A Design and a Practice of ELDP Project --- LMS, Podcasting, and English Presentation Class

Yuichi Ono

Oyama National College of Technology, Tochigi, Japan, Department of General Subjects

Manabu Ishihara

Oyama National College of Technology, Tochigi, Japan, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Mitsuomi Ideo

Oyama National College of Technology, Tochigi, Japan, Technical Office

ABSTRACT

This paper introduces a new type of English presentation course that emphasizes project work and internet technology. The course model discussed here was conducted at the authors' institution during the 2008 academic year over a period of 4-months. The principle behind the project was ELDP, which stands for "English class Linked to a Direct Product", and it is based on two themes: "creation" and "public participation", with English being the project's target language. Specifically, students created a podcast movie, or vodcast, which could be shared with others. The ELDP module was conducted during the second term of a yearlong course, in which the first term was devoted to more traditional PowerPoint presentations that stressed public speaking skills, visual aids, and question-and-answer sessions. Under the ELDP project, students not only used English to create educational videos, they also had to acquire non-linguistic skills, such as uploading video to a server, downloading mobile content, and becoming familiar with the learning management system (LMS). While such a project can be demanding, the purpose-driven, real-world nature of the task can be motivating for students. It will be concluded in this paper that the concept of "creation" and its beneficial effects extends beyond engineering, and is applicable to the broader field of English education as well. For example, the vodcasting project mentioned in this paper could provide a platform for both English learners and educators to introduce and promote their communities, countries and cultures to the world at large.

KEYWORDS

ICT, Podcasting, Presentation Class, ELDP

1. BACKGROUNDS

Let us start by introducing of the National College of Technology in Japan, where this paper's authors are currently employed. In 1961, the Ministry of Education of Japan incorporated the nation's colleges of technology (translated as *kosen* in Japanese) into a system of five-year higher educational institutions to meet the strong demand from industry

against a background of rapid economic growth. Our institution provides five years of integrated continuous professional education and accepts students with a junior high school diploma. Figure 1 shows the Japanese educational system in more detail.
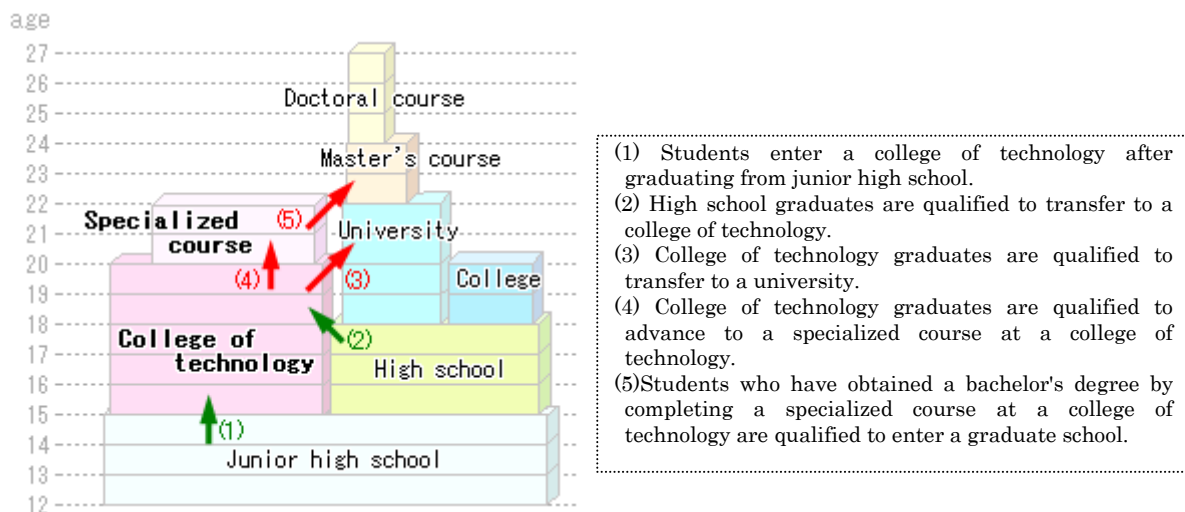

Figure 1. Outline of School System in Japan
(http://www.kosen-k.go.jp/english/outline3.html)

1.1 English Education at the National College of Technology in Japan

JABEE (Japan Accreditation Board for Engineering Education) is an organization which evaluates and accredits the engineering education programs of universities and most of the *kosen* in Japan. The educational program of Oyama National College of Technology was authorized by JABEE in 2005.

