

Creating Global Citizens at Kyoto Tachibana University

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The Japanese Ministry of Education, Sports (MEXT) requires universities to equip students with skills for global communication. While this is gradually and noticeably changing high school English education, we find that many students in their first year at university still view English largely as a textbook subject used for passing tests. As a result, their ability to confidently use English, particularly regarding their speaking and listening skills, can be low.

The Department of Global English Communication at Kyoto Tachibana University (KTU) has redesigned the English program to reflect the need for more interactive language learning, and the ability to communicate in a variety of real-life situations. The initial stages of this course are called English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The name reflects the ultimate goal of the course, however not every stage uses academic skills.

The EAP course consists of four main stages over the first two and a half years of study. There are three semesters of language classes, followed by a compulsory two semesters at an overseas university or college in the Study Abroad Program (SAP). EAP 1 is the first semester. This is designed to acclimate the students to regular study in English-only classes, and to lead from the book and test-based English of high school classes to actual production of English on a daily basis. As a result, students revise relatively simple grammar and vocabulary with the aim of confident and accurate productive use, both spoken and written. There is also a very strong focus in establishing effective self-study habits, and skills for group work within an intensive English environment.

The second semester is EAP 2, which continues the focus on study habits, group work, and production while introducing basic writing skills and using higher-level grammar in both speaking and writing. This semester forms a bridge between the very practical base of the first semester, and the higher level academic skills that will be required in the third semester.

EAP 3 in the third semester has two main points of focus. The first focus is on the targeted preparation for the classroom aspect of the SAP, with students learning formal, academic writing skills such as those required for the IELTS test and native-speaker content courses at universities overseas. Students also work on producing presentations at a level that is suitable for an academic or business setting. The second focus is on students learning practical, situational English for confidence in a variety of everyday English interactions during their time abroad. Both of these aspects involve the teachers constantly linking skills and content to topics and social behaviors that contribute to becoming effective in international communications.



After completing the first three semesters, students undertake the SAP component of their course during the fourth and fifth semesters. The SAP is 46 weeks of study at campuses in the UK, Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, or Malaysia. Students choose from a range of courses depending on their language level at the time of departure from Japan. Course possibilities include EFL classes only, EFL plus an academic Bridging Course, or Bridging Course plus Content Courses. Ideally, the majority of students will manage at least two native-speaker level content courses during their SAP.

The course culture is an important component of the EAP course at KTU. In an effort to provide as immersive an environment as possible, students have a constant, daily input of English. All students have English classes every day, for a total of seven classes per week. Class sizes are small, with a maximum of 15 students to each class, and classes are conducted entirely in English with the exception of occasional explanations in Japanese for the lowest level class. In addition, there is a great deal of out-of-class study involved, including weekly Skype conversations with international teachers, online TOEIC practice, and Extensive Reading. In fact, all EAP students must read a minimum of 500,000 words of English books to pass the first two semesters of the course. These activities form part of the formal assessment, as does a class attendance requirement of 80%, and that students must pass each level of the course before progressing to the next.

Staff also have an important role to play within the course culture, resulting in some expectations that may be quite different from previous tertiary teaching experiences in Japan. For example, classes are taught in lock-step which use the same syllabus, course books, and grading rubrics across all classes. All assessment is common to all classes, with speaking and writing assessment tasks being moderated among all teachers. Students have at least three classes per week with the same teacher, who becomes the contact point for all students in that class and is able to provide specific personal support when needed. This situation within the EAP course means that close cooperation between EAP teachers, other department members, and university administration staff is essential.

There are seven levels of classes in each semester of EAP, chosen according to the students' overall English ability, with class levels being reevaluated at the end of each semester considering both grades and active class performance for each student. This allows teachers to direct lessons accurately to students' needs, and results in considerably more motivation, particularly for students who may begin in lower-level classes.

The year 2017 was the first year of implementation for the new EAP program. The course is very different from all previous course designs at this university, and more strongly resembles the kind of study environment that students may face in ESL departments when they study overseas. The performance of students has exceeded the expectations not only of teachers but also of the university and even the students themselves. To date, students demonstrate excellent levels of motivation and engagement, as well as quite dramatic improvements in both English use and TOEIC scores. There remain many details to consider and adjustments to be made, not least of all for the staff and students facing a much heavier workload than is usual for such courses. This year, 2018, will see the first generation of *sempai*, and promises to continue to strengthen the active English culture that is rapidly growing on campus.

As the goal of the EAP course is to increase a sense of global citizenship within the student body, the true results of course changes will best be seen when the first students return from their SAP in the summer of 2019. Meanwhile, continuing to refine methods and foster a more international culture at Kyoto Tachibana University is a challenging but enjoyable and rewarding endeavor.





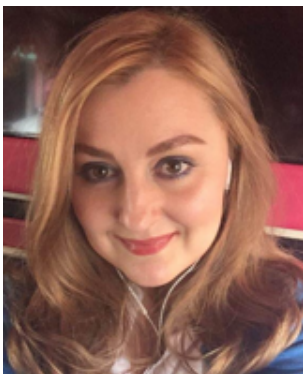
Bio: Meg Ellis (B.A., English Literature) has been teaching English as a Foreign Language since completing CELTA in 2005, beginning in Brisbane, Australia with full-time international students from every continent. She conducted courses in General English, IELTS preparation, and Cambridge exam courses, before moving to Japan in 2012. After leaving Ehime University in 2016, she began working with Keiko Iyanaga at Kyoto Tachibana University to completely redesign the English course for the new Faculty of English and Department of Global English Communication at KTU, which opened in 2017. Ms. Ellis is passionate about developing a classroom environment which encourages students to actively develop their language use, and acquire confidence in their ability to communicate with people anywhere in the world.



Bio: Keiko Iyanaga is an Associate Professor in the Global English Communication Department at Kyoto Tachibana University. A graduate from the Doctoral Program at Temple University, Dr. Iyanaga's research interests include extensive reading and vocabulary development.



Bio: Alan Mulvey graduated from Trinity College in Dublin with a B.Sc. in Architecture (1996) and a Masters in Philosophy (2001). His research interests include behavioral sociology, volunteerism, social entrepreneurship and civil society leadership. He is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Global English Communication Department at Kyoto Tachibana University.



Bio: Cristina Tat is an Assistant Professor in the Global English Communication Department at Kyoto Tachibana University. She is a graduate of Vassar College (B.Sc.) and Baruch College Marxe School of Public and International Affairs (MPA). A former fellow of the National Academy of Sciences, her research interests include extensive reading and comparative education.