

An Investigation into Actual Conditions of English Education at Universities in Korea and Taiwan

-Striving for an Ideal English Program for Small and Medium-Sized Universities in Japan-

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Key words: English Literacy · Communication Skills · English Communication · English Language Competence

Introduction

This paper is written to report our investigation into actual conditions of English education at three universities in Korea and Taiwan as the first step in comparative studies in the English education systems of universities in developed Asian countries. The final goal of this study is to identify the key components of an ideal English program for universities in Japan, focusing on how to obtain a high level of English communicative competence, especially in medium and small liberal arts universities. As society's globalization progresses, the Japanese government has a sense of crisis that Japanese people have lower English proficiency than people in neighboring Asian countries. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, in fact, has already launched English education reform in elementary and secondary education. Many discussions on English education reform in higher education, however, have not yet determined concrete measures for reform. Considering English education reform at earlier stages, it can be assumed that, in the future, English education in universities will confront further bipolarization of students' English proficiency. Early English education will increase the number of Japanese with higher English ability, but on the other hand, it does not necessarily reduce the number of those with low English ability. Small and medium-sized universities, which constitute the majority of Japanese universities, will face the problem of admitting students with low English ability who must be trained as human resources who can use English in an increasingly globalized society. To develop a concrete plan today for English education, it is an urgent task for universities to prepare for changes in the English education situation that will come within the next 10 years. In order to obtain clues to solving the present problem, we compare the English education of universities in Korea and Taiwan with Japanese English education.

Our specific concerns are based on three aims: (A) What is the structure and curriculum of English education at other East Asian universities? (B) How is English competence evaluated at these universities? (C) What out-of-class support does each university offer students who study English? We made and sent a list of questions¹ to the three universities before our investigation trips. We had meetings with the persons in charge of the English curriculum, observed some English courses, and interviewed some English teachers there. The investigation report of universities is as follows: two universities in Taiwan (hereinafter University A and University B) conducted by David M. Mosher and Damon E. Chapman from November 11th to 15th, 2018 in Chapter I, and one university in Korea (hereinafter University C) by Kazumi Shigesako, Mosher, and Chapman from March 25th to 27th, 2019 in

Chapter II. In the final step of this longitudinal work², we will make a proposal to improve the English-education environment at Hijiya University as an example of small and medium-sized universities in Japan.

Chapter I : Taiwan Report
Taiwan Educational Research Trip 1 (University A):
(November 11th – 13th, 2018)

(A) What is the structure and curriculum of English Education?

In Taiwan, semesters are 18 weeks. There are two semesters, but also a summer term. Fall semester is September to January, and spring is February to June. 128 credits are required for graduation. For general education English language requirements, 8 credits each of writing, speaking and listening and reading are required (8 credits = meeting once a week for two hours).

The curriculum aims at cultivating student's language proficiency and professional knowledge as well as communicative skills. The English Department is divided into two tracks: *Creative English Teaching* and *International Business English*. The curriculum covers two major aspects:

- 1) English listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation, as well as
- 2) Professional English courses. The professional English courses are divided into three major fields: foreign languages for tourism, foreign languages for trading, meeting, and exhibition, and language teaching. They are committed to the enhancement of student's language skills, professional knowledge, global perspectives, and cross-domain applications in order to have multiple advantages and stronger competitiveness.

The main goal of the Department of English is to cultivate students' professional talents through outstanding proficiency and expertise in English. To achieve this goal, the curriculum is focused on the following four core competencies:

1. Enhance students' four language skills and translation skills;
2. Equip students with skills in basic literacy in literature, culture, and language teaching;
3. Cultivate professional competencies in the interdisciplinary fields; and,
4. Train students in basic academic research capabilities to meet relevant standards for employment or further studies.