According to the standard provided by JABEE, *kosen* students must score a 400 or higher on the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) Test before graduating from a two-year specialized course. At Oyama Kosen, we require that students must score over 350 on the TOEIC by the end of their 5th year in order to acquire credit towards certain English classes. The average score of the 178 students who took the TOEIC Institutional Program Test as their term exam on Aug. 4, 2008, was 386.5 (Max: 995, Min: 175).

Since many students entering *kosen* similar to ours come directly from junior high school, the initial level of their practical English ability is usually lower than those students entering after high school. Thus, it is essential to offer an opportunity for students to learn both the fundamentals of English usage, as well as practical English applications in the real world.

1.2 English Presentation as a National Policy

A strategy for educating "Japanese people who can use English" was announced in 2003 by the Japanese Ministry of Education, and is composed of the following basic ideas: (i) the introduction of English education at the primary level; (ii) developing skills, such as debating, negotiating, discussing, etc., at the high school level; and finally, (iii) developing professional communication skills, such as professional or academic presentation, in university or college. However, there are a large number of arguments presented against this national policy. One common criticism is, as in [1] in the references below, that it lacks a crucial vision for learners' internal motivation in a linguistically homogenous "Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)" environment such as Japan, and also that there is a hollowness to the term "practical English ability", which is noted in the policy.   This, however, does not mean that improving practical English proficiency is totally implausible. Rather, it seems necessary to come up with ideas that will motivate students to be independent learners and study English continuously. It is our belief that ELDP and its concepts of "creation" and "public

participation" compensate for these criticisms and provide the adequate motivation for learners to use the target language.

1.3 English Class as "Creation" and "Public Participation"

The project described in this paper promotes "creation" through group work and public evaluation. Since student-produced vodcasts are uploaded to the podcasting server in our school, learners know that their work will be seen and judged by their peers. This forces them to think carefully about the content of their vodcast and motivates them to produce something that is worthwhile watching. In short, introducing these concepts into our English syllabus encourages students to try harder in the TEFL classroom.

1.4 Utilizing ITC Tools and E-learning Systems

Since this project involves using various kinds of ICT tools, students need to be adept at using them in order to achieve the project goals. Additionally, the class utilizes a learning management system (LMS), web 2.0 technologies, such as podcasting, and other ICT tools, like video cameras, voice recorders, and movie production software. The LMS in our school was originally constructed for TOEIC practice, but now serves a dual purpose by allowing students to work on their IT English projects outside of class (although the system is restricted to onsite access). The class syllabus also includes computer literacy and software tutorials.   It therefore has become possible for both educators and students to take advantage of the collaborative and social nature of web-based technologies in order to make learning more meaningful and rewarding.

1.5 Relevance to CDIO Standards

CDIO standard 7 states the importance of "integrated learning experiences" in one practice or exercise. The project described in this paper requires students to use the English language, while at the same time promoting both media and computer literacy, as mentioned above. Learners are expected to not only display a good command of English in the given situation, but also to know how to share their work with an audience using web 2.0 technologies and portable devices, such as the iPod and PSP (Play Station Portable). The theme of this year's class was to create a video presentation and vodcast of a famous local sightseeing spot near our school that would be appealing to foreign tourists and easily recognizable. The project also involved receiving permission from city officials to use certain images due to copyright and privacy issues. The class included people from other universities, English teachers, and foreign students. Collaboration is an essential part of our project. Details on its organization are given in chapter 2 below.

