning experiences lead to specific outcomes while at the same time empowering students. Empowering students to be able to successfully and actively participate at the MUN is the ultimate goal of the prep sessions described above. It is hoped and expected that by the later prep sessions students are sufficiently empowered to require less scaffolding, less explicit teaching and support, and to overcome most difficulties by themselves. The careful and systematic organization of the prep sessions allow the instructors to design the specific outcome they want students to achieve.

The scaffolded material serves as a “bridge …to build upon what students already know, to arrive at something they do not know” (Benson, 1997). In the first three or four simulations, the student delegates role-play cards may have a relatively simple task to complete in that session. Examples of role-play tasks students are asked to complete include:

- make a motion (a “suggestion” in official MUN procedural language) to set the length of delegate speeches
- ask a question about the theme of the MUN event
- propose meeting in regional blocs to share information with other delegates
- suggest breaking up into committee groups to discuss the event theme
- confirm information about event procedures.
- make a short, formal speech introducing and sharing some basic facts about your assigned country.

As alluded to above, in the first few sessions, the role-play tasks have language support provided (i.e., actual language to read verbatim from the role-play card) which is removed in the later sessions. Haack (2008) notes that the scaffolding needs to be strong if students are to “achieve deep learning as they construct and create meaning of the world around them.” However, this scaffolding is systematically removed and tasks get increasingly more challenging over the prep sessions. For example, in a later prep session student delegates are given a role-play card (with no language support of any kind) requiring them to share detailed information about their country’s positions on the issues to be discussed at the MUN.

In these simulations, everything is timed including the length of speeches and all discussions in committees and regional blocs. This is another way in which scaffolding is provided in that the instructors are not too strict about keeping to the time schedule in the first few sessions but become more strict in later sessions as students become accustomed to the MUN environment. Timing everything and moving fast is another way in which the sessions are designed to prepare student

delegates for the rapid-fire and potentially overwhelming pace of the actual MUN.

Each week student delegates are also given short homework assignments about their assigned country which progress from gathering basic facts (demographics, ethnic groups, religions, resources, alliances and trading partners , etc.) to more difficult questions requiring them to articulate their countries policy on the specific topics to be discussed in the five committees in their room at JEMUN.

## Method

Immediately after JEMUN in June 2018, a questionnaire was given to the eighteen participating SUAC students. Roughly three months later, a similar, follow-up questionnaire was also given to the students. Open coding, used to generate initial concepts from data, was used to compare responses to the two questionnaires and qualitatively analyze student learning at JEMUN. Reflective responses were grouped, identified, and sorted into conceptual categories and these descriptive categories form a framework for analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe open coding as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (p. 61). The three main questions analyzed from the questionnaire were:

- What was the best part of JEMUN?
- What was the most difficult or challenging part of JEMUN?
- How did you improve as a result of JEMUN?

## Results and Discussion

Responses of SUAC JEMUN participants to the above three open-ended questions will be discussed in this section. A number of students provided multiple responses.



SUAC students in Committee discussion at JEMUN

## Best part of the MUN

The question “What was the best part of JEMUN?” received fourteen responses which were coded into four categories. For the first category, Communicative skills and willingness to communicate, representative comments include “communicating with people from other countries and universities was the best part for me,” and “working with many kinds of people was interesting.” Another student commented that, “making many friends from foreign countries” was the best part for them. Still another student noted that, “making new friends” and “meeting different people” was the best part. A common theme among these comments is the huge value of JEMUN in allowing Japanese students to meet like-minded peers from not only other parts of Japan but also overseas. It can be easy to overlook how much students really do value authentic opportunities to use English and to meet others with similar interests and goals.

The second category was Multiple perspectives/Awareness/Value of Knowledge and one student indicated, “negotiating with other delegates was the best thing for me because we can share our opinion and if other delegates disagree with us, we can also think about the problem from other points of view.” This suggests an expanded worldview and student growth through participation in JEMUN; something that Zenuk-Nishide and Tatsuki (2012) describe as an imagined international community. Category three was Sense of Accomplishment. The following two student comments in particular indicate pride in successfully completing a challenging task; “finishing making our committees working paper (report) was a great feeling” and “working with my committee and regional bloc colleagues was so enjoyable.” The fourth category was Expanded Opportunities to Use English. Students noted their satisfaction in “speaking with so many interesting people in English” and that they “could use English with so many people so freely.”

