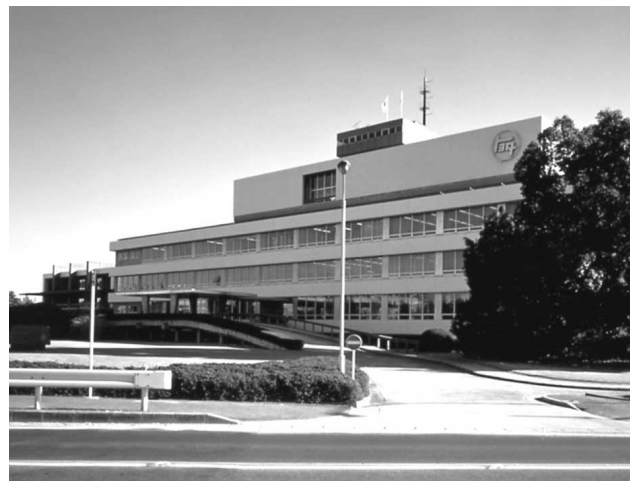


# TOEIC® Bridge Newsletter

## Toyota Motor Corporation

### Utilization of TOEIC Bridge in Human Resources Development Programs of Production Employees to Support the “Self-reliance” of Overseas Sites

Toyota Motor Corporation (hereinafter Toyota) is one of Japan's top automobile companies. Since the 1960s, the company has aggressively expanded its overseas network, building production centers and offices in foreign countries. In 1999, the company succeeded in selling more than three million vehicles outside of Japan. Its worldwide business operations have attracted intense interest from many nations. Given the context of these global activities, Toyota has been an enthusiastic supporter of English language education, as evidenced by its utilization of the TOEIC test and the company policy that attaining a certain test score is one of the prerequisites for promotion for administrative and engineering employees. The company's solid, consistent attitude can also be seen in the FY2003 incorporation of TOEIC Bridge into its human resources training programs designed for production employees assigned to work in overseas company. Our current issue, entitled “TOEIC Bridge Newsletter: Special Issue,” brings you the latest on the English language education provided to manufacturing members at Toyota.



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

The TOEIC® Bridge Newsletter -Special Issue- is translated into English by IIBC for its readers around the world.

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## English Language Learning Programs for the Development of Personnel with a Global Outlook and the Ability to Adapt to Changes in Their Environment

Kiichiro Toyoda, the founder of Toyota (located in Toyota City, Aichi Prefecture) was born in 1894. He was the son of Sakichi Toyoda, a man who went on to make his mark in history as the inventor of the automatic loom. Kiichiro, who carried on his father's legacy of "research and creation," devoted his life to the building of the automobile, which was an unknown field in Japan at that time. His long and strenuous efforts, which included visits to the United States and Europe to observe conditions within the automobile industry, finally culminated in 1935 with the completion of the Model A1 Prototype, which was to become Toyota's first passenger vehicle. Thus began the history of Toyota Motor Corp.

Two years later, he established Toyota Motor Co., Ltd., the predecessor of Toyota Motor Corp., and pursued an aggressive policy of business expansion, buoyed by the favorable trends of increasing automobile use. In 1957, the company began exporting to the United States, with the Crown, a domestic passenger car, being the first vehicle that was exported. In the 1960s, exports got into top gear, and as of the end of 2003, the company had a business network of 46 overseas production centers in 26 countries and regions.

Since the latter half of the 1990s, a time when its global business became well and truly established, Toyota Motor Corp. has been promoting English language learning programs with an aim of developing cosmopolitan personnel who can adapt to changes in their environment in the new era. At present, the company's language training programs are broadly categorized into two streams: those that are operationally focused, and those designed for self-development.

Operationally focused language training programs are mainly conducted in classes. English training programs, in particular, are designed to correspond to the employee's line of work, and fall into two main categories, "administrative and engineering staff" and "production employees." The administrative/engineering English program includes a course called Practical Business Writing (PBW), which helps trainees to acquire the skills they need for English composition.

At the same time, language training courses are also positioned as part of a self-development



**Masayuki Tagawa**  
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program called "Self Training and Education Toward Challenge (STRETCH)." In addition to class-based lessons, trainees can also take correspondence courses. While providing fine-tuned support for English acquisition on the one hand, the company also conducts an "In-house English Proficiency Test," in which TOEIC is utilized, that is attended by approximately 7,000 people a year, most of whom are administrative and engineering employees.