2. THE ELDP FRAMEWORK

ELDP project work originates from the concept that "the activity of creation leads to enhancing learner's motivation." It is necessary for learners to develop a positive attitude and to be motivated to use the target language. Creating a meaningful product in English leads to confidence, a sense of achievement, and a further willingness and interest to use the language. In Japan, the keyword *monodukuri* is often referred to as "fundamentals relating to production and creativity."   Our work is a case study in applying this concept to English education. The basic scheme of our understanding of *monodukuri* is illustrated in Figure 2, which is an extended version of [2] in the references below:
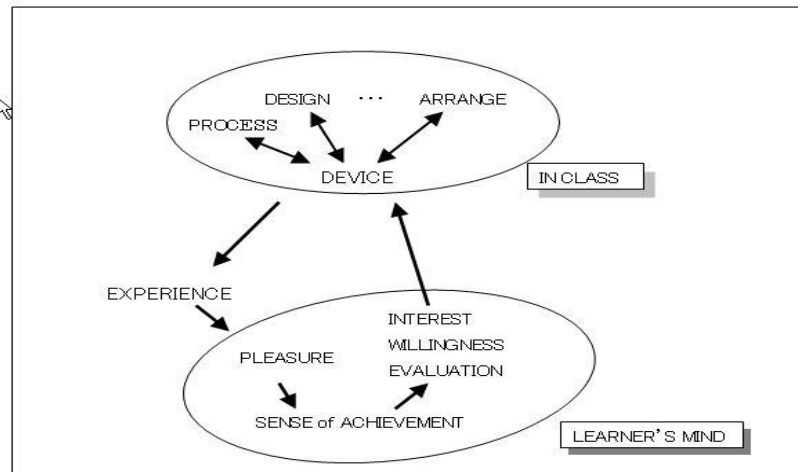
Figure 2   The Outline of Creativity Education

The three basic components are (1) E-learning, (2) Presentation, and (3) Creation. E-learning activities include collecting class information and submitting homework through the LMS, and to make effective use of the podcasting system. The "Creation" activity involves field research, recording, editing, and uploading to the server.
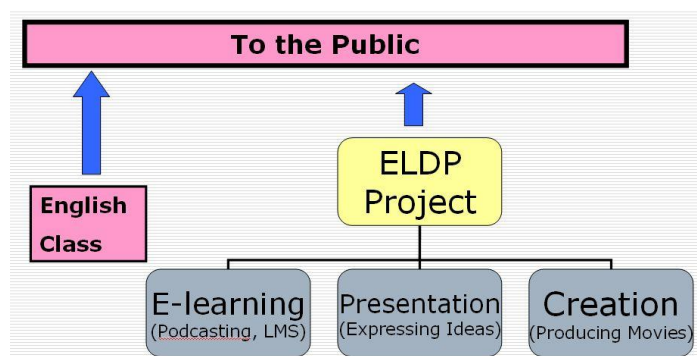

Figure 3   The Outline of ELDP Framework

Since English teachers are sometimes not comfortable with information technology and related devices and software, there are various support personnel in the ELDP organization who help us with class management. The system is in accord with item 7 of the CDIO standards, which calls for the involvement of industrial partners and other stakeholders in the design of learning experiences. Our collaboration constituents are given in Figure 4 below.
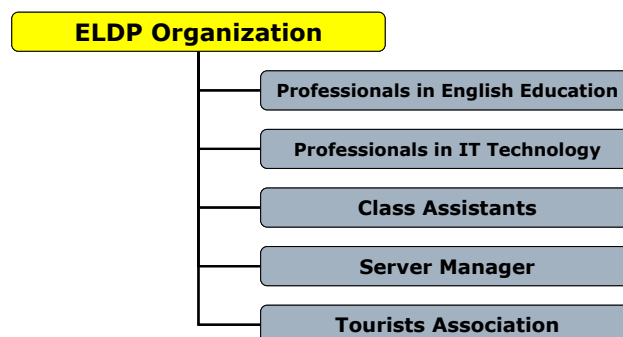

Figure 4   The ELDP Organization

The project also contains an experimental study on information engineering and how the podcasting system works according to the types of receiving devices and how reliably and quickly audio files are transmitted to them. In order to prove its effectiveness, the author set

up the heretofore mentioned theme of introducing a famous local spot to foreign tourists. However, thus far the experiment has not been carried out because of the school's security policy of restricting access to the main school server from outside the school. This is an issue for further research.

3. SYLLABUS

Let us move on to a more detailed description of the class syllabus. As shown below, the students will try two different kinds of presentations: PowerPoint presentation and video presentation. The first kind of presentation is rather familiar to students; they have done at least once for their graduation study. As a presentation for an English class, they must be aware of posture, gestures, eye-contact, and visual aids in terms of English education.

