



20240517: Hitotsubashi Yoga Class (TOSHI OGURA sensei) Special Guests Exchange (Sumei HUANG & Yoh INOUE, University of Tsukuba-TAIKU)

Let me start with a story: A Graduate Student, who has studied and practiced/taught asks - What is Yoga for? What is it really for? and, What can we do with Yoga??? Answer = Do it, Share it, Experience it, Learn it, Yoga is a lifestyle, not a one-day thing, not a yoga studio (no disrespect), not an event, much more – a DAILY HABIT requiring CONTINUOUS LEARNING – A LIFETIME. Are you ready to DDD = Do it, Devote yourself to it, Develop it???? The answer lies in yourself, YOGA is a COMMUNICATION WITH SELF and thereby OTHERS. And, does Yoga need a TEACHER????? Yes, it does, one teacher is self – one teacher is a ‘teacher’ who is worthy of being called a teacher – how do you find one, the ‘one’ who we run away from, or stay long enough to know who, and why the ‘one; is the teacher. It can be anyone...anywhere, everywhere- one needs to open the eyes & ears of the mind and heart to find one, recognize one, learn from one. I acknowledge such a teacher and such an opportunity at University of Tsukuba (UT) at the Graduate General Education (<https://www.tsukuba.ac.jp/en/academics/g-courses-kyoutsuukamoku/>) Courses (GGEC) initiative – to where we are today.

The on-going GGEC yoga courses (since 2015) for graduate students and the resulting ‘social innovation projects’ (Society for the Advancement of Yoga Education Teaching Research Culture and Practice– *Health, Traditional Medicine, and Well-being*–; [筑波みんなのヨーガ Tsukuba Yoga for All](https://www.tsukuba.ac.jp/en/extension/sec/)) / ‘extension program’ (UT; <https://extension.sec.tsukuba.ac.jp/>) and the SHED initiative () at the Global Sport Innovation, TAIKU (<https://www.taiiku.tsukuba.ac.jp/en/>) have been a nurturing (one key mission of the GEGC program) students to develop self and contribute to a humane society have seen many students and participants come and go; some stay longer to develop themselves – continuous life-long learning.

And, cooperation and collaborations are KEY, as in research – with the right person, the appropriate teacher & researcher; and, in this, we have one such colleague, teacher, and friend, Toshi Ogura sensei (teaching at Hitotsubashi University; <https://www.hit-u.ac.jp/eng/about/outline.html>), and who has been a part of our Tsukuba campus Yoga classes for long, sharing and discussing together, enriching each. This report now describes one such recent activity where Ogura sensei kindly invited our 2 graduate students (Sumei Huang, International English-based Master’s program in Sport & Olympic Studies) and Yoh Inoue, Doctoral program, TAIKU) to join the YOGA class for undergraduate students. This is their impression.

TOSHI OGURA sensei:

Sensei mentions: “We had a good day with Sumei and Yoh. ‘Yoga and friendship’. It is nice to see how Sumei is keep growing! - I think it works both ways to learn each other. Our yoga classes have similar philosophies to your program even though we currently have only undergraduate courses. We do more than asana, practice yoga as part of our lifestyle, have diverse students of different majors, domestic and international students, active interactive class discussions, have dedicated teaching assistant (TA) students etc.” Further, - Sumei Huang carefully taught us gentle, slow, flow yoga (asana) and breathing methods, motivation, and interacted with diverse students of Hitotsubashi University.

Yoh Inoue (Yoh) san is a tennis player, learned about sports nutrition (and was responsible for scheduling and coordinating nutrition seminars, inviting registered dietitians to provide more specialized knowledge to students), and a club worker, and this is the story of how she organizes student-run international sports tournaments at Tsukuba and other colleges and promotes interaction between old and new residents through yoga in Hokuto City, Yamanashi Prefecture! I and the 2 TA students [(Inesa Bardakchyan, Doctoral program in Social Sciences) and Haruka Sawada (Junior, Undergraduate program in Commerce

and Management), both of them studied yoga in my previous year's classes] and students, took last Friday's Sumei's and Yoh's visit very seriously as it was a great opportunity for our students to learn as well as I get to know these two Tsukuba students, who are at very important stage of graduate school and life. I and my students set up a series of clear respective objectives what each of three classes wanted to learn from the two wonderful graduate students, and how best we can prepare for their visit and how to leverage our regular classes and set it up so that both school of participants can learn for the future and foster friendships. The results are successful, but a mixture of expected and unexpected.