While pursuing these initiatives, Toyota Motor Corp. has begun to focus more strongly in recent years on the development of manufacturing members who can maximize their skills in overseas situations.

## Promoting the Self-reliance of Overseas Production Centers: "Overseas Human Resources Development System" is Established

Masayuki Tagawa of the Team Member Development Department of Toyota's Human Resources Division. explains how English language skills became a requirement for their production employees.

"In 2002, our company announced our management vision, the '2010 Global Vision.' This described the corporate image we were aiming for, with the year 2010 as a landmark of sorts. One of the corporate targets that constitutes part of the Global Vision is to capture 15 percent of the global market in the 2010s. In the context of a maturing domestic market and increasingly fierce competition, it has become necessary to win a significant share of the promising overseas market in order to expand our global presence. And furthermore, we will need

to put even more emphasis on expanding our offshore production as well as on shifting production overseas, based on the philosophy of producing saleable products in the locations where they are sold.

“Given this kind of environment, our company intends to place an even greater emphasis on overseas cooperation using our production employees.”

Toyota is already very active in the area of technical cooperation, with a large number of its production employees being dispatched to overseas production centers. However, according to Mr. Tagawa, the nature of such cooperation has in many cases been limited to the dispatched employees carrying out operations themselves using the know-how at their disposal, or dealing with problems that the overseas entity found difficult to solve on their own.

“We feel that in future, our offshore production centers will need to become self-reliant. By self-reliant, we mean each organization and worker will have to be capable of ‘performing, improving, and evolving’ in their duties relying on their own resources and ingenuity. Given that Toyota’s support system for overseas plants and offices will be aiming to create this sort of situation, there is a need to convey to our local partners not only the techniques and procedures for doing certain things, but also our company’s approach toward ‘manufacturing products’ that underlies these technical aspects, and the reasons why things need to be done that way. It is essential for us to improve the foreign language skills of our manufacturing members, as they need this ability to convey these basic philosophies and approaches as they give guidance to the local people.”

In order to accelerate the development of employees who can engage in support operations at offshore production centers, Toyota has set up an “Overseas Human Resources Development System.” Production employees who register with this system take the “English Conversation Course” or courses in the “Foreign Language Program” that include a Chinese language course. The English conversation lessons are conducted in classes, where students undertake intensive training to develop their skills over a short period of a month or two.

Lessons are offered at two levels, beginner and intermediate, and class sizes are between six and ten people. A combination of teaching materials are used in the beginner course that include general English training program materials, materials to help

trainees understand conversation categories such as “making requests” and “giving instructions,” general vocabulary building materials, and specialized materials consisting of English glossaries of special terms that are frequently used at the workplaces of production employees. Efforts are made to make the classes both enjoyable and informative, with trainees sometimes engaging in “Karuta” matches, where flashcards are spread out on the floor, the teacher calls out the name of a card, and players attempt to be the first to slap the card. Trainees who complete the beginner course may move on to the intermediate level.

When an employee who has been given an overseas assignment cannot attend class lessons due to conflicting work schedules, the employee may receive private lessons at a language school.

### **Creation of the Can-Do Questionnaire to Set Up a Guideline for TOEIC Bridge Score Evaluation**

In November 2002, 28 production employees took the TOEIC Bridge examination as a trial session. Due to the concern that an individual’s language skills in the context of job performance could not be fully ascertained through just a simple score, the company requested the creation and provision of an evaluation guideline for the TOEIC Bridge score before the system was fully introduced.

In response to this request, the TOEIC Steering Committee enlisted the cooperation of Toyota and began the production of the “Can-Do Questionnaire,” which was tailored to the characteristics of production employees. The questionnaire was designed to set up guidelines indicating how the total score of TOEIC Bridge would be evaluated. External experts were involved in the questionnaire, as well as its analysis and enhancing its reliability. A total of 60 Can-Do categories were created for the questionnaire, all built around real-life scenarios where the production employees would be using English. The questionnaire was to be given when the TOEIC Bridge test was implemented.

