

TOEIC® Newsletter

— Digest Version —

[Special Feature]

Using the TOEIC® program as a tool to improve the “four communicative skills”

The diversification of communication methods, through the appearance of the Internet, e-mail, and videophones, has led to demand for a higher level of comprehensive communication skills, including English ability, so that people can understand the opinions of others and quickly convey their own views in response, and for the ability to locate pertinent data from among the huge volume of available information and act on it.

This issue looks at the efforts of some organizations to comprehensively improve listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills in English; and also examines ways in which the TOEIC® test (listening and reading) and the TOEIC Speaking and Writing tests (TOEIC SW tests) are being used to that end.

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The TOEIC® Newsletter is published quarterly by the Institute for International Business Communication (IIBC) in Japanese. It features how the TOEIC test is used effectively within companies, universities and other institutions. We offer the latest case studies of TOEIC test usage to our clients, so they can take full advantage of the TOEIC test within their organization. In this journal, we also introduce a trend of global human resources development and the globalization movement in Japan.

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The importance of nurturing the ability to use English as a communicative tool

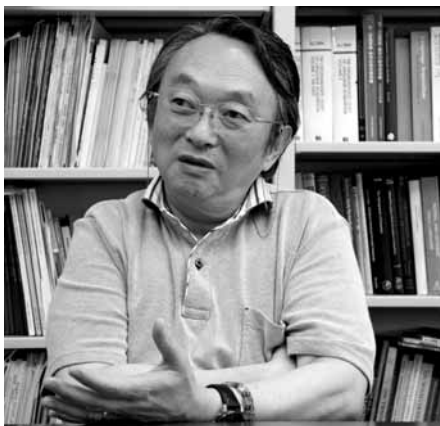
Kensaku Yoshida

Professor of the Faculty of Foreign Studies
at Sophia University

Kensaku Yoshida

Professor of the Faculty of Foreign Studies
Director of the Center for the Teaching of Foreign
Languages in General Education
Sophia University

Graduated from Sophia University's Faculty of Foreign Studies in 1972, where he majored in English. Received a master's degree from Sophia University in 1974, and finished the doctoral program in linguistics at the University of Michigan in 1980. Served as dean of Sophia University's Faculty of Foreign Studies and was a member of MEXT's Super English Language High Schools (SELHi) Research, Development, and Planning Committee; and leader of the MEXT's Task Force to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities." Currently serves as external executive director of Asia TEFL and director of the Accreditation Council of Elementary School Instructors of English. Has written numerous books, including, *A Guidebook to Training English Instructors to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities."*



We asked professor Kensaku Yoshida, who has been involved in a broad range of projects about the new Course of Study and the future of English education in Japan, including the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's (MEXT's) Strategic Plan to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities."

Japan has many people who cannot function in English because of exam-centered education that over-emphasizes knowledge acquisition

English education in Japan up to now has been centered on classroom-based learning for knowledge acquisition. In fact, there has been a distinct lack of awareness of English as a tool for communication. The focus on accurately acquiring English as a grammatical system was so intense, that the need for English in daily life was hardly considered.

These days, however, the advance of information technology has given rise to a borderless age. English has become a vital means of communicating information, and there is a greater awareness of the fact that Japan faces a difficult future unless it can make effective use of that tool.

The corporate community is aware of the need for practical English skills and has adapted accordingly, but the academic community has remained stuck in a knowledge-centered, classroom-based type of English education. In this sense, Japan's educators have not managed to keep pace with globalization.

The fact that most Japanese people cannot speak English, despite having studied it from junior

high school onwards, indicates that the problem lies squarely in Japan's system of English education, where the aim in teaching students the language has been to ensure that they pass their exams.

The new Course of Study, however, adopts the view that Japanese people need the ability to speak English in order for Japan to thrive within the global community. Based on this perspective, the guidelines chart a new direction for English education, recognizing the need to conduct classes in a way that nurtures practical English skills.

Balanced learning of the four communicative skills makes it possible to express oneself in the global community

Under the new Course of Study, foreign language instruction will become compulsory for fifth- and sixth-year elementary school students, starting in the 2011 academic year. As with other subjects, elementary school English will be centered on experience-based learning. The objective is to have students experience English as a language, thereby providing them with the building blocks needed to build their communicative skills, while also boosting their motivation to learn English. In junior high school, students go on to develop the basics of practical communication, in addition to acquiring a systematic understanding of English. Students polish their practical English skills further in high school and university, with the aim of developing the active communicative skills necessary to engage in discussions, speeches, and debates.

Of the four communicative skills, elementary school English classes will focus on listening and speaking in particular, but starting in junior high school, English will become a more comprehensive subject that encompasses reading and writing as well. Students cannot participate in discussions, speeches, and debates without also having a grounding in reading and writing; and the level of language required for such activities is higher than for ordinary conversation, making it vital that students learn to read and write English in order to grasp the language visually as well as aurally. High schools and universities will aim to provide a good

balance of instruction in the four communicative skills, including a higher level of reading and writing.

A vicious cycle developed in English education centered on listening and reading because the lack of opportunities to communicate in English stunted the development of students' speaking capabilities, which in turn reduced opportunities to communicate. It is laudable, therefore, that the new Course of Study is oriented towards classroom English lessons that provide students with as many opportunities and forums as possible to communicate.

