

新カリキュラムに向けての段階的取り組み —静岡文化芸術大学における英語教育改革に関する報告—

Steps toward a new curriculum: A report on English education reform at Shizuoka University of Art and Culture

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本稿は静岡文化芸術大学における英語教育改革の多面的な取り組みについて報告するものである。現カリキュラムにおける取り組みを振り返ることは、2015年からはじまる新カリキュラムの開発にとって意義があると考えられる。ここ数年でなされてきたカリキュラムレベルにおける改革は、教育方針、実践方法、などである。具体的には、授業内容（文政学部とデザイン学部の共同授業、共通テキスト使用など）や共通課題（オンライン TOEIC 練習、多読、e-learning）を充実するなど段階的な改革を行っている。さらには、カリキュラムを補完するものとして、課外活動の充実も図っている。授業外で英語を向上させる諸活動（ESS、スピーチコンテストや討論への参加、インターナショナルフォーラム開催）について紹介する。また、これらをシステマティックに動かしていくためのコーディネーション、ミーティング、役割の明確化などについても報告する。

This paper reports on the multifaceted steps taken to improve English language education at Shizuoka University of Art and Culture (SUAC). This report is a reflection on the progress made in the current program. By taking stock of what is presently being done, the authors will subsequently be able to develop plans for the next English curriculum in 2015. The improvements, implemented over a number of years, include changes at the curricular level in educational policies and practices such as the use of an online TOEIC system, the implementation of an Extensive Reading program, a subscription to an E-learning system, the use of common textbooks, and an English course collaboration between the Design and Cultural Policy and Management Faculties. Furthermore, to complement these additions that have strengthened SUAC's English courses, a number of extracurricular activities such as the founding of an English Speaking Society, hosting of an English speech contest, participation in an English Model United Nations, and the organization of International Community Forums have been carried out on campus. After explaining the steps taken to improve English courses, coursework, assignments, and teaching materials, information will be given about the opportunities provided to students to continue improving English outside of the classroom. To make these improvements happen, systematic coordination including English meetings and the delegation of roles and responsibilities has taken place and will continue to be refined.

1.0 Steps taken within the English Curriculum

1.1 The current English curriculum

Before detailing the various improvements occurring in the English curriculum, an overview of English courses available at SUAC will be provided. For ease of reference, a flow chart has been created to illustrate the organization of the English program at the university. (Figure 1) While students at SUAC have several English courses and opportunities to improve their language skills available to them, English is currently not a required subject. Nonetheless, students who enroll in English courses to receive foreign language credits must successfully complete four courses; each course is worth one credit. These courses are traditionally taken during freshman year by the vast majority of students. Students who wish to continue their studies, or students who are enrolled in the teaching licensure program take additional credits including upper level English courses. An English Diploma Course

SUAC English Courses

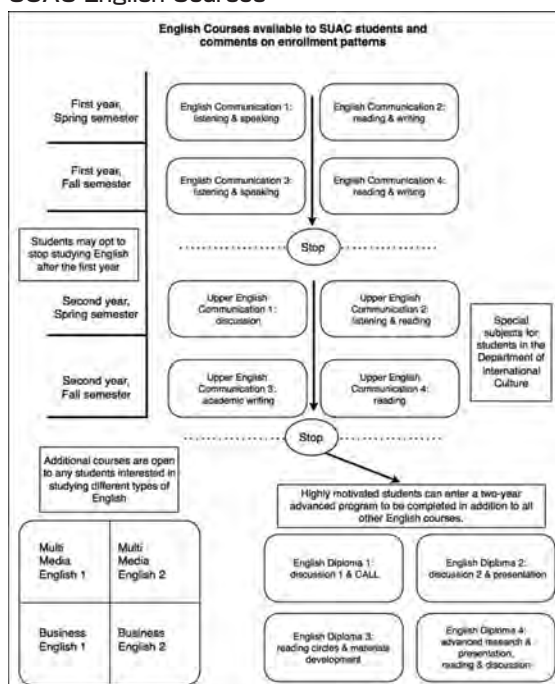


Figure 1. SUAC English courses and enrollment patterns

(EDC) is also available to qualified students who wish to study English at the advanced level. Despite the lack of an official requirement and prerequisites, a high number of students enroll in SUAC's English courses. In order to manage the approximately four hundred students taking English courses in any given semester at SUAC, various policies have been put in place. These policies include common assignments and course coordination both of which are expected to help make the transition to the next English curriculum in 2015 more seamless. More details about these educational practices will be provided below.