In the first early morning class, Sumei instructed students with confidence in clear easy-to-understand pronunciation in English, sometimes adding Japanese keywords, such as "Onaka (belly), for about 60 minutes. In the 2nd class we asked a shorter practice and tips on breathing techniques, which our students were interested in. In the last class we asked her to have fun to teach in Chinese: at first to get connected with those students and alumni who speak, or have some knowledge of Chinese. Secondly, to have a quasi-multi-cultural yoga class experiences with the rests of students who do not understand Chinese at all in order to test if they can still enjoy learning yoga each other as if they were attending in a yoga class during a trip abroad.

In advance, I and my dedicated TA students, Inesa and Haruka, had discussed how to maximize the visits of Sumei and Yoh. We asked Sumei and Yoh become active participations in our classes, instead of siting and observing as external guests. We were looking forward to learning from Sumei's different style of yoga and cross-cultural experiences. We discussed pros and cons of having English and Chinese yoga instructions by Sumei. We asked Yoh, not only to practice yoga with us, but share her community development and other life experiences to our students, who have more valuable life experiences than our undergraduate students.

During Sumei's first instruction, I immediately recognized that she was developing her own unique yoga style based on her experiences in University of Tsukuba, inspired by Genboku Sensei and others. Similar to him she taught us some body awareness practices, but in flow yoga style, instead of his typical practice style of holding each posture for longer. Her teaching was smooth with much better skills than I had expected, which made me comfortable enough to let her continue teaching two additional short sessions of 30 and 20 minutes respectively in the following late morning and afternoon classes. We learned that one of the Sumei's challenge was to deal with diverse students with who have different yoga requirements in terms of lengths of practice time, level of physical strength and flexibility, interests and objectives in yoga and life. A yoga class instructed in Chinese were not only fun and refreshing, but helped concentration of students who do not understand Chinese language. At the late social lunch started at 4 pm after three yoga classes, I was pleased to observe happy faces of two visiting students from University of Tsukuba and our two TA students empowered, continue developing friendships and potential future collaboration ideas.

SUMEI HUANG:

Sumei mentions: The simplest and most impressive thing I want to share is: This visit makes me realize that there is difference between yoga classes in the university and in other places. For example, they (students) are at this age that most of them have just started their life alone and they have/wish to have a goal; they are easier to understand the deeper meaning of yoga like the breathing techniques; they are using their brain to work a lot which shows a need, and that they need to have the ability to manage their life and their mind to contribute to their high efficient work; they are looking for a higher level of yoga which might be seeking depth in self. Each of these topics could require me a long time to dig deep and learn. I am surprised that students were mostly interested in the breathing techniques I had just learned from Gen (Genboku) sensei last week <the relationship between breathing and motivation>. It makes me believe more in that: yoga sometimes could be vague, but if I could share a knowledge as a practical way (technique, method, approach) in real life, it will give students a way to go, it gives a 'First Step' to get access to (yoga). And also, I wish to keep learning one book deeply and share about <How to USE this book/this knowledge/wisdom>. And I truly appreciate that Gen sensei is a real book, and each of them could go so deep. But still, I want to share them in a 'daily practicing' (i.e., to do it daily for the common people, before developing myself as an expert to be able to teach deeply (as Gen sensei)) way,

‘onegaishimasu’! And I appreciate the chances I could experience. Because the output (experiential) pushes me to learn and apply. This is also my motivation. Without this chance, I might not start seriously to learn Gen sensei's book and utilize it, ‘osoreirimasu’. The above are the main things I want to share, the followings are more things I learn from this visit, from Ogura sensei, from feedback and discussion with Yoh san.