Japanese students make a contribution to the world by teaching English to Cambodian middle school students

This summer, I took eleven students to Cambodia, where they taught English to local middle school students.

The Cambodian attitude was that it might be easier to learn from fellow Asians who know firsthand how hard it is to acquire English, rather than from native speakers of English. So we were warmly welcomed and the local middle school students were pleased. The project was a great success, and we received feedback about how the Cambodian students had learned a lot.

Needless to say, this little experiment in contributing to the advancement of a developing nation is part of a wider trend of globalization. While the more tangible facets of aid for developing countries tend to attract attention, I believe it is equally important that we Japanese use our knowledge, which is surely one of our strengths, to provide assistance in less tangible areas.

In any case, it goes without saying that Japan must put its strengths to use in the international community and make a contribution. That is true globalization. It is not the job of school-based English education alone to help improve our English skills and foster international understanding; society also has many educational resources to contribute (such as local personnel who can help out for elementary school English classes).

TOEIC® program used to comprehensively test astronaut candidates' English skills

Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)

For the first time in ten years, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) put out a call for applications from people wanting to become astronauts; and in 2009 three were formally hired. Part of the selection process involved testing the candidates' English abilities using the TOEIC test, the TOEIC Writing test, and the TOEIC Language Proficiency Interview (LPI).

We spoke to Takahiro Abe, an associate senior engineer at JAXA who was involved in the selection process.

First call for astronauts in ten years; Japanese astronauts to go to the International Space Station

— What caused JAXA to advertise for prospective astronauts for the first time in a decade?

The International Space Station (ISS), the huge, manned research laboratory currently under construction approximately 400 kilometers above the earth, is an international project involving fifteen countries, including the U.S., Canada, Russia, and European countries. Japan is also a partner in the project and its first space laboratory, the Japanese Experiment Module (dubbed “Kibo”) was attached to the ISS, beginning its operations in 2008. Astronaut Koichi Wakata just returned to Earth last July after spending four and a half months aboard the ISS, thus becoming the first Japanese to make an extended stay in space. And other Japanese astronauts are scheduled to regularly inhabit the ISS in the future.

Training and other preparations for space flight take time. Being in space puts a heavy physical and mental strain on astronauts so it is difficult to

have the same astronauts go to space again and again. For this reason, and in order to expand Japan's space program, JAXA decided to recruit additional Japanese astronauts able to live aboard the ISS for an extended period of time.

— How are they chosen?

There is a screening process made up of four stages: documentary, primary, secondary, and tertiary screening.

First of all, the documentary screening involves examining the application materials and conducting an English test. This is followed by the primary and secondary screenings, where applicants undergo a medical examination, a general education test, basic tests in areas of expertise, and a psychological aptitude test. Finally, there is the tertiary screening, where an overall evaluation is conducted by subjecting applicants to an aptitude testing regarding long-term space travel, a swimming test, and interviews.

We carry out the tests in stages so that we can examine applicants' aptitude from a variety of angles.

Six astronauts, who come from Russia, the U.S., Japan, and European countries, live and work together aboard the ISS. There is also a large body of support staff on the ground to help ensure the success of the astronauts' activities in space.

In order to complete the mission as a member of such an international team, not only is it important to have expertise in natural sciences and an ability to communicate in English, which is the common language used, but it is also vital to be aware of the need for teamwork and to have flexible leadership qualities as well as the ability to cooperate and understand other cultures and values. Moreover, in addition to having the physical strength to live in

space, astronauts need the inner toughness and self-control to make appropriate decisions and act on them, even in the stressful environment of having to live for a long period of time in a confined space.

So, our screening process is designed to evaluate those qualities, abilities, and mental characteristics. We choose only balanced individuals who have all of the required qualities and skills.

— What level of English does JAXA require in the screening tests?

Astronauts need to be able to freely communicate their views in English. One relevant criterion would be the ability to keep up with post-graduate courses taught in English.

But English ability is not our sole requirement. Astronauts must also be able to communicate at a level that allows their colleagues on the international team to rely on them, not only in terms of the tasks they perform but also in areas that are not necessarily work-related.

We do not demand candidates to already have that high level of English ability at the time they are selected as trainee astronauts, but we do expect them to improve their communication skills in the course of undergoing their training.

TOEIC program chosen because it enables testing of applicants from Japan and overseas

— The English tests conducted in the course of the screening process for astronaut candidates includes the TOEIC test (listening and reading) and the TOEIC Writing test, both of which are held at the documentary screening stage, as well as the TOEIC LPI that is held during the secondary screening. Tell us about how JAXA came to adopt the TOEIC program.

As early as the documentary screening stage, we need to begin evaluating whether the applicants have the English skills necessary to perform their tasks. We thus needed a test that could be given to around 1,000 examinees in locations nationwide, at the times and dates of our choosing. We also considered having overseas-based applicants send in documentary evidence of their English skills that could exempt them from having to take the English



Takahiro Abe
Associate Senior Engineer
Human Space Technology
and Astronauts Department
Human Space Systems
and Utilization Mission
Directorate
Japan Aerospace
Exploration Agency

test, so we also needed a test that would be well known among overseas residents and available for candidates to take in their home countries. In the end, we realized that the TOEIC program met all those criteria.