In addition to actively strengthening students' English proficiency, the curriculum is designed with particular emphasis on "TESOL" and "International Business English". TESOL / English Teaching is designed to cultivate practical experience in English teaching in order to meet the development needs of education teachers. The university is organized for preparing students to develop their abilities in teaching English at the secondary level so that they can teach at senior and junior high schools, cram schools, and national or private elementary schools³. International Business English emphasis is on Business English and the development of the students' international perspective. The curriculum is composed of courses in presentation, meeting, negotiation, social and interview skills, and professional practice knowledge of international *Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE)*, as well as business English letter and report writing.

There are nine features of the English Department worthy of special mention.

1. It provides English proficiency tutorial classes and professional certificate classes, in order to help

students obtain relevant certificates.

2. English faculty serve as language learning consultants in order to enhance students' four language skills and teacher-student interaction.
3. It provides application assistance for students wishing to apply for double degree studies or exchange programs.
4. It fosters international mobility to provide students with the opportunity to travel abroad, do working holidays and internships, and broaden their international perspective.
5. It promotes industry cooperation, promoting networking between firms/industries so that employers can offer students internships and jobs.
6. It provides service-learning opportunities. Each semester, the department organizes English camps in rural areas for elementary, junior and senior high schools. Students can develop responsibility, think critically and solve problems. They can work well with others and learn respect, as well as improve their team working, service skills and communication skills.
7. It provides mentoring assistance. Each student is assigned a mentoring teacher to look after the student.
8. It fosters senior student mentoring. Newcomers are assigned a senior student to help them take care of things such as their accommodations, campus life, selecting courses, etc.
9. It provides a multi-language learning environment with international students from many countries, which creates language learning and cross-cultural interaction with students. This develops global views and enhances the conservation of multiculturalism.

(B) How is English competence evaluated at University A? and (C) What out-of-class support does the university offer students who study English?

Students' English competence is evaluated by their achievement on the TOEIC. The university's out-of-class support is closely related to the evaluation and the structure and curriculum of English education. The university has the International Language Center (ILC), which runs approximately 200 classes per week. Students are motivated to take ILC classes by the following incentives: If they attend classes, they get "bonus points" in regular classes. Also, 100% attendance in an ILC class can be used for 25% credit in regular classes. Furthermore, students who achieve 450+ on TOEIC can be hired as student assistants in local cram schools. There are about 10 students each year who qualify for this. So, such motivating factors can clearly have a positive effect.

The university hopes for a 600+ score on the TOEIC by graduation. If students do NOT achieve this, they can use the Speaking & Writing part of the TOEIC score as an equivalency for the graduation requirement. 80% of English Department students score 600 or better on the TOEIC by graduation. In previous years, only 50-60% of students had achieved this. For English Majors, a 785 TOEIC is rewarded with a payment of 6000 NTD. Non-English majors can get this reward with a 550 TOEIC score. To be a high school English teacher, a 780 TOEIC score is required. The Navigation Center provides 6 to 8 mini-classes for students, such as in English composition.

The university has an International Office, which sponsors and manages several different overseas programs, including double-degree school programs at four universities in the United States and one in the United Kingdom, internships in the United States, and exchange programs with eight universities in

Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, China, and Argentina.

Taiwan Educational Research Trip 2 (University B):

(November 13th – 15th, 2018)

(A) What is the structure and curriculum of English Education?

Semesters are 18 weeks, the same as University A. The university follows the English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) approach. The English curriculum is managed by the English Language Center (ELC), which also has classes for non-English majors (detailed below, in “out of class” support). The university also has a Department of Applied English (DAE), which has three groups of students (General Population, International College, and DAE Majors).

English Programs are split into 3 areas: 1) Undergrad: Practical English (PE), 2) U n d e r g r a d : Advanced Program, and 3) M.A. Program: Graduate English Program. 8 semesters of general or practical English (PE 1-8) are required, but only students with low English levels have to take PE 1-4 courses. Students with 500-550 TOEIC can get waivers.