Students naturally are unsure of the second type of presentation, since they have no prior experience. One student told the author that he had never used a so-called video camera. This is where group work helped, because it allowed students who do not like speaking English to take the role of the teacher and instruct the student about video cameras.

At the conclusion of the 4-month course, students completed three PowerPoint presentations and two video ones, all of which were saved to the author's computer.   The syllabus is given in Figure 5 below.

week	Class Plan	Homework	Class Activity
1	Guidance, Self Introduction Speech	Preparing for self introduction	Self Introduction
2	Text Reading (Types of Presentation)	Summary of the Textbook	Show and Tell Presentation
3	Text Reading (On Cellular Phone)	Summary of the Textbook	Show and Tell Presentation
4	Text Reading (On Global Warming)	Summary of the Textbook	Quiz Activity
5	On PowerPoint Presentation	Summary on Organization	Quiz Activity
6	Preparation for Presentation Contest	Prepare for one's Own Role	Discussion with Native Instructors
7	Preparation for Presentation Contest	Prepare for one's Own Role	Discussion with Native Instructors
8	**PPT Presentation Contest**	Prepare for one's Own Role	Communication with Judges
9	Guidance of Video Presentation, Media Literacy, Purpose, Collaboration	Bring Theme	Grouping
10	Description and Understanding of Nikko (Sightseeing spot)	Devise an Organization	Group Discussion
11	Group Discussion, Planning for Field Research	Devise a further Organization	Group Discussion
12	FIELD RESEARCH (Visiting Nikko)	Prepare Video and Recording Tools	Group Discussion
13	Preparation for Video Presentation Contest, Software, Uploading	Prepare for one's Own Role	Group Discussion
14	Preparation for Video Presentation Contest, Video Editing	Prepare for one's Own Role	Group Discussion
15	**Video Presentation Contest**, Class Summary, Concluding Remarks	Questionnaire, Brief Report	Class Evaluation

Figure 5   Syllabus

4. THE PODCASTING BLOG SYSTEM

Podcasting is the syndication of audio or video files using RSS (Really Simple Syndication). We can listen to the contents of a feed using a reader or aggregator that supports podcasting,

or we can listen to them on an iPod or similar device. We do not have to have an iPod to listen to a podcast or watch a vodcast. Podcasts can be displayed on websites with clickable links to audio files and many of the standard RSS readers have begun supporting audio enclosures. Moreover, via wireless LAN, a variety of media formats can be sent to PSPs (Play Station Portable produced by SONY) or PDAs (such as iPAQ of hp). PSP is a portable machine originally created to enjoy video games, and many young people carry them in Japan.

   Podcasting uses RSS 2.0, an extended version of RSS. RSS 2.0 can specify an audio file, such an mp3, with an "enclosure tag" in its XML file, allowing users to automatically receive new files whenever they are posted. The general scheme of podcasting is illustrated in Figure 6 below.
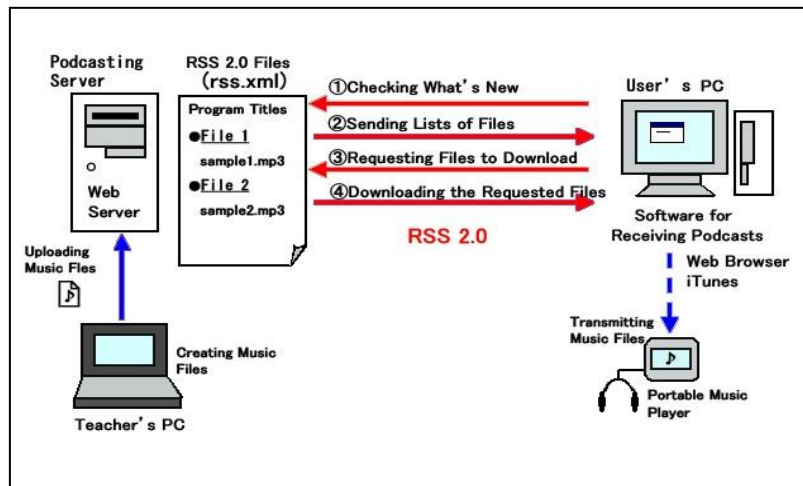