Astronauts' communication mainly involves listening and speaking, but obviously there is paperwork as well that requires reading and writing skills. Through administering the tests we attempted to gauge as many skills as possible so as to get a comprehensive overview of each candidate's abilities.

— Why was English speaking ability tested at the secondary screening stage?

We received almost a thousand applications for the astronaut trainee positions, so we wouldn't have had enough time or personnel to hold interview-style speaking tests for every applicant at the documentary screening stage.

Timing was also a factor, as we felt that the secondary screening stage was the best moment for measuring applicants' English speaking skills. The documentary and primary screening processes, designed to assess whether an applicant has the basic aptitude to become an astronaut, focused mainly on written tests. Once we reached the secondary screening, applicant numbers had been whittled down to around fifty and we could finally get to know each applicant's personality in greater detail. The secondary screening stage was where we interviewed candidates to evaluate, from a multi-faceted perspective, their various traits, abilities, and mental aspects.

Finally, at the tertiary screening stage, assessors met with applicants one-on-one to really get a feel for their what they are like and evaluate their behavior and view of the world. We did not want people to come as far as the tertiary screening

stage only to be turned away because their English communication skills were not up to scratch, so we evaluated English ability prior to that stage.

— Apart from the English tests, which parts of the screening required applicants to demonstrate English skills?

For the tertiary screening, applicants traveled to NASA in Houston, Texas for interviews and to experience training, both of which were conducted in English. That was not an English test as such, but it did require the ability to use English.

We also gauged applicants' aptitude for the position of astronaut during the tertiary screening by having them live together for a week in a facility where they worked on a range of different tasks, based on our assumption that the successful applicants will eventually have to spend long periods of time on the ISS. During that week we made the experience more challenging for the applicants by suddenly requiring that they switch from performing their tasks in Japanese to doing them in English.

— Now they have been selected, what do the trainees have to do to become astronauts?

They will undergo approximately two years of astronaut training at NASA in the U.S., where they will further their knowledge of science and technology and get an overview of the systems equipped in the ISS. The trainees will also study English and Russian, receive aircraft flight training, and take part in physical training. If they successfully complete that stage they will become certified JAXA astronauts. Thus certified, the astronauts will then go on to study the various systems and operational technologies of the ISS at space agencies in Japan, the U.S., Russia, Canada, and European countries.

Once the decision is made to send the astronauts to the ISS, they will undergo at least two more years of training in which they learn about ISS operational procedures and experiment procedures

needed to complete their mission, as well as training for maneuvering manned transport spaceships.

In addition, in the time leading up to their departure for NASA, the trainees chosen in 2009 were provided with one-on-one English lessons with instructors whose first language is English.

— What direction will Japanese manned space exploration take in the future?

The installation of Kibo in the ISS has ushered in a new era in Japanese manned space exploration that will involve long-term stays in space. We are in the process of considering how our space program will proceed beyond 2015, which is the final year of the current operational plan of the ISS, but I am sure that the scope of manned space exploration will only expand. JAXA aims to maintain and develop the field of aerospace in the future, and to give back to the community by helping to improve people's lives through the research and technologies resulting from the space program.

If manned space exploration continues to progress, we will need more astronauts. It is important for astronauts to maintain their strong desire to travel to space, even when the training gets tough, and to relish taking on the challenges that exploring that new frontier entails.

I have high hopes that Japan will produce astronauts with unquenchable enthusiasm who play an increasingly important role as members of our international team.

Organization overview

Name : Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency
Established : October 1, 2003
Staff : 1,636 (as of April 1, 2008)

Inspired by its corporate message, "Reaching for the skies, exploring space," JAXA is dedicated to aerospace research and development that contributes to the creation of a secure and prosperous society.

TOEIC® SW tests incorporated into Global Business Staff Training and used to develop personnel for overseas operations

Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd.

Setting TOEIC score as a promotion criterion raises awareness of the benefits of improving English ability

Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd. (KHI) is a comprehensive engineering manufacturer that supports society and industrial infrastructures through its global operations.

The company, which has active overseas business operations, beat out other top players in Japan's car and motorcycle industry in 1975 to become the first to produce motorcycles locally in the U.S.

We spoke to Masaaki Sawasaki, senior manager of KHI's human capital development department within the personnel and labor administration division, about the company's overseas business.

“Our wide-ranging overseas operations include the export and overseas production of products, cross-border joint development of new products and technologies in cooperation with overseas companies, and licensing technologies to foreign companies, as well as the introduction of foreign companies' technologies and producing goods under license.

“For our business, overseas sales surpass domestic sales, constituting 55 percent of consolidated sales; and we have some sixty overseas locations, with some 270 Japanese employees assigned to those positions. KHI employees take a combined total of around 8,000 overseas trips per year, including everything from one-night trips to two-year or three-year stays for developing and building industrial plants.”

It is vital that employees involved in the company's overseas business have the ability to communicate in English in order that they can negotiate with clients and carry out other tasks.

Moreover, with overseas markets making up such a large part of its business, KHI views English ability as a necessary skill for employees based in Japan as well; and the company is eager to help those employees improve their English ability. As part of that effort, KHI introduced the TOEIC test in 1997.

The test, which is held annually in January or February, is compulsory for new employees, while other staff may take it voluntarily at the company's expense. Prospective employees are also required to take the TOEIC test.