In FY2003, a total of 2,550 people took the TOEIC Bridge test, mostly trainees in the English Conversation Course and employees being trained for overseas support. Mr. Tagawa explains why the decision was made to adopt the test:

“In order to go about improving the language skills of our production employees, there is a need to first of all fully understand where they are

at in terms of their current skill levels.

“We had already been giving the TOEIC test to our administrative and engineering personnel, but we thought we should bring in a slightly less difficult test for our production employees, who have only recently become involved in comprehensive training to turn them into globally oriented personnel.

“This is how we came to choose the TOEIC Bridge, which has an established track record for beginning and intermediate English users.

“We also decided to measure how our training programs improved scores by administering the test to trainees before and after they took the English Conversation Course.”

The items in the Can-Do Questionnaire come in three categories: Survival tasks, which measures respondents’ basic English skill level, such as whether they can count numbers in English; Functional tasks, which measures their ability to use complex English skills, such as using English to ask a superior for instructions; and On-the-Job tasks, which asks respondents about their ability to use specific and difficult English skills such as expressing work goals in English. Each question is answered on the basis of self-evaluation on a scale from 1 to 8, from “cannot do at all” to “can do very well.” This self-evaluation score and the TOEIC Bridge total score were used to set the levels [Appendix 1], and a list of “can do” items was formulated for each level [Appendix 2].

“The Can-Do Questionnaire,” says Mr. Tagawa, “was very effective in that it clarified the kinds of things a person at a certain score level could

do, and the ballpark score that a person would need in order to do a certain job, thus giving us an idea of what goals to aim for. By indicating the correlation between test scores and actual work, it allowed us to identify where staff members assigned to overseas support operations were in terms of their current language skill level in relation to the nature of their work. We think this knowledge will help us motivate our staff to further improve their skills.”

Between April 2003 and the end of March 2004, as many as 1,948 samples of the questionnaire were brought in. Out of these, 226 samples had been given immediately before and after the training session. According to the analysis of questionnaire results, average marks went up after training for all three categories (Survival tasks, Functional tasks, and On-the-Job tasks).

A comparison of pre- and post-training TOEIC Bridge scores indicated a post-training improvement in scores for Total, Listening, and Reading. An analysis of the factors believed to have affected the post-training score yielded the following results: the higher the trainee’s age, the smaller the post-training score improvement; the higher the course level, the smaller the post-training score improvement; and no differences in post-training score improvement between course instructors. In light of these analysis results, Mr. Tagawa says:

“We adopted TOEIC Bridge in a major way for the first time in FY2003, and found that it was a very effective tool for measuring the language skills of our manufacturing members. We intend to continue providing the test, and use it to help us plan our in-house language training programs.”

**【Appendix 1】 Rough Guide to Scores vs. Skill Levels**

Level	TOEIC Bridge Score	Estimated English Skill Level
	155	Can conduct everyday conversation and interactions. Can communicate in the work setting as long as the subject is not too complex.
	140	Can communicate in the work setting, with the help of re-phrasing and given a cooperative attitude of the other party, as long as the subject is not too complex (explaining what is required of a task, giving instructions, etc.).
	130	Can communicate in the work setting within a limited context (such as when both parties share the same information, or when using actual objects or illustrations on-site).
	115	Can communicate simple and familiar concepts.
	95	Can conduct daily conversation at the minimum level of communication (such as giving a simple self-introduction).
		Can only communicate in fragments (numbers, etc.).