1.2 TOEIC Exercises and TOEIC ITP

While improving students' overall English skills is the primary focus of the English program at SUAC, a secondary focus is helping students to raise their TOEIC scores to a level that may assist them with job placement in companies in Japan. Spending time in class training for commercial standardized tests not only does not meet the needs of language learners at SUAC, but it is also a misuse of valuable class time. As a result, students are assigned online exercises using a system that was created in cooperation with Ritsumeikan University's College of Science and Engineering. Students in all SUAC English courses are required to complete about ten hours of online TOEIC exercises each semester; the exercises are done for homework and are intended to familiarize students with the format, question

types and length of the TOEIC test. Since these exercises have been created specifically to raise TOEIC scores, TOEIC score data has been tracked to measure the efficacy of this system. Figures 2 and 3 provide data related to online TOEIC system use and highlights of the most recent SUAC TOEIC Institutional Testing Program (ITP) scores. The completion rate for this homework assignment is nearly 100% each semester. This high rate of success for an assignment that requires so much time and effort on top of other coursework is evidence of not only the ease of use of the system, but also that students find value in the task and derive some benefit from their investment.

1.3 Extensive Reading

Implementation of the TOEIC system was a precursor for greater synchronization of English coursework between classes and among teachers. The success of the university-wide TOEIC assignments allowed common Extensive Reading assignments to be more easily introduced into the English curriculum. While the transition to additional common homework was facilitated by the precedent set by the TOEIC homework, implementing Extensive Reading (ER) is not without its challenges. The ER assignment requires students to read graded readers from the SUAC library and to complete 15,000 words in the spring and 20,000 words in the fall semester. Students keep a scorecard and self-

TOEIC System statistics and TOEIC data

Semester	Number of students using the system	Number of questions answered
Spring 2012	467	136,886
Fall 2011	343	127,566
Spring 2011	435	177,001

Figure 2. 2011-12 Online TOEIC system use

Test Date	High scores	Average scores
July 2012	905, 815, 805	465 (n=220)
May 2012	840, 815, 790	476 (n=187)
December 2011	850, 825, 810	528 (n=165)
October 2011	835, 815, 800	530 (n=131)
July 2011	925, 815, 800	497 (n=138)
May 2011	835, 830, 825	501 (n=126)

Figure 3. 2011-12 SUAC TOEIC IP High scores and averages

report their progress to their teachers. Perhaps the greatest challenge for the ER assignments is verifying whether or not students have actually read the books they listed on their Extensive Reading scorecard. Nonetheless, it is essential that students take part in Extensive Reading activities in order to improve their language skills. The merits of this system outweigh the demerits and a number of students have reported that they enjoyed being able to read English books for this assignment. Engendering a lifelong love of reading in English is an ancillary goal of the ER assignment and one that is sure to serve students well long after they graduate from SUAC.

1.4 E-learning

Implementation of ALC e-learning was a catalyst for the tightening of course coordination at SUAC and the introduction of more common assignments in English courses. In order to better utilize the online system for which SUAC has made a significant investment, e-learning homework is assigned, and ten weekly quizzes are administered to all students enrolled in all English communication and upper English communication courses. That means about 400 students in two communication and two upper communication courses during any given semester require support using the system, level appropriate assignments, assessment tools such as quizzes, and oversight to ensure they are completing their assignments. Furthermore, considerable time and effort is required by English instructors to give guidance on the assignments, prepare and give weekly quizzes on system content, and keep records on student performance. In its second year of implementation, e-learning has undergone some adjustments and changes in response to student needs. Survey data on student use of and response to the system has been gathered and will be presented in more detail in a future report.

1.5 Common assignments and coursework

While the aforementioned TOEIC, Extensive Reading, and e-learning assignments are efforts to give all students studying English at SUAC a set amount of homework, further coordination is necessary in order to ensure that students can reach common goals and have similar learning experiences upon completion of their coursework. To that end, a trial effort to implement the use of common textbooks from the 2012-13 academic year in some English Communication 1, 2, 3, and 4 courses has been undertaken. Use of common

texts in upper level reading and academic writing courses are also being used by some teachers in order to work together toward common goals on the one hand, while providing students with specialized instruction that will more accurately meet their needs on the other hand. In particular, most Department of International Culture students taking English Communication 1 and 3 have been assigned a text designed by English teachers in the Department of International Culture that focuses specifically on the content areas they can be expected to study in more detail in their academic careers at SUAC. The English content focuses on one country or region in each unit and various activities allow students to practice all four core language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The selection of content has been partially influenced by input from departmental colleagues who have at times lamented students' lack of basic knowledge of different parts of the world. It is expected that these efforts will be expanded and refined as we move closer to implementation of the new English curriculum in 2015.