In addition, TOEIC scores are one of the criteria for promotion to the level of assistant manager. “As our offshore business expands,” Mr. Sawasaki explained, “employees never know when they might be assigned to work with an overseas client. Therefore, we have set a target score of 450 to encourage our employees in Japan to acquire at least a basic level of English ability as a tool for communication.”

Employees' TOEIC scores are recorded in their personnel files. This allows the company to identify the company personnel with the necessary qualifications or skills required to work on a particular new project. Mr. Sawasaki pointed out that, even after employees achieve the level of English required for advancement, those who continue to improve their TOEIC scores have opportunities to expand the scope of their work even further.

KHI incorporates English lessons as a part of training for new employees so that its employees will engage in English study as early in their careers as possible. For example, those working at company headquarters in Kobe take two-hour English lessons twice a week, for approximately three months, in groups of five or six employees. Training is planned and carried out independently by each of KHI's

branches and factories, with some opting to offer English conversation and TOEIC preparation lessons.

Once the training of new employees is completed, English study becomes a matter of their own self-development, although the company provides the employees with support through correspondence courses designed to suit a range of objectives and levels of ability.

There is also a voluntary training program for employees who wish to improve English skills for areas related to their work duties, such as contracts, technical writing, foreign exchange, and other topics related to export finance.

With the growing awareness of the benefits of learning English, there are also numerous cases of individual branches and factories organizing their own English courses in addition to the company-wide courses described above, as Mr. Sawasaki explained.

“There are cases of motivated employees getting together to plan and hold language classes outside of company time, such as bringing in instructors from outside the company to teach English conversation lessons or having overseas engineers in Japan teach such courses.”

Employees involved in overseas operations selected for Global Business Staff Training

KHI enhanced its already active involvement in English education in 2007 with the introduction of a new program aimed at fostering a globally capable workforce through the training of employees based overseas.

In May 2007, KHI unveiled the Kawasaki Group Mission Statement as a way to clarify its mission vis-à-vis society and convey the values shared by its employees as a 21st century company. The group's mission was stated thus: “Kawasaki, working as one for the good of the planet.” KHI believes that achieving this mission will require the development of a globally capable workforce, and to that end the company introduced its Global Business Staff Training.

Miyuki Imamura, manager of the overseas human administration section in the labor administration department of the personnel and labor administration division, explained the sort of employee KHI is hoping to foster through Global Business Staff Training.

“Conducting business on a global scale requires an understanding of the cultures and ways



Masaaki Sawasaki
Senior Manager
Human Capital
Development Department
Personnel and Labor
Administration Division
Kawasaki Heavy
Industries, Ltd.

of thinking of the countries you are dealing with. So it is necessary to view things from a wider and more diverse perspective. Our aim is to foster employees who can engage in our overseas business with that sort of perspective. We also hope that those employees will put their overseas experience to good use when they later become KHI executives, so that our local companies worldwide and the Kawasaki Group as a whole can be guided by a truly global mindset.”

At present, Global Business Staff Training consists of an Elementary Class for second-year employees. In 2009, each KHI division involved in overseas operations—such as overseas sales, procurement, and project management—recommended one or two employees with English skills equivalent to a TOEIC score of 600 for the program, for a total of ten trainees.

Training lasts for six months. Trainees come together for a week every month to learn about the current state of KHI's overseas operations as well as the trading business, international contracts, finance, taxation, and the overall process and procedures for KHI's business (from procurement of materials through to project completion and product delivery).

The training program also includes English instruction. English lessons are held on the last day of each month's training week, with the trainees studying business English conversation for the whole eight-hour workday. Once the six-month training period is completed, the trainees take the TOEIC SW tests.

The TOEIC SW tests were incorporated into the training program in FY2008, as Ms. Imamura explained.

“In conducting business overseas, there is a need to communicate in English via paper documents and e-mail, as well as many situations



Miyuki Imamura
 Manager
 Overseas Human
 Administration Section
 Labor Administration
 Department
 Personnel and Labor
 Administration Division
 Kawasaki Heavy
 Industries, Ltd.

that require employees to meet clients for discussions and negotiations. This is why our trainees now take English conversation lessons. And we have also introduced TOEIC SW tests as a means of directly evaluating our employees' speaking and writing capabilities. In February we have the trainees take the TOEIC test as well, so we are effectively able to measure all four communicative skills.”

In addition to the monthly English conversation lessons, the training program also involves raising the level of the trainees' English skills by providing them with grammar and writing assignments via e-learning and e-mail.

TOEIC SW tests make examinees better aware of their abilities and prepare them for further study

When KHI held the TOEIC SW tests for the first time, many employees who took the test said they found it challenging to respond quickly within the time allotted. For Ms. Imamura, this feedback reflected the benefits of the TOEIC SW tests, as she explained.

“My impression was that the TOEIC SW tests served to open the examinees' eyes to their own weaknesses related to English. Those who find speaking English a hassle are often not aware of what aspects of their speaking ability are insufficient. The tests, however, enable them to identify their weak points.

“Even people who have the listening and reading skills to perform well on the TOEIC test are sometimes unable to give the answers they want on the TOEIC SW tests, and that is when they find out

that they need to work on their speaking skills.”