There are four compulsory English courses for all undergraduates. Practical English 1 & 2 is conducted for freshmen. Practical English 1&2 includes 1-hour class time and 1-hour lab, 1 time a week. It focuses on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills at the CEFR A2 level. Practical English 3 & 4 is for sophomores. It includes 2 hours lab, 1 time a week, focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills at the CEFR A2+ level. English for Business Communication 1 & 2 is for juniors, focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills at the CEFR B1- level. Practical English for Professionals 1 & 2 is for seniors, focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills at the CEFR B1 level.

Six more courses are available for undergraduates in the Advanced Applied English Program. Oral Communication 1 & 2 is for freshmen; Oral Report and Practical Reading & Writing for sophomores; Advanced Reading & Writing and Skills for Business Presentation for juniors; and Western Culture & English Learning 1 & 2 for seniors.

The university has an International College comprised of about 600 students. Of these 600, about 200 are non-Taiwanese students. The International College requires 9 credits of English over three years (starting from the CEFR B1 level). There are classes in listening and speaking, reading and vocabulary, as well as grammar and writing. All International College classes are taught in English and the CEFR B1 level of competency is required to start. The International College is the first of its kind in Taiwan. One-third of all international students are enrolled in this college.

(B) How is English competence evaluated at University B?

All 1st-year students take an English Placement test. A TOEIC score of 700 is the goal, while the range of most students at University B is 500-700. The university aims for an average increase in TOEIC scores of 150 points per academic year. If students get 700+ on the TOEIC, they do not have to take any English classes. If they do not get 700, they can get the CEFR equivalent: B1. 50-60% of students meet these TOEIC goals by graduation.

Among the English majors, communication is the most important factor. A 600 on the TOEIC is expected from all students by graduation (10 years ago the average at graduation was 750). For MA

students 750 is expected at graduation.

(C) What out-of-class support does the university offer students who study English?

The university has a dedicated English Language Center (ELC) for non-English majors. The ELC has the mission to provide a stimulating, culturally diverse environment for extensive English language learning in which learners are inspired to develop skills in 1) English self-study; 2) application of English for professional development; and 3) use of English for meaningful and fluent communication. The ELC has the goal to provide undergraduate and graduate EFL/ESP courses for non-English majors, extension EFL/ESP courses, and staff ESP courses.

The university also has an English Corner. It is a dedicated office offering extra English classes (up to a maximum of 8 people on one of the two campuses; 5 people maximum at the other campus) by appointment (although drop-ins are OK if there is space). The English Corner classes can be used for “extra credit.” After a class, the English Corner gives a “proof of participation card” for the class, which the student gives to his/her teacher for extra credit.

The university also has self-learning sites online. These include “TOEIC Grammar & Vocabulary” on the university’s on-line learning site, “Studio Classroom” (external site), “Online Practice TOEIC Tests” (on-campus and external sites), and “Online English Learning Resources.” The university also offers extensive on-line resources for English proficiency tests, external learning resources (Taiwanese newspapers, etc.) and various on-line dictionaries.

The university also has an annual Movie Dubbing Contest, which encourages students to improve English speaking and pronunciation skills through dubbing 5-7minutes from a movie. In this contest, an original movie or animation clip is played with the sound off. Students then dub their voices in place of the originals. Students can not be English majors. Also, they can not have lived in an English-speaking country for more than 1 year. This encourages beginner and low-intermediate students to work on their oral English skills. There is also prize money. Similarly, the university has an English comic activity. This is designed to enhance students’ English ability by challenging them to design vivid four-column comics and interesting English dialogues.

The university has an international office, called the International Exchange & Exchange Division (IEE). The IEE sponsors and manages several different overseas programs, including: Australia (4 schools), Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Finland, France (8 schools), Germany (4 schools), Georgia, Holland (2 schools), Hong Kong, Indonesia (4 schools), Ireland, Japan (over 30 schools), Kazakhstan, Korea (over 15 schools), Latvia, Malaysia (10 schools), Mongolia (3 schools), the Philippines (4 schools), Poland (2 schools), Russia (2 schools), Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand (8 schools), U.K. (8 schools), USA (over 30 schools), Vietnam (10 schools), and India.

