A Proposal of Communication Skill Improvement Training for University Students in

Career Education —Verifying Training Effectiveness Using Text Chat App—

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Career education has become mandatory at Japanese universities since 2011, and programs have been implemented as the essential skills for workers who graduated from universities. However, such career education is greatly influenced by government policies, and effective educational methods have not been established.

According to a questionnaire survey by Japan Business Federation, "communication skills" were the most critical factor for recruitment selection in companies for the 16th consecutive years. Many university placement divisions also believe that improving communication skills is necessary as a valuable skill for job hunting. However, there are not enough research cases on good initiatives as career education.

On the other hand, some existing studies have indicated that university students are uncomfortable and anxious about interpersonal communication. The author had worked in the placement section of a private university and had been in charge of student consultations for seven years. Preparation for interview tests is the most time-consuming consultation for the students. However, even if they learn how to prepare for and talk in the interview tests, it is not easy to improve their communication skills and reduce consultation sessions with them. Moreover, there is also a common gap, even if students can communicate frankly via e-mail but not the same as face-to-face, especially in the early stages of career education. Bridging the gap will lead to improving communication skills for university students.

This study proposes a method for strengthening communication using a text chat app as a preparation training of face-to-face practice to improve communication skills for university students at an initial stage in career education and clarify the effect by comparative experiments. Specifically, using the proposed method devised by our training model, a comparative experiment was conducted by online face-to-face training and text chat training for university students. The effectiveness of the proposed method was verified by comparing the degree of improvement for both methods from each communication skill point of view.

This study clarifies the following questions. MRQ: What is the effect of text chat apps on improving university students' communication skills in career education? SRQ1: What is the gap between the communication skills that career education aims for and university

students' communication skills? SRQ2: What kind of training is effective for communication weakness and interpersonal anxiety? SRQ3: How can the effect of training be evaluated? By clarifying these questions, the effectiveness of the proposed method will be verified in the context of career education.

There are few previous studies in career education because effective educational methods have not been established. In particular, there are no model-based or application-based methods as far as the author can find. If this study clarifies the effectiveness of the proposed method, it is expected to become a new one for fostering communication in career education.

In order to clarify SRQ1, a literature review was firstly conducted from the following three perspectives:
① Communication skills aimed at career education;
② Communication skills of university students;
③ Communication skill measurement method.

Next, a training model was designed based on the literature review and practical examples in career education at Kindai University to clarify SRQ2. The SECI model, known as the knowledge creation process model in knowledge management, was applied to design the training model.

A comparative experiment using an online meeting system and text chat was conducted by eight undergraduate and graduate students to answer SRQ3. Webex Meetings were used for the face-to-face training since the recruitment and selection process has been shifted to online due to COVID-19. Communication skills were evaluated using multiple evaluation items in an online meeting system and text chat, and the improvement difference were compared.

As the results of verifying the experiment and considering the effect of text chat training, the answers to the research questions are as follows.
SRQ1 answer: There is a gap in the communication skills of university students, as they are too biased towards reception and not enough towards skills for career education.

Regarding communication skills aimed at career education, the Communicator Competence Questionnaire (CCQ) was adopted as the communication ability measurement scale required at the workplace. The literature review has revealed that university students are too sensitive to feel the atmosphere since their communication skills are not assertive. The CCQ clarifies that smooth communication by such students was not achieved because the sender did not replace the receiver, and no circulation occurred.

SRQ2 answer: A debate game using text chat in a mixed team of university students and working people was proposed.

The literature review led to the idea that transmission-centered training is practical for communication weakness, and non-face-to-face training is effective for interpersonal anxiety. Furthermore, four issues were clarified by recognizing the assertive training in communication with the SECI model. Therefore, a debate game was proposed to solve these issues.

SRQ3 answer: In a comparative experiment using the online meeting system and text chat, the effect of training can be measured by quantitative evaluation of the number of remarks and qualitative evaluation using the ENDOCORE model and CCQ.

The effects were measured by the number of subjects' statements as a quantitative evaluation and by subjects' questionnaire and working people evaluation as a qualitative evaluation. Regarding the quantitative evaluation, it became clear that the number of remarks per person increased after the text chat training in the number of remarks by the group. The questionnaire survey by the subjects indicated that in the text chat training, it could be seen that awareness of others such as acceptance of others, relationship adjustment, and decoding ability has weakened, making it easier to feel the effect of self-assertion. The evaluation by working people showed significant differences in three categories:

① has a good command of the language;
② typically gets right to the point;
③ generally says the right thing at the right time.

MRQ answer: As the results of the experiment, the effect of increasing the objective evaluation from working people was observed.

This experiment clarified that university students felt more changes in text chat training and were highly evaluated by working people. Besides that, it was able to find the possibility of the proposed method from the viewpoint of career education and recruitment selection.

Since the number of subjects in this experiment was only eight students and conducted only one day, it is insufficient to verify the effect in career education. In addition, since the face-to-face experiment was held on the online meeting system, it could not be evaluated whether the same effect is obtained in an actual face-to-face situation.

Experiments with more subjects should be conducted as further verification because

there will be a transition of conventional face-to-face interview tests and communication for recruitment selection when the influence of the COVID-19 disappears.