Mr. Sawasaki adds: “One of the most important aspects of training is to have trainees identify areas to work on. In that sense, I feel the TOEIC SW tests are effective in allowing examinees to reach specific conclusions. For instance, those who were unable to convey a message concisely will know that this is an area that requires more work.

“It is my sincere hope that trainees will strive to continue developing their skills after the training is completed.”

Until FY2008, TOEIC scores were not a prerequisite for eligibility to participate in Global Business Staff Training, but based on the results of the previous round of TOEIC SW tests, KHI realized that the program would be more effective if the participants already had attained a certain level of English ability. Accordingly, the company established a TOEIC score of 600 as a criterion for eligibility, starting in FY2009. Ms. Imamura hopes that this will lead to an improvement in TOEIC SW test scores compared to the previous time. Although no target scores have been set for the TOEIC SW tests yet, the company is looking into establishing targets in the future, after a few years of test data have been accumulated.

“There are plans to increase the number of Global Business Staff Training classes to include more advanced content aimed at employees who have been with the company for three to five years,” explained Ms. Imamura. “And we are also considering dispatching trainees to our overseas affiliates for a year of training.”

KHI is making a company-wide effort to improve the English ability of its employees; and “Global Kawasaki” aims to contribute further to enriching people's lives and protect the natural environment throughout the world.

Company overview

Name : Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd.
 Established : 1896
 Employees : Consolidated: 32,266; non-consolidated 10,901
 (As of March 31, 2009)

Since its foundation in 1878, KHI grown steadily into a comprehensive engineering company by expanding its operations from shipbuilding to also include rolling stock, aircraft, motorcycles, industrial plants, and machinery.

TOEIC® scores used as a criterion for credit authorization and graduation; Department of Tourism Policy introduces TOEIC® SW tests

Yamaguchi University

Common English curriculum partially revised; elementary-level students to take TOEIC Bridge®

Since the 2002 academic year, English courses have been compulsory for all students at Yamaguchi University regardless of their majors, and part of that curriculum involves the TOEIC test. Immediately after admission, all first-year students participate in a two-month, seven-session course called Comprehensive preparation for the TOEIC test. Then, in June, those students take the TOEIC test, and their scores are used to divide them into the appropriate level for their subsequent classes.

Yamaguchi University also uses TOEIC scores as a criterion for graduation, with the required score ranging from 300 to 600 depending on the faculties and departments. Students have five opportunities to take the TOEIC test throughout the year, including the June test just mentioned.

In the 2008 academic year, six years after TOEIC was first introduced, the university partially amended its curriculum. The change centered on the introduction of a new course: Basic English.

Under the old curriculum, students who failed to score 350 on the TOEIC test had been required to take a Basic Training for the TOEIC, and were not allowed to progress to the next class level until they had attained that required score. The new system is aimed at gradually eliminating that process by positioning the new Basic English course as a way to encourage students to earn credits through classes and self-study, while at the same time maintaining the minimum score requirement for graduation. After the change, anyone who scored less than 400 on the TOEIC test was required to take Basic English.

We spoke to Kozo Iwabe, professor in the Department of Language and Literature in Faculty of Humanities and head of the Center for the

Promotion of Higher Education at Yamaguchi University, to find out more about the background to the establishment of the Basic English course.

“Our objective in introducing this requirement to score 350 on the TOEIC test so soon after admission was to have students acquire a basic level of English ability at an early stage so they could subsequently improve their English skills through English classes grouped according to their ability. It gradually became clear, however, that some students were falling into the dilemma of failing to achieve the required score and repeating the Basic Training for the TOEIC, which eventually led to a reluctance to attend the Basic Training for the TOEIC classes. We also had a number of students well into their third or fourth years who were still unable to attain the minimum score. Basic English was introduced in order to reverse those negative trends.”

For the Basic English course, the content of the class differs depending on each teacher, and students can choose the class which they want to take in each semester. They are required to engage in 180 minutes of e-learning and other types of studying per week for every 90-minute class they take; and they are awarded credits for steadily completing that total of 270 minutes of study each week. The progress and content of the e-learning portion of the course is the same for all students, and their study hours are closely monitored.

In addition to taking Basic English, students who score under 400 on the TOEIC test also have the opportunity to participate in English Speaking, a course with a low student-to-teacher ratio that is aimed at bolstering English conversational ability. For this course, the students' seating arrangement in a circle and they form pairs to practice conversing on a given topic. Every few minutes, students change partners and speak with someone else, so that conversations do not fall into a repeated pattern and



Kozo Iwabe
Professor
Department of Language
and Literature
Faculty of Humanities
Head of the Center for the
Promotion of Higher
Education
Yamaguchi University



Daijiro Fujii
Dean and Professor
Faculty of Economics
Graduate School of
Economics
Yamaguchi University

to ensure that students can keep talking without becoming bored.

In conjunction with those tweaks in the curriculum for students who have yet to achieve a TOEIC score of 400, Yamaguchi University has also introduced TOEIC Bridge. Students may have their TOEIC Bridge scores count as a criterion for graduation until they reach the score of 350 on the TOEIC test. However, a score of 400 or more is still required in order to receive credit authorization and graduate.

Professor Iwabe told us about the background to the university's introduction of TOEIC Bridge: "In a test with a maximum score of 990, setting a requirement of 350 is like asking students to aim for a level of achievement that is no higher than thirty or forty percent. This is not likely to motivate students to take the test, so we also introduced TOEIC Bridge, which is better suited to their level of ability. We recommend students stick with TOEIC Bridge until they exceed 400."