- ✓ Why University students join the yoga class?
Some are sports students, they share that the precise yoga body practice could benefit them to have a better performance for their own sports and prevent from injuries. Some students shared that they want to deal with their stress/chaos in their mind through this class.
- ✓ Did I confirm what's my class goal, which part of yoga I want to share using proper and exact guiding words? I divided the yoga class into three main goal: FIRST, the breath-body awareness (for this type, teachers focus on each detail of how students breathe, the speed, the length, the places of the breath; and the preciseness of the asana, the direction of their muscle, to put the muscle and bone and joints into original places). SECOND, to prepare for the meditation (for this type, we do asana, to prepare for better focus on/get into meditation and self-conversation and guiding self to the ancient wisdom). THIRD, the spiritual experience (for this type, each self has the true self and spiritual self, by deep connecting to self, body and mind, each student will ultimately find their own spiritual feeling while others could not tell).
- ✓ While I did not expect the students' beginners level of yoga, I am actually surprised. Because this "beginner" is way more than a "beginner" than I experienced before. I think they are beginning in moving level, ‘osoreirimasu’. I actually adjusted to their level in the class which I thought it is enough, however, they shared that it is still difficult for them. So I think, I still need to grow my ability to ADJUST and OBSERVE the students. And this brings me to further think that on what type of students join the yoga class in the university?
- ✓ And as mentioned above, there are different yoga goals in one class, because we cannot take in everything. Then what do I want to share the most, I asked? What I could share now at this age and at this level?
- ✓ While having great passion on yoga is good for building own strong trunk and skills. But also, I think, yes, yoga attracts Sumei very much, But what about the other part of Sumei? What about seeing yoga out of yoga? What is the yoga world? What is the other world?
- ✓ What is the most special and strong point of yoga compared to other mind-only techniques and body-only techniques? Like the mantra could be singing, self-conversation could be philosophy, spirituality could be art.
- ✓ EXPERIENCE and DISSCUSION with people is truly nice!!! I could learn so much out of my narrow box!!!!
- ✓ In the end, I want to revise the ‘lunch-time’ (SHED-GSI, UT) yoga class again and again, put all the learning and experiences in work.



Thank you Sensei and Yoh san and Gen sensei!! We wish to have more opportunities to learn and grow!!, ‘yoroshikuonegaishimasu’.

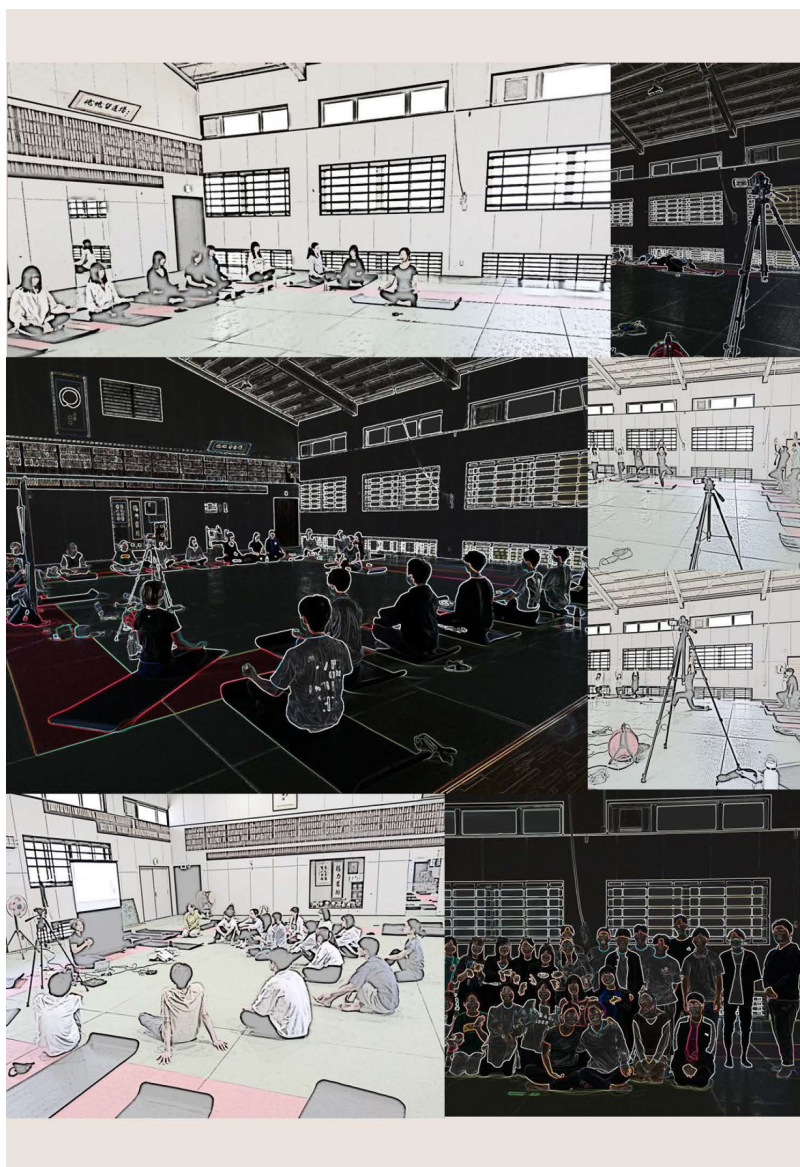
YOH INOUE:

