

Model United Nations in Japan

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Britta Hufeisen (Darmstadt) und Beate Lindemann (Tromsø)

Samuel Ngwa Nfor

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in Japan

Towards Promoting Linguistic
Mediation and Intercultural
Communicative Competence

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To my daughter Kotone:
For your paths that were redirected and guided towards
where you are most needed.

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About this Book

This book uses Model United Nations (Model UN), an academic simulation of the United Nations (UN) that is adapted for educational purposes and includes elements of discussion, negotiation, presentation, and engagement with global issues and international affairs (JUEMUN 2021) as case studies. Students participating in Model UN are called country delegates and represent different countries on different committees (JUEMUN 2021). As delegates, they join in discussions on global issues related to such topics as world conflict, international security, human rights, and education. To facilitate understanding, prevent communication breakdown, and address global issues, they must mediate concepts, texts, and communication more effectively. In Model UN, student participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, collaborate and interact in a common language (English) spoken differently among participants to deepen their understanding of current world issues. By so doing, they reflect on their intercultural communicative competence ability, summarised as the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language (Byram 2021: 151). The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda is central to Model UN courses offered in Japan. Model UN courses often constitute multinational participants and prepare them to participate in a Model UN conference described as a global engagement platform to raise awareness among university communities and to foster the UN's initiative to improve quality of life globally (JUEMUN 2021). During the conference, student participants work as a team to agree on innovative action plans regarding the SDGs issues they discuss. Solutions are included in a plan known as a working paper and presented to delegates in the form of a draft resolution. Draft resolutions are then amended with the hope of them being voted on and becoming a resolution if passed (JUEMUN 2021). Mediation strategies were identified and coded from students' recorded Model UN course and conference discussions observed, for qualitative content analysis. Following two Model UN semester courses at two Japanese universities and a Model UN conference held in Japan, interview sessions with Model UN student participants were moderated and recorded to understand their learning attitudes and experiences of studying in the Model UN context. The interview data were used to generate themes for thematic analysis. This book concludes that Japanese Model UN student participants' interactions and mediation of concepts with other learners of English from various cultural backgrounds allowed them to reflect on their intercultural communicative competence ability and thus, were able to develop tolerance towards language-related misunderstandings.

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