Department of Tourism Policy requires a TOEIC score of 600 for graduation; aims to combine specialist courses with English study

Yamaguchi University's undergraduate departments strive to deepen students' knowledge in their areas of specialized studies, while at the same time fostering the sort of English skills that can be put to practical use in the real world. The Faculty of Economics, which in 1994 became the first at a national university to implement the TOEIC test, makes a particularly strong effort when it comes to English study.

Students at the Faculty of Economics must achieve a TOEIC score of at least 400 in order to graduate. The only exception is for students in the

Department of Tourism Policy, who must meet an even higher standard: a minimum TOEIC score of 600 or a TOEIC score of at least 500 and a suitably high score on an independent test in another foreign language (Korean or Chinese).

The Department of Tourism Policy was established in 2005 within the context of the national policy aimed at making Japan a major tourist destination. Professor Daijiro Fujii, dean of the Faculty of Economics, spoke about the Department of Tourism Policy's curriculum.

"To work on tourism policy, it is necessary to have a wide range of knowledge, including a fundamental understanding of not only economics but also of the culture, history, and religions of Japan and the rest of the world. That is why the Department of Tourism Policy, with help from other faculties, offers courses from a variety of faculties and departments."

At the same time as it endeavors to foster such wide-ranging knowledge, the department also expends considerable effort in developing students' ability to communicate in foreign languages.

Marc Löhr, a professor at the Department of Tourism Policy, had this to say about the department's foreign language studies: "For tourism policy, foreign language ability is a skill that is vital to a range of different scenarios. For instance, you may need to read related materials and annual reports to carry out economic analysis, unveil policy proposals in public forums, or conduct tourism promotions aimed at foreigners. In light of this, we at the Department of Tourism Policy work hard to improve students' communication skills; and we have a robust structure in place for teaching English, the international language, as well as Chinese and Korean, which are also closely linked to tourism in Japan these days."

The philosophy of the Department of Tourism Policy is that students only truly possess



Mitsuyasu Miyazaki
 Professor
 Tourism Communication
 Department of Tourism
 Policy
 Faculty of Economics
 Yamaguchi University



Marc Löhr
 Professor
 Tourism Communication
 Department of Tourism
 Policy
 Faculty of Economics
 Yamaguchi University

“practical English skills” when they are able to understand subjects such as economics and business management taught in English. For this reason, rather than teaching English as a general subject, the department closely links English instruction to the content of its specialized subjects. The ultimate aim of the department is to enable students to communicate in English, in terms of providing and receiving information, with regard to subjects such as economics, tourism, and accounting.

In the spring of 2009, the first class of students graduated from the Department of Tourism Policy. The average TOEIC score for the students was 635, which exceeded the graduation target. Professor Löhr said that one factor underlying the high scores was the challenging target of 600, which motivated the students to study hard.

TOEIC SW tests praised for their active communication requirements; test scores established as a criterion for graduation

In 2009, the Department of Tourism Policy introduced the TOEIC SW tests, in addition to the TOEIC test. One of the proponents of introducing those tests was Mitsuyasu Miyazaki, a professor at the Department of Tourism Policy. We asked him to explain his reasons for wanting to utilize the TOEIC SW tests.

“Unlike the TOEIC test, which uses a mark sheet format, the TOEIC SW tests require examinees to formulate expressions themselves and put them in proper order to score points. There are a number of approaches to take in answering questions in the Speaking and Writing tests, so examinees need the faculty to think creatively. In addition, while students obviously need the listening skills needed to comprehend the questions, they must also have swift reading comprehension abilities. In that sense, the

TOEIC SW tests cover all four of the communicative skills.

“Students need to revitalize their thinking faculties, as well as reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills, in order to be able to communicate about the things they have learned. We felt that the TOEIC SW tests were geared to precisely evaluate those skills, which is why our department decided to utilize the tests.”

The first time the TOEIC SW tests were held, the professors notified students and they took the test on a voluntary basis. Students who took the tests said that they were tough, but at the same time they felt a sense of satisfaction from using their own words to answer the questions; and many said they would like to take the test again.

Based on the belief that speaking and writing skills should also be evaluated, alongside listening and reading, the Department of Tourism Policy has approved the use of TOEIC SW test scores as criteria for graduation; and students are required to score at least 120 on both the speaking and writing components.

In light of these developments, the Faculty of Economics has decided to implement TOEIC SW test scores as criteria for graduation, in addition to TOEIC test scores, for all of its departments starting next year.

School overview

Name : Yamaguchi University
 Founded : 1949
 Student body : 10,643 (as of May 1, 2009)

Yamaguchi University was officially founded in 1949 but its history stretches back to 1815 when Yamaguchi Kodo, a private school, was established nearly 200 years ago. It is the region's core integrated university, and has seven undergraduate and ten post-graduate schools. Inspired by its motto, “Discover it. Nourish it. Realize it. A Place of Wisdom.” Yamaguchi University aims to produce graduates who are able to contribute to the betterment of communities on both the local and international levels.