Figure 6   Outline of the Podcasting System

   Podcasting is based on the RSS technology widely used in blogs. Many popular open-source blogging scripts, such as the one illustrated below, will automatically insert the necessary podcasting enclosures into the RSS feed, making it easy to set up a podcast. The blog format also makes it easy for a podcaster to write show notes about each video file (see Figure 8)

   Considering these things, the blog system adopted here is Wordpress ME, which is an open-source system with a Japanese interface capable of running in an intranet environment. Several different file types can be sent via RSS (see Figure 7).

	kinds of extensions podcastable
sound	mp3, mp4, m4a
movie	Mp4, m4v,mov
	Flv, avi, mpeg, asf, wmv

Figure 7 Types of Files

Figure 8 Top Page of Our Blog

The basic specifications of our podcasting server are as follows in Figure 9 illustrated below.

CPU	Intel Pentium III 600MHz
RAM	768MB
HDD	20GB
OS	Fedora Core 5
HTTP Server	Apache 2.0.34
PHP	PHP 5.1.6
RDBMS	MySQL 5.0.18
Blog System	WordPress ME 2.0.9
WordPress Plugin	PodPress 3.8

Figure 9   Hardware and Software

As an experiment, the author asked 40 students to download 4.0 MB mov files simultaneously from the English class LL room. Although some students had to wait several minutes, eventually all the machines were successful in fetching the files.

5. WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THE CLASS

5.1 Initial Motivation

Sixteen students attended the 2008 academic year class. Since this would be a new, unfamiliar course that differed from the traditional grammar-oriented English classes that are very common in Japanese colleges and universities, including our institution, students seemed to be anxious. On a questionnaire at the end of the course, however, while half of the students answered that there was some initial anxiety to speaking English in public, all of them said that it had disappeared as the term passed and the presentations ended up being a great experience.

5.2 English Proficiency

Students wrote scripts for their presentations, and because editing every script would have been very time consuming for a single teacher, the author was fortunate to have had two native speakers available to help. As an additional benefit, students seemed to try to communicate with native instructors in English during the editing process. Some students answered in the questionnaire that talking to a native speaker was really a good experience.

However, it must be said that the students' English in their presentation was far from complete. Therefore, next year it will be necessary to provide students with more time to prepare beforehand and consult with teachers. In particular, some students wished they could have worked on their pronunciation more so their English would sound more fluent and "beautiful".

5.3 Questionnaire

In order to rate how satisfied the students were with the course, a questionnaire covering the following points was given:

(1) What was the most enjoyable thing about each presentation?
(2) Write freely about what appealed to you (or did not) regarding the video presentation.

Figure 10 shows the PowerPoint presentation feedback. English composition, English pronunciation, and standing in front of people were equally challenging things for most students. Interestingly, however, working on PowerPoint seemed less stressful. Figure 11 displays the questionnaire data for the video presentation. Students reported that the field research was an interesting part of video production process, and half of those surveyed wish to collect materials outside of class if given another opportunity in the near future.
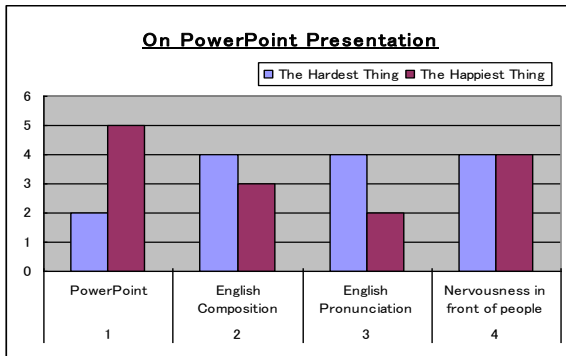
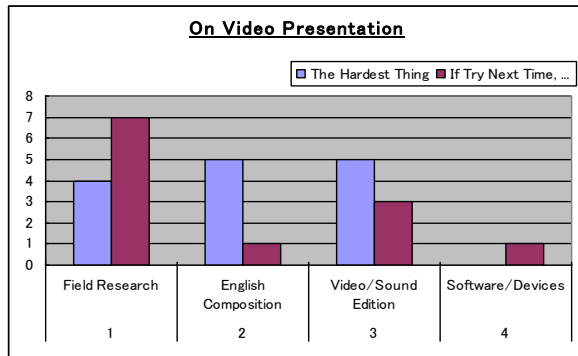Figure 10 On PowerPoint Presentation