## Most difficult or challenging part of the MUN

The responses to this question were categorized into four different areas. The first, Discussion/Negotiation skills, is hardly surprising because successful participation in JEMUN requires student delegates to actively negotiate with their peers if they hope to achieve anything. Representative comments included “talking with people who have a different opinion than me was interesting,” “having to negotiate with people who have different positions or opinions than me was a big challenge,” and “it was difficult, but fun, to discuss the issues in English.” The difficulty likely stems from both a

lack of opportunity for students to express their opinion on important issues in Japanese combined with an even greater shortage of chances to do so in English. The fact that committee groups at JEMUN consisted of twelve members, all wanting to be heard, makes the following comment about how challenging that was perfectly understandable: “Meeting and discussing with colleagues in Committee and Regional Bloc was the most difficult thing.” As Kille (2002), McIntosh (2001) and Schaap (2005) all have noted, MUN’s are negotiation simulations that lend themselves to examining conflict/cooperation and power/representation. The difficulties student delegates faced at JEMUN remind us how challenging what they are asked to do actually is.

The next category was Difficulty of learning pre-conference/Learning the Schedule. One comment regarding difficulty was that “not having enough general knowledge made me sad.” This gives a hint at how challenging JEMUN is on multiple levels. Student delegates must not only do deep and broad research into the country they are representing. They must also know the JEMUN conference theme well. Further, they must also learn about all the committee topics in their room so as to offer their input to all committees. As if this were not enough, they must be able to discuss all of the above while advocating for their country’s position entirely in English for the entire event. Considering this, it is somewhat surprising that only one student mentioned general knowledge as the most difficult part of JEMUN. The busy and very full schedule did prompt another student delegate to note that, “following the busy schedule” was the biggest challenge for them. The third category was Difficulty of speaking English. Comments included, “communicating with others in English was hard because I couldn’t say what I wanted to say” and “expressing my opinion in English was the most difficult part.” Another student noted that, “speaking English with Japanese people” was the most challenging part of JEMUN. This can of course seem unnatural and one important way JEMUN endeavors to avoid the problem is to make sure there are an equal number of Japanese and non-Japanese students on every committee. This means that there will always be plenty of non-Japanese native speakers to communicate with. This should, in turn, increase the need to use English as a lingua franca and reduce awkwardness in speaking English among Japanese. “Writing” was an area which four students found to be the most difficult part of JEMUN. As was mentioned in the Introduction, one vital part of JEMUN is that, at the end of the event, each committee produces a written resolution with suggested actions to address a specific problem. This resolution should refer to previously adopted, actual UN resolutions for support and continuity and cite any

precedents that relate to the current resolution. Doing all of the above, while also writing in formal UN-speak, makes it understandable that the four comments all referred to the challenge of “writing the draft resolution (report) in English.”

### Improvements

Appendix C shows the qualitative analysis of the responses to the question “How did you improve as a result of JEMUN?” There were eighteen responses and they were coded into five categories. In the first category, Improved Knowledge, there were four responses. One student delegate noted that, “I learned more about the world and now I want to study even more” while another expressed satisfaction with having “learned a lot by researching my country and committee topic.” Other students mentioned, “my understanding of world issues improved” and “I realized the world is much wider and bigger than I imagined.” There were six responses in the second category Improved Confidence/Motivation. One comment illustrates a student delegate overcoming their fear and ultimately having a very positive experience, “I was able to say my opinion and helped manage the group even though I was really scared because it was my first time.” One student found motivation in the skill level of their peers, “The high English level of other students makes me want to study more.” Another participant enjoyed the opportunity to not only work on improving their English, but also to broaden their horizons, “I understand I must improve not only my English but also my knowledge of the world.” Four responses were deemed appropriate for the Improved Communicative Skills category. Two representative comments were “I feel that my vocabulary expanded and I am now better able to express myself” and “I had never said my opinion in English before and I feel I improved this ability.” Two responses were deemed worthy of the category titled, ‘Using English has become a natural part of my life’. The students mentioned, “Meeting and talking easily with students from all over the world and “I could learn the actual level of my English skills.” These comments suggest progress in their evolution as citizens in a truly globalized world and awareness of themselves and their abilities in relation to others in their peer group. The final category, Willingness to Communicate in English/Reduced Anxiety saw two responses. This category is related to both the concept of the “international posture” noted by Yashima (2009), as mentioned earlier, and in encouraging a willingness to communicate. The concept of willingness to communicate refers to the idea that language learners who are willing to communicate in the second language actively look for chances to, and actually do, communicate. One student commented, “I tried speaking English as much

as possible and participating in discussions.” The other student noted how they, “felt comfortable speaking to people in English.” This is encouraging because, as MacIntyre et al. (1998) state, a willingness to communicate is “the ultimate goal of the learning process.”