Chapter II : Korea Report

Korea Educational Research Trip (University C): (March 25th – 27th, 2019)

(A) What is the structure and curriculum of English Education?⁴

University C requires 130 credits/units to graduate with a 4-year degree. Of those 130, the general education requires a minimum of 6 units in English. English majors will have to take more units. There is no “minimum” English score (TOEIC or other) to join any major.

English Language & Literature majors follow a 4-year plan (however, due to ongoing curriculum changes at the time of our visit, the final 4-year plan was still undecided). For non-English majors, all English classes are organized into 1 of 4 “standardized” levels, with the following emphasis:

Level 1: Grammar & Reading / Textbook: Unknown. (20 different classes are offered)

Level 2: Listening & Reading / Textbook: Unknown.

Level 3: Speaking & Listening / Textbook: *Firsthand 1 & 2*

Level 4: Speaking & Listening / Textbook: *Firsthand 1 & 2*

The CEFR/TOEIC/IELTS Equivalents

CEFR	TOEIC	IELTS
A1	120-220	—
A2	225-545	—
B1	550-780	4.0-5.0
B2	785-940	5.5-6.5
C1	945-990	7.0-8.0
C2	—	8.5-9.0

(Source: ETS, 2019)

The students are free to choose the level they wish to attend, based on their self-evaluation. They are required to take a certain amount of credit hours in foreign languages. Advanced Classes (English conversation and discussion classes) are also available. It is believed that students must take 2 units per level⁵. The university has used KSAT, TAPS⁶, and high school records when placing students⁷ in the past. Once self-placed, students must “pass” one level before moving up to the next level.

The university uses the *English Firsthand* textbook series, which has 4 levels: “Firsthand Access” (CEFR A1 – A2), “Firsthand Success” (CEFR A2 – A2+), “Firsthand 1” (CEFR A2 – B1), and “Firsthand 2” (CEFT A2+ - B1). One teacher suggested *Firsthand 1* is roughly equivalent to 250 on the TOEIC (see “The CEFR/ TOEIC Equivalents”). Only GSE equivalencies are given on the back cover. GSE = Global Scale of English / www.english.com/gse)⁸

For all students, extra-curricular classes are available (at additional costs). These include TOEIC classes (and they can also include a “cash refund”⁹).

(B) How is English competence evaluated?

For English majors at University C, the staff stressed that communicative competence is the most important factor. Regarding standardized evaluation, there are two ways to evaluate: TOEIC and placement tests¹⁰. But in classes, each teacher decides his/her own tests. But, once again, it must be noted that due to the ongoing reorganization of the entire English curriculum at University C, specific details regarding how and which placement tests are used (and who creates them) could not be determined at the time of our visit. (A return trip to this university to confirm specific details about the new English curriculum is planned for early 2020).

(C) What out-of-class support does the university offer students who study English?

The university has an International Affairs Office¹¹, which sponsors and manages several different overseas programs (not counting Japan), including: Canada, Malaysia, Sweden, USA (New York), and the Netherlands.

Extra-curricular English classes are available, but for an extra fee. There is no limit on how many of these classes students can take. These classes are open to all university students.

Conclusion

This paper seeks to learn from English language programs in Asian universities in Taiwan and Korea so as to build upon these programs and improve the current English curriculum at the authors'

home university. To do so, the following questions were posed: What can Hijiya University learn from English Education at universities in other Asian countries? What, if anything, can or should Hijiya change based on what was observed at these universities? Following the format at these universities, as well as the feedback gained (and class observations), the authors propose the following changes/additions to the English curriculum at their home university:

(1) Hijiya could make a 4-year English language study plan (curriculum) that is based on specific and measurable goals in line with internationally recognized forms of evaluation (such as CEFR levels, or TOEIC targets) for each academic year. For example, make target CEFR (or TOEIC or IELTS) levels for each academic year, as suggested here:

	CEFR	TOEIC (L & R)	IELTS
End of 1 st year goal:	A2	OR 225-545 (TOEIC)	OR — (IELTS)
End of 2 nd year goal:	B1	OR 550-780 (TOEIC)	OR 4.0-5.0 (IELTS)
End of 3 rd goal year:	B2	OR 785-940 (TOEIC)	OR 5.5-6.5 (IELTS)
End of 4 th goal year:	B2-C1	OR 785-990 (TOEIC)	OR 7.0-8.0 (IELTS)

(2) Hijiya could define and publish “can do” statements for each academic year (semester) so students and faculty know what is expected by the end of each academic year. By the end of each academic year, students (“you”) should have achieved these English language abilities:

At the end of Beginner Level (A1):

- You can introduce yourself and others.
- You can ask and answer questions about daily life, including the “wh” questions (what, where, when, who, why and how) in the simple, present, past future tenses.
- You can ask and give directions, order food and drink, discuss basic hobbies, and make basic travel arrangements.
- You can comprehend and have a basic conversation, as long as the other person talks slowly and clearly.

At the end of Elementary Level (A2):

- You can understand sentences and frequently used expressions about your own basic personal and family information, basic shopping and job information (including part-time jobs, etc.).
- You can communicate in simple tasks, requiring a simple and direct exchange of information, doing things such as asking for favors, making suggestions, or asking for and giving advice.
- You can describe (in simple words and expressions) your background and family, your immediate environment and things you need.
- You can comprehend and “get by” in conversations with native speakers or when traveling abroad although with difficulty.

At the end of Intermediate Level (B1):

- You can produce better and more connected sentences on topics which are familiar to you or you have personal interest in.
- You can better describe experiences and events in detail, and you can talk about dreams, hopes and ambitions.

- You can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
- You can comprehend the main points of familiar matters you regularly experience at school, at work or in your leisure time, etc.

At the end of Upper Intermediate Level (B2):

- You can understand the main ideas of complex topics on both simple and abstract topics, including discussions on a variety of topics (such as social and/or environmental problems, etc.).
- You can interact with sufficient fluency to make regular interaction with native speakers possible, without stress for you or other people.
- You can give brief reasons and explanations for your opinions and plans on many different subjects.
- You can comprehend and “do business” with speakers of English in most common business situations.

At the end of Advanced Level (C1):

- You can express yourself fluently and spontaneously without having to pause to think or search for expressions.
- You can use the language as needed for social, academic and professional (job-related) purposes.
- You can make clear, well-thought out and detailed interaction on difficult subjects, including use of organizational patterns, logical flow of conversation and an understanding of your audience/ listener.
- You can comprehend a wider range of detailed and longer discussions, as well as gain implicit meanings from such conversations.

At the end of Proficient Level (C2):

- You can comprehend with ease almost everything you hear or read.
- You can accurately summarize information from different spoken and written sources.
- You can reconstruct arguments and accounts in a clear easy-to-understand presentation or discussion.
- You can express yourself with preparation, both fluently and precisely.

(3) These “can do” statements could be done in conjunction with a revised goal statement of the core competencies the curriculum is focused on fostering, such as those of University A (See p. 3).

(4) Make a list of features for Hijiyama’s English language learning program that clearly state the support and services provided to enable students to reach their goals, such as University A’s list of nine features (See p.3). Below are six features that Hijiyama could begin with and/or improve:

- ① Hijiyama could offer out-of-class English lessons and/or an English Corner like University B. Hijiyama does have the “English Roundtable” on Thursdays, but there is currently no reward for attending. So, make any out-of-class English lesson eligible for a “bonus” (such as removing a class absence, increasing a test score, etc.). If possible, these incentives could be instituted university wide.
- ② Hijiyama could also encourage out-of-class English practice with interesting activities, such as Movie Dubbing, with rewards given, similar to University B.
- ③ Hijiyama could offer students menu of recommended on-line “self-learning” resources for English-

language study, such as the online English conversation service Hijiya started in 2019.