1.6 TOEIC Bridge and Class Streaming

Since April 2011, in order to measure the English levels of incoming freshmen at SUAC and to place them in courses with suitable materials and levels of instruction, the TOEIC Bridge test has been conducted during spring guidance. The TOEIC Bridge test is a shorter, simplified version of the TOEIC test designed to measure the reading and listening ability of non-native speakers of English. The test, comprised of 100 multiple choice questions, is a suitable instrument for streaming of lower to intermediate level students in the current English program. Students who enroll in upper English communication courses are streamed using SUAC TOEIC ITP scores and information from surveys conducted at the end of each semester. The surveys require students to report their TOEIC scores, any scheduling conflicts they might have for a particular course and time, and also the level of class they feel is most appropriate for them. After this information is gathered, students are placed in a course that is intended to meet their educational needs. It should be noted that while a number of practices are in place to help students in the Faculty of Design at SUAC, English courses taught to design majors are not currently streamed. Nonetheless, a special program has been put in place to meet the needs of design students.

1.7 Design English

Since April 2011, a unique program has been underway to offer motivated design majors a chance to improve their English skills and gain valuable real-world experience while working in collaboration with students from the English Diploma Course (EDC). The program is written about in more detail in another report in this publication; however, some information will be provided below regarding how the project has had a positive impact on plans being developed to serve design majors in the new English curriculum in 2015. The program has been officially funded by a grant from SUAC and has a team of six instructors, three from the Faculty of Design and three from the Department of International Culture. In brief, design students and EDC students are put together on teams to create an English presentation about a product or product concept that has been designed by design majors. This project enables design students to gain valuable experience using English in a context that may benefit them in their careers as internationally minded designers. Furthermore, EDC students get experience working with colleagues from another field of study in a context that more closely resembles a business setting, as opposed to their more familiar surroundings of academia. This project has provided a number of benefits to the SUAC English program. It has given English teachers valuable insights into the learning styles and needs of design majors, so that courses and materials can be better tailored to help those students have a more fulfilling and relevant English learning experience at SUAC. It has also had a positive effect on design students who have participated in the program. Students who have successfully completed the program have become role models for underclassmen and have had their motivation to study English increased. The program has also built a bridge between both faculties. Having students and teachers from the Faculty of Design and Faculty of Cultural Policy and Management work toward common goals is good for the learning community at SUAC.

1.8 Course coordination, roles and responsibilities, and Faculty Development

None of the above mentioned policies and plans would be possible without the cooperation of the part-time English faculty at SUAC. Over 50% of SUAC's core English courses are taught by part-time teachers; therefore, working together on common goals and assignments is essential to

any educational plans at SUAC. This is especially true in light of the fact that, as we move toward the next English curriculum in 2015, a lack of coordination and common goals and assignments among all English teachers at SUAC, both part-time and full-time, will make the new curriculum a dead letter as soon as it is implemented. There can be no doubt that a greater burden has been put on teachers, both part-time and full-time, as a result of the required coordination. Nonetheless, raising awareness of the importance of the whole curriculum, rather than focusing only on individual courses, has been done by sharing common assignments, policies, and materials. To that end, each semester meetings are held for part-time teachers to start the semester and go over any changes to policies or plans, and share ideas on how to best implement the English assignments and use new materials. These meetings are also opportunities for teachers to share opinions, ideas and even discuss problems with their colleagues. The input received from teachers has been valuable and has enabled the organizers of these faculty development sessions to make improvements to better serve the needs of students and teachers. It is essential that this spirit of cooperation continue, both in and out of the classroom, to meet the needs of language learners at SUAC.

2.0 Steps taken outside the English Curriculum

2.1 ESS

In 2008, four upperclassmen and one of the authors of this report officially formed an English Speaking Society (ESS) at SUAC. The main goal of the club was to provide students with fun opportunities to use English outside of class. As in the case of the founding members, the club allows students to maintain their English after formal study has been completed. The club also allows underclassmen a chance to overcome their anxieties in speaking English and make friends while discussing and debating many of the issues of the day. The ESS also frequently holds joint events with students at other local universities such as Shizuoka University. The ESS has approximately thirty members; meetings and events are open to visitors and any other students and members of the SUAC staff or faculty who would like to use English in a fun and relaxed setting. Meetings take place during lunch on Mondays and Wednesdays.