【Appendix 2】List of “ Can Do ” by Level

Level	TOEIC Bridge Score	Can do/Can do with difficulty
	155	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can describe required accuracy levels (e.g. “ plus or minus X degrees, ” “ within Y percent of Z ”).</li> <li>• I can ask for instructions.</li> <li>• I can inquire about workplace problems.</li> <li>• I can describe event sequences.</li> <li>• I can express my opinion about a problem (e.g. “ I think we should replace it ”).</li> <li>• I can make suggestions about a problem (e.g. “ I suggest that you replace it ”).</li> <li>• I can express event possibilities (e.g. “ It might rain this evening ”).</li> <li>• I can describe present and past conditions (e.g. the difference between how the factory looks today and how it looked 10 years ago).</li> <li>• I can express worries about events or people (e.g. “ I am afraid you will miss your train ”).</li> </ul>
	140	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can give step by step instructions.</li> <li>• I can give a job explanation to trainees.</li> <li>• I can explain the steps in a process (e.g. “ First, do this operation. Next, do this operation ” etc.)</li> <li>• I can explain key points in a process (e.g. what is important and must receive attention).</li> <li>• I can identify workplace problems (e.g. “ The air hammer isn't working ”).</li> <li>• I can express work goals.</li> <li>• I can describe the functions (usage) of workplace tools.</li> <li>• I can give warnings (e.g. calling attention to a safety check that has been neglected)</li> <li>• I can describe volume (e.g. “ a one-square-meter board, ” “ five liters of gasoline ”).</li> </ul>
	130	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can offer objects ( tools, etc.) to a trainee.</li> <li>• I can give confirmations (e.g. “ The telephone number is correct ”).</li> <li>• I can ask simple questions (e.g. “ Is this machine working OK? ”).</li> <li>• I can describe abilities (e.g. can operate specialized machinery; can run fast).</li> <li>• I can describe my weekly schedule.</li> <li>• I can describe my home ( where it is, how far away it is, etc.).</li> <li>• I can describe event frequencies (e.g. “ This machine breaks down sometimes, ” “ He is always late ”).</li> <li>• I can describe continuous action (e.g. “ The Plant Manager is having a meal ”).</li> </ul>
	115	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can describe my job ( can respond to the question: “ What do you do? ”).</li> <li>• I can describe the location of objects (e.g. on the desk, behind the pillar, inside the cabinet).</li> <li>• I can express basic needs (e.g. “ I need to use the telephone ”).</li> <li>• I can ask for assistance (e.g. “ Please help me with my work ”).</li> <li>• I can describe quantities ( the number of components, etc.).</li> <li>• I can express time duration (e.g. “ The morning work hours are from 9 o'clock to 12 o'clock ”).</li> <li>• I can make comparisons.</li> <li>• I can ask for reasons (e.g. “ Why were you late today? ” to a subordinate)</li> <li>• I can ask for objects (e.g. “ Please hand me a pencil, ” “ I want a drink of water ”).</li> <li>• I can make a self-introduction.</li> <li>• I can describe clothes (what they are wearing).</li> <li>• I can describe my family.</li> </ul>
	95	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can give instructions how to attach an armrest.</li> <li>• I can tell time and dates (e.g. “ The next meeting will be at 10:30 a.m. on May 10 ”).</li> <li>• I can talk about past events (past tense).</li> <li>• I can express likes and dislikes (food, sports, etc.).</li> <li>• I can ask where people are from.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can count numbers in English.</li> <li>• I can state possession of objects (e.g. “ I have the air hammer).</li> <li>• I can ask for object identification (e.g. “ What is that? ” regarding something they are not familiar with.)</li> </ul>

A comparison of listening and reading scores indicated that reading scores improved more than listening scores. This may have been because the production employees acquired basic reading comprehension skills in the training programs.

### **The Corporate Ideal in Crystallized Form: “The Toyota Way 2001” Communicates the Ideal to Overseas Production Centers**

Mr. Tagawa has the following to say about future career-building for production employees:

“Each and every individual will be required to work in a way that generates even higher added value. For this to happen, the development of individuals has to go beyond cookie-cutter programs, focusing instead on enhancing each person’s expertise. We believe our overseas support is a type of work that requires a high level of expertise and skill.”

Since its founding, Toyota has strived to produce “better things better.” Through this process, the company has built up and then passed on to successive generations of employees its own unique business ideals and values, a legacy that has been the wellspring of its competitive edge. Toyota organized this legacy of “tacit knowledge” and compiled it to create “The Toyota Way 2001” in order to aid systematic understanding. According to this vision, the “Toyota Way” is built upon the twin pillars of “continuous improvement” and “respect for people.” Each and every individual who works at Toyota is required to bear two things in mind no matter what action they are undertaking. One is to never simply accept the status quo, but instead to constantly pursue higher added value and continuously challenge themselves to accomplish this goal. The second is to have respect for every stakeholder and link the growth of workers to the performance of the company. The “Toyota Way” is knowledge given form, born of the recognition that passing down and evolving the company’s unique ideals, values, and techniques, nurtured since its founding, are vital for the development of the global Toyota of the future. The production employees who are assigned to support operations at overseas offices and plants play an important role in conveying this vision to the local management and in providing support so that it is communicated throughout the business operations.