Figure 11 On Video Presentation

The questionnaire also contained open-ended feedback about the various course components. One question was on what was the most interesting lecture given in the class. In particular, many students seemed very pleased with a talk given by a guest native-English teacher at a university located in our city on presentation manners and body language. The points are summarized as follows:

○Speakers Body
  Shoulders back / Open your feet / Look at their (audience's) eyes
○Speakers Voice
  Loud enough for the person in the back / Pause between ideas / Use 4 voice types (low, high, soft, loud) /
  Feel your face muscles
○Speak slowly and clearly   *Class Notes by a Student, Dec. 1, 2008*

This feedback made the authors realize that students are more interested in basic presentation skills than how to make use of ICT tools. Therefore, it is important for instructors to keep in mind that no matter how popular and efficacious the information technology might become in the future, students still want most to be able speak confidently and effectively in front of others.

Lastly, the authors were pleased to learn that many students found the class very interesting and enjoyable, in spite of its difficulty. When viewing all the videos during the last class, students seemed somewhat embarrassed yet pleased with their work. They were also surprised that everything worked successfully in the end and that they could view their downloaded videos on the author's iPod and PSP. Two videos are given below in Figure 10, where the picture on the left hand side is a record of PPT presentation and that on the right is a video created by students. These videos are uploaded onto the podcasting server in our institution.

Video is an effective tool for communication, different from books and traditional public presentations, and can allow introverted students to be more direct and convey their feelings easier, and offers alternative tasks and roles for students who are not good at speaking or writing English.
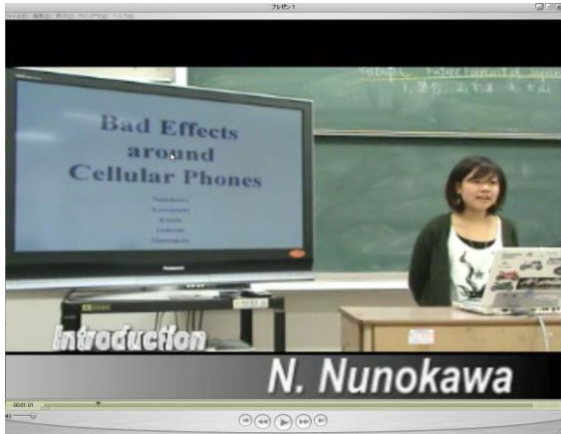
Figure 10   Two Types of Presentation (Viewed on QuickTime)

Figure 11 Movie Displayed on iPod (Left) and PSP (Right)

6. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

6.1 Evaluation on This Project

As pointed out by the reviewer(s), the paper so far gives insufficient information on the benefits to students' learning and intended learning outcomes through the class.   More should be said to evaluate whether the pedagogic approach met these more effectively than traditional approaches.   Since there has been no such class as video presentation, I have no critical data on the evaluation comparing this project with the grammar-oriented traditional approach.   More precise questionnaire research on students' benefit or intended learning outcomes is necessary on the basis of larger numbers of students to clearly state that the class suggested here is satisfactory to the students.   This is what we are doing now on the basis of students this year.   As far as the students' interest is concerned, however, most students answered in the questionnaire that their interest in English presentation was enhanced after the class (See Figure 12 below).   As stated above in this paper, motivating students to try an English presentation is a crucial factor in a totally TEFL environment.   One of the outcomes and the benefits on the part of students is this "enhanced motivation" inside the learners.   In this sense, one goal can be said to have been achieved in this class.

grade	interest in presentation in English	
	before the class	after the class
1	1	
2	4	2
3	6	5
4	3	5
5		2
ave	2.8	3.5

Figure 12   Students' Interest Before/After the Class

6.2 Some Implications for the Future

Needless to say, the project detailed in this paper is under the preliminary stage and needs to be improved in addition to the suggestions made by the reviewer(s) in the above section. Conceptually, there are two types of problems that need to be solved: hardware (cost, security policy, school system) and software (how to teach). The former problem is the most challenging. To make headway in our e-learning strategy, the ELDP project server needs to be accessible from the outside. One solution is to set up an outside dedicated server next year, if time and money allow.