SUAC students at JEMUN

### Conclusion

As an instructor preparing students for JEMUN each year I feel that the most important things are for everyone to have a valuable and positive experience, to actively participate and, hopefully, to expand their horizons. The results of this study suggest the JEMUN experience inspired a number of positive changes in several students. Specific examples include an increase in content knowledge, improved communicative competence, better ability to express opinions, a readiness to take an alternative perspective, and an increased willingness to communicate. All the SUAC student delegates were forced to, and did, raise the level of their game. They did their best to express the positions of their country and worked sincerely to reach agreements that truly represented their country's interests. This supports Yashima's (2007, 2009) findings that taking part in an MUN helps learners to have a strong desire to communicate what they have learned from their research.

The fact that JEMUN is experiential and not a series of classroom-based, teacher-led lessons allows the language students use to naturally become more realistic and personalized. Once the event gets started, for the most part, knowledge at JEMUN is constructed in a social context in which students are responsible for their own learning without recourse to their teachers. This means that delegates must take implicit responsibility for themselves and their learning and the overwhelming majority do so. Learning outside the

classroom in a truly international environment is a valuable component of a 21st century university curriculum. Ultimately, as long as students learn a little about the issues, broaden their horizons a bit, have a good overall experience and hopefully make friends, participating in JEMUN can always be judged beneficial. Perhaps it would be fitting to allow a student have the final say about their experience at JEMUN 2018: "It was so hard at first but also so exciting. It was a really nice experience for me. I want to participate again next year!"

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**Appendix A: "Best part of JEMUN"**

Category Sub-categories	Examples of student comments
Communicative Skills and Willingness to Communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To talk with other countries students</li> <li>- We could meet and talk with new friends from other universities or countries all over the world</li> <li>- Talking with people from different countries and schools about their experience</li> <li>- Communicating with people from other countries and universities was the best part for me</li> <li>- Making many friends from foreign countries</li> <li>- Talking about many things with different people was great</li> <li>- Working with many kinds of people was interesting</li> <li>- Making new friends</li> <li>- Meeting different people</li> <li>- Meeting and making friends with so many interesting people</li> </ul>
Multiple perspectives/Awareness/Value of Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negotiating with other delegates was the best thing for me because we can share our opinion and if other delegates disagree with us, we can also think about the problem from other points of view</li> </ul>
Sense of Accomplishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finishing making our committees working paper (report)</li> <li>- Working with my committee and regional bloc colleagues</li> </ul>
Expanded Opportunities to Use English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speaking with so many interesting people in English</li> <li>- I could use English with so many people so freely</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: "Most difficult or challenging part of JEMUN"

Category Sub-categories	Examples of student comments
Discussion/Negotiation skills	Talking with people who have a different opinion than me Having to negotiate with people who have different positions or opinions than me Meeting and discussing with colleagues in Committee and Regional Bloc It was difficult to discuss the issues
Difficulty of learning pre-conference/Learning the Schedule	Not having enough general knowledge Following the busy schedule
Difficulty of Speaking English	Communicating with others in English because I couldn't say what I wanted to say Expressing my opinion in English was the most difficult part Speaking English with Japanese
Writing	Writing the draft resolution (report) Writing the draft resolution (report) in formal words To write our draft resolution (report) in formal English Writing the draft resolution (report) in English

## Appendix C: "How did you improve at JEMUN?"

Category Sub-categories	Examples of student comments
Improved Knowledge	- My understanding of world issues improved - I realized the world is much wider and bigger than I imagined - I learned more about the world and now I want to study even more - I learned a lot by researching my country and committee topic
Improved Confidence/Motivation	- I was able to say my opinion and helped manage the group even though I was really scared because it was my first time. - I feel more confident when speaking English now - It gave me motivation - The conference made me want to study more than before - The high English level of other students makes me want to study more - I understand I must improve not only my English but also my knowledge of the world
Improved Communicative Skills	- I became able to express my opinion quickly in English - I feel that my vocabulary expanded and I am now better able to express myself - I had never said my opinion in English before and I feel I improved this ability - Just communicating with people in English
Using English has become a natural part of their life	- Meeting and talking easily with students from all over the world - I could learn the actual level of my English skills
Willingness to Communicate in English/ Reduced Anxiety	- I tried speaking English as much as possible and participating in discussions. - I felt comfortable speaking to people in English