“Particularly in the context of the increasing globalization of our business, we are finding that our company is working with people who have diverse

values. The role of our production employees, who will be promoting a shared sense of values through overseas support, is becoming increasingly important, and there is a need for them to have an even higher level of English in order to successfully perform this role.

One may well assume that those production employees who fully appreciate their role would then naturally be motivated to acquire English skills. However, Mr. Tagawa says there is much he still needs to do as the person in charge of human resources development for overseas support operations.

“For instance, someone who is stationed at a local office or plant in order to conduct support operations will have a different role than that of a person who provides support only when they go away on business trips. We want to think about setting up TOEIC Bridge score targets that take these differences into account. For this to happen, there is a need to further intensify and expand our company’s English education policies to achieve the target scores we set.”

Mr. Tagawa also mentions another problem with the current situation, namely when faced with production employees who wish to learn English voluntarily, the company is not going beyond the initial step of pointing the workers in the direction of class lessons and/or correspondence courses, that is, just indicating the menus and tools for English study. If all of the production employees who wish to work overseas can clearly identify their target scores, this should translate into motivation for voluntary study. There are high expectations regarding the effects of the upcoming implementation of TOEIC Bridge .

### **Success of Production Employees Vital for Global Toyota to Leap Forward**

In FY2003, Toyota pursued a policy of active business engagement in a variety of fields, including getting products to market both in Japan and overseas; expanding local production in various regions around the globe; and across-the-board cost-cutting efforts by the entire corporate group. Financial results in the period ending March 2004 indicated steady growth, with Toyota becoming the first Japanese corporation to exceed the 1 trillion yen mark in terms of final consolidated profits. Last year the corporate group as a whole sold more than 6.5 million vehicles, and Toyota alone sold more than 6 million vehicles, both record figures in the

company's history. In North America last year, the company sold more than 2 million vehicles, and in Europe, over 800,000. Together with those sold in other parts of the world, the company achieved a record total of over 4 million vehicles sold overseas last year.

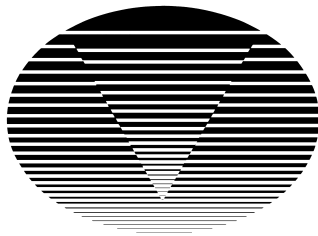
The company's focus is not limited to selling more cars. Taking to heart the concept that "the automobile industry has no future without addressing environmental issues," the company is broadly and deeply involved in environmentally friendly projects, such as the launch of the new Prius model. The "2010 Global Vision" mentioned above entails four innovations for the future: (1) the dawning of the recycling and sustainable society, (2) the appearance of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and a ubiquitous network society, (3) ever-increasing motorization on a global scale, (4) the advent of a mature human society. These visions are based on the realization of a more affluent society and are coupled with a corporate image that takes into account the company's aspiration to create a positive social profile in the period after 2010.

In particular, the fourth item, the advent of a mature human society, entails such developments as "the gradual decline of nationalism in the shift toward a world where all the people of the world have respect for one another, so that global companies become places for the active interaction of people with diverse national and ethnic backgrounds." Given this context, Toyota will aim to become "a truly global company that is loved and respected by everyone in all the regions of the

world." In order for this aspiration to be realized, Mr. Tagawa emphasizes that the success of production employees on assignment in overseas production centers is vital.

"Our production employees must play the role of passing on our corporate legacy by assuming the stance that 'creating products is creating people,'" he says. "We have only just begun our full-fledged efforts to improve the English skills of our production employees. There is still great potential for those skills to be improved even further. We intend to motivate our production employees to learn, take full advantage of the TOEIC Bridge, and support them in their efforts to acquire the English skills that will allow them to flourish when they are assigned to support operations at overseas production centers."

Some members of the production employees are finding that the TOEIC Bridge test, which is geared toward beginning and intermediate learners, does not challenge them enough. These workers are asking to be switched over to the TOEIC, and their ranks are gradually growing. Toyota has prepared an extensive lineup of programs that further stimulate the desire to learn, such as intermediate level class lessons and correspondence courses. As the activities of overseas support staff continue to expand, the number of production employees members who want to exercise their talents to the fullest at overseas offices or plants is expected to grow even more. The TOEIC Bridge promises to be highly useful as an index for measuring the English skill levels of such workers.



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