Yoh mentions: First of all, I would like to thank you for giving me such a valuable opportunity. I learned a lot. I also wanted to teach a yoga classes at the university. I feel that it is very effective for both general students and student athletes to take care of their minds and bodies. My reflection is a bit long, but there are three main things I would like to look back on. Firstly, I was very surprised that there were three yoga classes in one day. At the same time, I felt that it was effective for university students to make their community and good their habits for their healthy mind and body and that the other universities should

offer more yoga classes. When I was studying sports nutrition in my master's program, I wanted to support the mental and nutritional needs of students who were dedicated to competing at the university, so I worked on team management. From the references I read at that time, I learned that college is a time when one's identity is being established, and that the lifestyle habits and activities during college are important for the rest of life. Unfortunately, however, university students tend to neglect their eating habits. When students who lived in dormitories or at their parents' homes until high school start living alone in college, the quality of their meals deteriorates because they eat alone, they are unable to find the community they seek, and many students become mentally ill (stressed). Among the students who came to class, there were students who had experienced depression, and another one was a student who did not go to other classes because he was lethargic, but only came to the yoga classes. There were a variety of students, including those who were involved in music and those who belonged to a sports team, but it was interesting to see that many students were impressed with breathing techniques. Students are looking for yoga! more than I expected. Secondly, taking Sumei's yoga class made me realize so many things that helped me clarify my yoga I wanted to try. I was able to focus on the feeling of connecting my mind and body. However, the explanation may sometimes be difficult for beginners to yoga. I felt it would be a good idea to explain a little more about precautions regarding movements that could potentially lead to injury. For example, where to place your feet in the 'tree pose'. It might be a good idea to add a comment to avoid putting your feet next to each other's knees, as doing so puts stress on your knees and pushes them against each other, which can be dangerous. Another thing I was concerned about was hydration. After all, when teaching beginners, I felt that it would be better to take too much care of their hydration. This is because beginners do not/might not understand their own bodies that well, so they cannot stop moving unless the instructor gives them instructions. They push too much. So, if you are doing an hour of yoga in a first-period class early in the morning, and the target audience is yoga beginners, I think it is okay to stop the whole session and take a break to rehydrate, etc. Finally, this was my first time at a university that I had never been to, and I was not sure what kind of students there would be or what they were looking for, so I shared my experiences with tennis and yoga, and my efforts to revitalize the community through yoga. It was a great learning experience for me to organize and output what I wanted to convey. I have been a tennis coach and have been taking yoga classes for about a year and a half, but I am not really good at speaking in front of large groups; especially if I do not know the person very well. If I do not know what the audience needs, I will not know which stories to focus on. But I think it is all just a matter of getting used to it. I believe that by continuing to have these experiences and looking back (reflecting) on them, my confidence will grow little by little, and I will be able to convey what I want to convey more clearly and in an interesting way. It was also interesting to be able to experience yoga in various languages such as English, Chinese, and Japanese, and it gave me a good stimulus to further improve my language skills and broaden my horizons. I want to speak English as much as I speak Japanese. I am always impressed by the eagerness of international students, including Sumei, to learn something. I learned things that I would not have noticed if I was in a Japanese-only community, and it was stimulating. I think I will try my best too. If you have an opportunity like this, please let us participate again. Thank you very much.

AFTERWORD – Genboku Takahashi sensei felt the experiences of SUMEI HUANG's (as Sensei has been teaching and interacting with her since past 1 year) as follows – “Thank you, for your serious report. Until now, you have only seen yourself. This time, for the first time, you may have had the opportunity to see someone as a mirror of yourself. What I mean by that is that you were able to empathize with other people's worries and anguish by overlapping them with your own. That's what I was able to read from this report. If my reading is correct, I think this is a very valuable experience for you.” In addition, I would like to convey one tip to deepen your experience: “I think you put on your makeup in the morning. At that time, look at your eyes in the mirror and do breathing exercises for about 1 to 3 minutes. At that time, ask your eyes in the mirror, “What do you (eyes) want to say to yourself right now?” “Listen to what your eyes say.” It may seem like a contradictory expression, but it is a Zen-like expression. I believe that just 1-3 minutes a day of listening to your eyes can greatly change your life.”
(自分の経験を深めていくためのコツを1つ書いておきます。あなたは、朝メイクすると思います。その時、鏡に写った自分の目を見ながら呼吸法を1-3分ぐらいします。その時、鏡の中の目に向かって「あなたは今、自分に何をいいたいの?」と、聴いてみてください。「眼が語る言葉を聞く」。矛盾しているような表現ですが禅的表現です。一日たった、1-3分、「眼に聞く」それだけで人生を大きく変えていくと思います。)