Department of English uses the TOEIC® SW tests to improve students' four communicative skills

Hokusei Gakuen University & Junior College

Hokusei Gakuen University,
School of Humanities Department of English

TOEIC SW test scores reflect students' attitudes in class and enthusiasm for learning English

The Department of English at Hokusei Gakuen University's School of Humanities aims to nurture graduates who are not only specialists in their chosen fields but also have a high level of English proficiency and intercultural awareness, and can act as a bridge between countries.

We spoke to Hitoshi Eguchi, an assistant professor at the School of Humanities, about the department's English curriculum.

“The Department of English has a Common English Course for the systematic learning of reading, writing, and speaking skills. First-year and second-year students are required to study reading comprehension, composition, and conversation, while third year students must enroll in the discussion class. These courses are mainly taught by instructors whose native language is English; and we make a real effort to develop all four communicative skills, including instruction for listening that employs e-learning materials.”

As the university endeavors to improve those four skills, assistant professor Eguchi and fifteen of his third-year tutorial students took the TOEIC SW tests in May 2009, as he explains: “A person who speaks English for everyday situations needs to be able to explain—in that language—not just abstract topics but also specific things and events that are happening right in front of us. The TOEIC SW tests require examinees to look at pictures and discuss in English what is going on in them, so I felt the tests were well suited to gauging the ability of students to express themselves in English.”

The students who took the test scored an average of 117 on the TOEIC Speaking test (top score was 150) and 135 on the TOEIC Writing test (top score was 180); and assistant professor Eguchi analyzed those results.

“I think the scores were an accurate reflection of the students' attitudes in class and their enthusiasm for learning English. We plan to hold the TOEIC SW tests again in January, which will enable us to gauge the students' progress.

“The Department of English is also scheduled to hold the TOEIC test this October for all third-year students. This use of the TOEIC program allows us to directly monitor students' progress in the four communicative skills; and I look forward to finding some interesting results when we analyze the correlation between the TOEIC test scores, the TOEIC SW test scores, and the TOEFL scores of the students who took the TOEIC SW tests.”

Regarding the use of the TOEIC SW tests, he added: “Some students who took the tests are not particularly good at reading, but achieved surprisingly high scores on the speaking test thanks to their experience of studying overseas. I believe we can motivate these students to do even better by using the TOEIC SW tests as a means of assessing the sort of skills they would have been hard pressed to display in reading or grammar tests.”

International exchanges and other innovative ideas foster an environment for students to speak English daily

Despite the introduction of a number of innovative ideas in the department's English curriculum to help students improve all four communicative skills, there are some students who still lack the confidence to speak English even in



Hitoshi Eguchi
Assistant Professor
Department of English
School of Humanities
Hokusei Gakuen University

their third and fourth years. Assistant professor Eguchi suspects that the following reason may be involved: “Such students do not have a real sense of putting their English skills to practical use. This means that they are not entirely convinced that their English is good enough for others to really understand them. And this creates a mental block that hinders further progress.”

However, the Department of English has introduced a broad range of innovative extracurricular activities to help students overcome that obstacle, as he explained further.

“One activity is short-term overseas study trips. In the past two years, we have organized one-month English study programs at the University of California in San Diego. The program is greatly beneficial to students, as it provides them with more experience in actually using English while also broadening their horizons. In fact, students that participated in the program have become much more proactive in their participation in voluntary international exchange activities, such as interacting more with the university’s foreign students or participating in volunteer activities. For example, in 2008 around forty Hokusei University students served as volunteer interpreters in conjunction with the G8 Summit held at Lake Toyako, Hokkaido.”

According to assistant professor Eguchi, that the university hopes such efforts will help minimize the obstacles to using English and promote the creation of an environment at the university in which English communication between faculty and students—and among the students themselves—will become a common occurrence.

“That kind of environment would enable students to improve their English skills right here on campus, without having to go overseas; and it would also allow students to feel that they are using English in a real sense. I sincerely hope that this would

inspire more and more students to aspire to professions that afford them the opportunity to use their English skills; and that they will ultimately expand their horizons beyond Hokkaido to include the wider world.”

Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College, Department of English

Maximum development of fundamental skills in first year; lectures in English in second year

The Department of English at Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College aims to maximize students’ development of fundamental English skills in their first year so that they can keep up with their second-year fundamental higher education courses taught in English by foreign faculty members.

We spoke to Kyoko Morikoshi, an associate professor at the Department of English, to find out more about the department’s English curriculum.

“As a two-year junior college, our objective for that limited timeframe is for our students to acquire the basics of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English before going on to establish the broad foundation of general knowledge needed to improve their ability to express themselves in that language.

“Concentrating on the basics of the four communicative skills in the first year has allowed the Department of English to introduce a curriculum that goes beyond what other universities have to offer by providing general education courses taught in English in the second year. Specifically, this involves the lecture courses for Sociology and Life Science that are conducted in English by foreign faculty members. English is also used for the tests and reports for the courses. In the 2009 academic year, students must choose three or four of the eight available elective courses.”

In addition to these efforts, the Department of English endeavors to provide students with a rich environment for studying English outside of the classroom as well.

Given that self-study is an important aspect of the second-year English lectures, the department has set up a writing laboratory where tutors are on hand to give students advice on their English reports and essays. Additionally, foreigners who are not native speakers of English participate as tutors at one of the four weekly classes in the first-year Oral English course. There is also a daily English Lunch



Kyoko Morikoshi
Associate Professor
Department of English
Hokusei Gakuen University
Junior College

program, where five to ten students can spend their lunchtime conversing in English with tutors and professors, as well as a homestay program and a voluntary short-term overseas study program for first-year students.