2.2 English Speech Contest

In the spring of 2011, members of the English Speaking Society proposed a plan to have an English speech contest at SUAC. The members who suggested this event had taken part in a number of other speech contests and debates and were well aware of the motivational power of setting an English learning goal and working toward that goal. The speech contest was open to students from other universities in the area. The date of the contest was set to correspond with SUAC's open campus in the summer of 2011. The event was made open to the public as a way to promote English education at SUAC and to allow visitors during open campus to learn more about SUAC's students. In all, thirteen contestants participated in the event, including two contestants from Shizuoka University. Speeches were limited to five minutes. Students were encouraged to bring props or visual aids to enhance their speeches. This event was considered a success for a number of reasons. First, it gave students a concrete English goal that was successfully achieved by all who participated. Second, it provided students a chance to speak publicly and gain confidence in doing so. Finally, it increased motivation in all participants to take advantage of all opportunities to further their study of English.

2.3 Japanese University Model United Nations

In February of 2012, SUAC English teachers received an invitation to have a group of five students attend the Japanese University Model United Nations (JUEMUN) conference at Kinki University in Osaka. SUAC English teachers seized on this chance that presented itself as a rare and extremely beneficial opportunity for students at SUAC to prepare for and participate in; negotiations and preparations for the event began in early March 2012.

The recruitment process for this event was hindered due to ambiguity over whether or not SUAC would officially fund this event. As a result, the scope of recruitment was narrowed to students willing to participate regardless of funding and students with high-level English skills. The event took place from Friday to Sunday during the weekend of July 6, 7, and 8, 2012. To prepare for this conference students were assigned a country and a committee and were required to do research and prepare a paper that would aid them when they gave formal speeches or participated in debates.

The JUEMUN was attended by a total of 59 delegates from 14 countries, including Japan. Universities in Japan that sent delegates include Doshisha University, Kinki University, Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Kobe University of Foreign Studies, Nagoya University, Ritsumeikan University, and Shizuoka University of Art and Culture. The event was held entirely in English. During the formal and informal debates, students worked together in regional blocs, as well as in committees to propose solutions to deal with an increasing world population. This was an incredible learning experience for SUAC students; the team of five students conducted themselves professionally. The second and third year students were model representatives of our university and returned from the event with many new friends, the knowledge that English truly is a global language and renewed determination to further improve their English.

2.4 International Community Forums

It is said that Hamamatsu has the largest per-capita population of Brazilians in Japan as well as large numbers of international residents from other parts of the world. Even so, sadly often little interaction seems to take place between the Japanese community and international community in the city. To make an effort to both alleviate this situation and to provide additional opportunities for SUAC students, indeed the entire SUAC community, to meet and interact in English with members of the sizable foreign community here in Hamamatsu, an International Community Forum was established in April 2012. An English-speaking member of the foreign community is invited to SUAC to give a short presentation during lunch on the last Wednesday of every month. Their presentation is generally about their country, their background and what has brought them to Hamamatsu after which an open-ended discussion is held. International Community Forum guest speakers are specifically requested to keep their presentations casual and short enough to allow plenty of time for Q & A and discussion. Despite being held during lunch, attendance at the International Community Forums has been outstanding with about 30 people attending every month to date. The International Community Forum can already be deemed a success as the interaction between students and guest speakers during the Q & A and discussion has been very lively and rewarding to see as a teacher. To date, we have had guest speakers from the United

States, Tunisia and Israel. Future scheduled guests for the 2012-13 academic year include Hamamatsu residents from Mongolia, France and Denmark.

Conclusion

The aforementioned curricular and extracurricular English language policies and practices have laid the groundwork for reforms that will occur when the new curriculum will be put into place in 2015. Common homework assignments enabled instructors to ensure that all students received a fair workload, and equal opportunities to study regardless of whose course they were enrolled in. The importance of extracurricular activities to aid in language learning cannot be overstated. SUAC's extracurricular English activities are numerous and provide students with opportunities

to meet weekly in ESS and chat, participate in discussions and debates in English, set goals for speech contests, participate in Model United Nations Conferences, and learn about the world by meeting and listening to special guests at the International Community Forums. While these steps taken to improve English education have shown positive results and given students rewarding experiences, more needs to be done to prepare for the new curriculum. Continuing to promote extracurricular activities is certainly on the agenda for curriculum reform. At the curricular level, more synchronization of courses with other academic disciplines at SUAC, designing courses to address the needs of students on an academic track and others on a general English track, and finally devising common course goals and course benchmarks will be given top priority.