In YOH INOUE san's text the need for hydration was mentioned, so I will comment on it. I do not know if it is written in the general Yoga texts that are currently in circulation, but when I first started learning Yoga, I was told to keep water nearby during Asana time and sip while doing it. It was said that drinking water was mandatory to facilitate the cleansing of the body through Asana. I completely forgot about this since the GGEC Yoga Course classes went online. In the past, classes sometimes took place over the summer, and there was a sports teacher there, so I reminded students about hydration. I never forgot that there was a sign in the restroom of the University of Tsukuba Sports Building that said, "Please check the color of your urine to check for signs of dehydration." Hydration is important. (YOH INOUE sanの文章の中で、水分補給の必要性が書かれていました。今流布している一般のヨーガテキストに書かれているのかどうか知りませんが、私がヨーガを習い始めたときは、「アーサナタイムでは手元に水を置いて、ちびちびと飲みながらやりなさい」といわれていました。それは、アーサナによる体の浄化を促進するために水飲みが必須でした。GGECヨーガコースの授業がオンラインになってからこのことをすっかり忘れていました。以前は、授業が夏にかかることもあり、また、スポーツ系の先生がいらっしやったので、水分補給について学生に注意喚起をしました。筑波大学体育棟のトイレに「おしっこの色を見て脱水症状を確認するようにしてください」という張り紙があったので、忘れることがありませんでした。水分補給は大事です。)



I, **Randeep Rakwal** (Sumei's academic advisor and mentor) wrote to Sumei the following on getting a first impression (post-class) as "Otsukaresama deshita- take each step each reflection – as it is, and one (we all) learns each time and over the years it (the meaning of the experience and the doing that led to it in the

first place) becomes more clear to self before one can answer to others – i.e., time is great teacher and so is experience and that in turn creates a teacher who is indeed a teacher, calm and composed, critically thinking without bias and prejudice, providing answers to questions, the solutions (to whatever problems they may be small or big), the paths ('michi' and 'do' – one has to find oneself. And, remember deeper the learning process (like research discipline, so I say to develop the basic knowledge and techniques is key for any graduate student; in Yoga as Sumei mentions, students showed a deep interest in breathing techniques...) and broader the experience (like a teacher) greater the path in front, which is simple not complex...if we want it to be. Further, the more one sees from other experiences (and, here one must have the ability to distinguish between the good and bad experiences; both provide a learning, it is how one is influenced by it and one's ability to seek the truth in each; i.e., this is not right and this is right, both are true). So, I believe Sumei has to experience (other than what she has learnt in China, and from Gen sensei) – get exposure and awareness (like with Ogura sensei's class, and know each individual style, which is also the basis of communication) – and reflect by writing (critical analysis as in research) and analysis and discussion; i.e., then only a revision is possible. Then, she (Sumei) is on the 'path' of the YOGI it can be said; and, then only can she be able to 'see and say' what is Yoga and what is outside of Yoga. In all, Sumei is growing, by doing, and having the patience to do and listen, and that serves the purpose of doing YOGA itself – to be one with self.

For Yoh, I can say that she has had an experience and exposure to another way of Yoga by visiting the Yoga classes run by Ogura sensei. And, the importance of both nutrition (we often neglect it in the university, I have to acknowledge it...) and hydration. So, I believe other than her expertise, Yoh has to continue learning – listening – observing from not only a 'good' teacher, but also other good teachers and yoga practices, and refine her own way of Yoga as her own path.

Thank you ALL, TOSHI OGURA sensei and all STUDENTS, SUMEI HUANG – YOH INOUE, and GENBOKU TAKAHAHSI sensei, we continue the journey...with the students; together we learn and make a 'change'.

Thank you.
Sincerely Yours

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PROJECTS:

tYMC/TYfa-筑波みんなのヨーガ Tsukuba Yoga for All: <https://www.facebook.com/tsukuba.yogaforall>

SHED: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/shed.u>

AKUA BADMINTON アクア バドミントン - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2213775982286770>

TIAS 2.0 x Japan Cricket Association (JCA) Research - Talent Identification - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2052650814908370>

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