TOEIC SW test questions used in class to teach practical English

The Department of English has adopted the TOEIC test since the 2004 academic year; and students take the test a total of four times over their two years at the college (in July and January every year).

In addition, the English Skills Practicum II course, which Associate professor Morikoshi teaches, incorporates practice questions of the TOEIC test in each lesson because the test features many expressions that students will find useful in the real world.

All the while, however, associate professor Morikoshi felt that limiting the course to listening and reading practice made the classes monotonous. So when she found out about the TOEIC SW tests, she was immediately interested.

“I felt that if I could transform my classes by incorporating SW aspects into the course. I tried the sample TOEIC SW test CD-ROM in one of my classes and was surprised at just how much the students enjoyed it, so I decided to make more in-depth use of the tests.”

A trial was held in July 2009 in which the TOEIC SW tests were taken by ten second-year

students who had scored at least 500 on the TOEIC test or who had an equivalent level of English ability. Associate professor Morikoshi depicted the students during the tests.

“Watching the students as they took the tests, I had the impression that they were answering the questions very diligently, but after the tests the students were disappointed that they had not been able to come up with better answers. I fully expect that they will improve their scores even further once they get more study under their belts and become more familiar to the tests' formats.”

Associate professor Morikoshi spoke of how the Department of English will make use of the TOEIC SW tests in the future.

“Many of the department's students go on to work in the hospitality industry; and I have spoken to a number of graduates who have jobs in sectors related to that industry. It has become clear that we did not provide sufficient simulation exercises to cover scenarios that arise in the actual workplace, such as polite expressions to use when dealing with customers or how to deal with complaints. The department's English curriculum will maintain its academic focus of course, but I believe that incorporating the TOEIC SW tests into our classes will enable students to pick up the kinds of skills they will need in the real world. Accordingly, we plan to make use of the TOEIC SW tests in specialist courses starting next academic year.”

School overview

Name : Hokusei Gakuen University,
Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College
Founded : 1951
Student body : University (undergraduate): 3,936;
Junior college: 483;
Post-graduate: 58 (as of May 1, 2009)

The history of Hokusei Gakuen University can be traced back to 1887, when American missionary Sarah C. Smith opened Smith Girls' School. To this day, the university continues its tradition of education aimed at fostering qualities that include a sense of humanity, sociability, and international perspective. The university offers some courses taught by foreign faculty as well as an extensive international exchange program.

The 30th anniversary slogan, "Your Chance Maker" has been adopted with the intention of expressing the desire for the TOEIC brand to continue to generate opportunities for test takers in the future.

TOEIC® SW tests enable direct measurement of speaking and writing skills

The TOEIC SW tests are a means of directly assessing the speaking and writing skills necessary to communicate effectively in English in the global workplace. These tests are held separately from the TOEIC test, which measures listening and reading skills.

The TOEIC Speaking test includes six different types of tasks, consisting of eleven questions. The TOEIC Writing test, meanwhile, is made up of three different types of tasks, consisting of eight questions. The score for each of the tests can range from 0 to 200 in increments of 10.

The TOEIC SW tests are delivered online. Examinees wear headsets and record their spoken answers or type their written answers into a computer.

The Secure Program (SP) of the TOEIC SW tests is held once a month (on a Saturday or Sunday) in major Japanese cities. There is also an Institutional Program (IP) that can be held within an organization at any time.

For more details, visit the official TOEIC Speaking and Writing tests website:

http://www.toEIC.or.jp/toEIC_en/sw/



Examinees take the TOEIC SW tests

TOEIC® Speaking test format

●11 questions ●About 20 minutes

Task	Number of items	Response time	General outline of task
Read a text aloud	2	45 secs. per item (Prep time: 45 secs. per item)	Test-taker reads aloud a short text, such as an announcement or advertisement.
Describe a picture	1	45 secs. (Prep time: 30 secs.)	Test-taker gives a verbal description of a photograph.
Respond to questions	3	15 or 30 secs. (Prep time: none)	Test-taker responds to questions on a commonplace topic, as if responding in an interview.
Respond to questions using information provided	3	15 or 30 secs. (Prep time: none)	Test-taker responds to questions based on written information (such as a schedule of events) that appears on the screen.
Propose a solution	1	60 secs. (Prep time: 30 secs.)	Test-taker listens to a voice mail message describing a problem and gives a response. In the response, the test-taker indicates recognition of the problem and proposes a solution.
Express an opinion	1	60 secs. (Prep time: 15 secs.)	Test-taker expresses an opinion about a specific topic and the reasons for that opinion.

TOEIC® Writing test format

●8 questions ●About 60 minutes

Task	Number of items	Response time	General outline of task
Write a sentence based on a picture	5	8 min. for 5 items	Test-taker writes one sentence based on a picture, using the two words or phrases provided.
Respond to a written request	2	10 min. for each item	Test-taker reads an e-mail message which is about 25 to 50 words long, and writes an e-mail in response.
Write an essay expressing an opinion	1	30 min.	Test-taker writes an essay expressing an opinion on the topic providing, giving reasons or examples to support the opinion.



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