A very promising aspect of this project is that student video work can be used to promote local communities. Podcasting is a powerful technology because it allows student-generated media to be easily and cheaply distributed to portable devices. This means that foreign tourists visiting a particular area might be able to subscribe to entertaining and educational travel guides produced locally by students. In other words, visitors could learn about the area not just through a typical guidebook, but from those who know the place best: the people who live there. Motivating and empowering learners to use English to teach others about their culture and community is a win-win situation for both the student and the visitor. In conclusion, the ideal sketch of this project is given below:
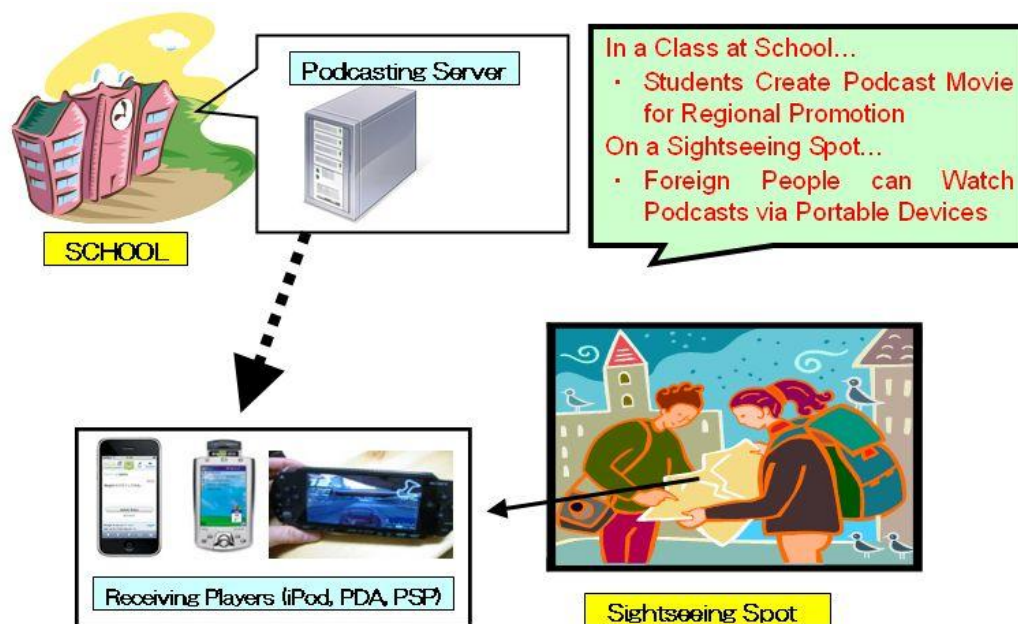
Figure 13 One Future Image of the System

REFERENCES

[1]   Takashi Miura, " 'Senryakukousou' ga karamawarisuru futatsuno gen'in (Two Causes Why the Strategic Policy Is Ineffective)", Proceeding of the Symposium on English Education: A New Epoch in English Education, Keio University, 20080915, pp 13-15.

[2]   "Monodukuri kenkyu (Study on Making)", 2003, Osaka Prefecture Education Center.

Biographical Information

Yuichi Ono is an associate professor for the Department of General Subjects at Oyama National College of Technology, Tochigi, Japan. He received Master Degrees in Education from Tsukuba University, Japan. His major is English and Japanese linguistics; syntax and semantics from comparative and constructional points of view. His current interests are in Second Language Acquisition and utilizing ICT tools along with an e-learning strategy. He is a member of the LET, the JACET.

Manabu Ishihara received the Ph.D. degrees. Now he was an associate professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Oyama National College of Technology, Tochigi, Japan. His research interests include multimedia, computer network, human engineering. He is a member of the IEEE, the IEICE, the IEE of Jpn. and ASJ.

Mitsuomi Ideo is a member of Technical Office (Group II) at Oyama National College of Technology, Tochigi, Japan. His major field is in computer network. He is in charge of e-learning server in Oyama National College of Technology.

Corresponding author

Mr. Yuichi Ono
Oyama National College of Technology
771 Nakakuki Oyama-shi
Tochigi, Japan 323-0806
+81-285-20-2188
yono@oyama-ct.ac.jp