- ④ Hijiya could learn from University A and produce educational materials both individually and as teams. Part-time faculty could also be recruited as team members.
- ⑤ Hijiya could learn from the Taiwanese and Korean universities' use of the E-Station¹² and Google Classroom technology in the classroom. A professor at University B, for example, corrected students' English as they spoke or presented in class showed them to the students and saved them on-line on the spot. Other professors at University A and C had both publisher and self- and team developed materials on-line for easy access in the classroom.
- ⑥ Hijiya could also establish an on-line booking system for non-credit classes like the Navigation Center for tutorials at University B. Possible examples are: on-line English conversation, TOEIC training, IELTS training, etc.

Based on specific suggestions such as those given here, Hijiya can and should strive to revise its English language education curriculum. Such changes are hoped to result in increasing the level of communicative competence in English, thereby making our students more fully prepared not only to communicate with ease among English-speakers in local society, but to become a more productive member of a globalized society. A second language, in this case English, is a necessary tool to live in, work in and succeed in such an interconnected society.

The first steps in implementing such specific changes to the curriculum at Hijiya will take place in the spring of 2020, when both the “can do” statements listed above are given to all English language teachers (full and part-time) to follow in their lesson planning. Also, target goals, such as the CEFR, TOEIC or IELTS levels for each academic year listed above, will be emphasized from the next academic year.

* This research was supported in part by a grant from the 2018 International Joint Research Grant Project of HIAC, Hijiya University.

notes

¹ Our overall approach to learning about English Education at Asian universities in general comes from this key question: *What are the key components of an ideal English program for a small liberal arts university that will motivate and give beginner and/or low-intermediate level students sufficient input, practice and experience to obtain a high level of English communicative competence in all four areas of communicative competence: linguistic (grammatical), sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic?* Questions in the list based on the key question are as follows:

On-Campus English Curriculum

- What specific areas of English education lead to *measurable* communicative competence? How is that success measured?
- Which language teaching methods are currently in ESL classes at your university? (e.g. *Communicative Language Teaching*?)
- What are the English goals (levels of English competence) in each academic year? (e.g. What specific

language goals are taught at each year of university? Do 1st-year students focus on academic writing, 2nd-year students on speaking, etc.?)

- How are these skills measured?
- How many hours of English-language class time is administered in each year?
- How is the overall English competence measured? CEFR? TOEIC? IELTS?
- Do you have target scores for each academic year?
- Is that test required each year? Each semester?
- Are freshmen required to take an English evaluation before classes begin (e.g. TOEIC? CEFR?)

Outside the Class Curriculum

- What out-of-class English learning is available, and how effective is it in achieving competence? (e.g. English village, ILC, online courses, etc.)
- What steps are taken to increase student motivation (such as scholarships, etc.)?
- What associations are in place between overseas training and home university English learning programs?
- What kind of support do students need to study outside of the curriculum?

² Thailand will be researched in 2020.

³ Master's Courses in English of this university are all TESOL related.

⁴ General education at the university is being "restructured." From 2019, there will be a new English curriculum, so we have to investigate the details of the new English curriculum shortly.

⁵ But what is unclear is, whether or not they need to take courses from each level.

⁶ TAPS is a Korea-only English test.

⁷ The department chair said they plan to institute an on-line English placement test from February 2020.

⁸ See these links for more equivalents, include TOEFL PBT/IBT & IELTS

(https://slidelegend.com/toefl-equivalency-table-toeic-toefl-ielts-english-college_59bc9c3d1723dd53e8e8460d.html) and (https://www.geomar.de/fileadmin/content/studieren/msc-bo/TOEFL_Equivalency_Table_-_table_only_01.pdf)

⁹ It is based on the level of student "satisfaction", but this is very unclear. The main challenge here is that we did not learn how students evaluate their satisfaction.

¹⁰ However, this is not 100% clear as we mentioned.

¹¹ The university had an "English Town," a dorm where students were encouraged to use ENGLISH ONLY, but it is gone. Currently, the dorm is exclusively for international students.

¹² E-station is an interactive electronic podium used by the teacher in the classroom. It is on-line and is fully displayed during a class.