

国際試験を活用した新カリキュラム導入に向けての試み

A Report on the Oxford University Press Textbook Seminar and Related Online Materials Workshop: Preparation for New Curriculum

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Abstract

Kanazawa University is a Super Global Initiatives funding recipient and is undergoing rigorous curriculum changes. As a result of strategic planning, the Foreign Language Institute is adopting the Test of English for International Communication as an evaluation tool for student language acquisitions. Both the university and the FLI are undergoing considerable changes and exploration in order to be better prepared for new curriculum implementation. To smooth the transition to a common syllabus in the 2016-2017 Academic Year, the FLI offers various seminars and workshops for all faculty and adjunct instructors teaching English. This report discusses an Oxford University Press textbook seminar and related online materials workshop organized by the FLI.

金沢大学はスーパーグローバル大学創生支援の採択校として、キャンパス全体の国際化を目指し、著しい過渡期を迎えている。外国語教育研究センターにおいても例外ではなく、大幅なカリキュラム編成を行うべく、平成27年度は数々のFD研究を行ってきた。ここではその一例を取り上げ、国際試験を活用した新カリキュラムの導入に向けての試みを紹介する。来年度から導入する予定の教科書を使って教材研究をするため、出版社から講師を2名招き、テキストブックに関するセミナーと付属するオンライ教材を使ったワークショップを開催した。そのまとめをここに報告する。

1. Introduction

On November 22nd and 23rd of 2015 the Foreign Language Institute (FLI) at Kanazawa University invited facilitators from Oxford University Press (OUP) to campus. Based on changes to the English curriculum starting the following school year, the FLI selected a textbook published by the OUP as the main textbook for a common syllabus. Although English instructors at Kanazawa University have extensive teaching experience, the latest curriculum reform proposals brought anxieties and concerns. For example, using the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) as the main evaluation instrument for student achievement was a significant change. In

In addition to evaluative changes, individual instructors will also be asked to deliver eight-week courses instead of the usual semester system of 16-week courses. All of this will take place in the context of a new, common syllabus created by the FLI. After months of internal debate, the decision was made to use the TOEIC to determine at least 80% of students' final grades. This has inevitably shifted the focus of FLI English instruction to a TOEIC-centered approach. In order to assist reading and listening course instructors, the FLI organized a variety of seminars and workshops in order to smooth the transition to the new OUP textbook for the 2016-2017 academic year. This paper describes a textbook seminar and an online materials workshop offered by OUP representatives Robert Peacock and Sakie Ishibashi.

2. Oxford University Press Textbook Seminar

This section presents the details of the textbook seminar. A brief introduction of the facilitator and textbook are followed by details of each lesson unit's constructs as well as a sample lesson utilizing an active learning approach.

2-1. Introduction.

To accommodate instructor schedules, two OUP textbook seminars were held, on October 22nd and 23rd. Both days followed the same time table: a shorter session during the lunch hour (50 minutes) and a full session (75 minutes) in the afternoon. Robert Peacock from the OUP facilitated sessions on both days. Rob is a teacher trainer and course coordinator for the Oxford Teachers' Academy and has over 12 years of experience in Japan teaching to students of all ages and delivering teacher support programs and workshops. He started his seminar by introducing the textbook, *Tactics for the TOEIC® Test: Listening and Reading Test Introductory Course*, authored by Grant Trew (2013).

2-2. Textbook organization.

The textbook contains two listening sections (Units 1 through 4 and Units 8 through 11) and two reading sections (Units 5 through 7 and Units 12 through 14). Based on the Kanazawa University FLI common syllabi, the first quarter covers listening (Units 1 through 4), the second quarter reading (Units 5 through 7), and the third (Units 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13) and fourth (Units 10, 11, and 14) quarters teach both reading and listening using an integrated approach.

Units 1 through 7 are designed to correspond to parts of the TOEIC test. Part 1 involves listening to questions about a photograph shown to students, Part 2 covers question-response, Part 3 for conversation, and Part 4 for listening comprehension of spoken passages. Similarly, each reading unit covers different aspects of reading comprehension: Part 5 involves sentence-completion, Part 6 text completion, and Part 7 reading comprehension. The latter sections follow similar patterns but introduce materials not covered in the first half. Both listening and reading units include specific

“Key Vocabulary” intended to help build vocabulary, “Language Building” to improve grammar skills and develop better language function, and “Test Tactics” and “Tactic Practice” to teach test-taking strategies and provide practical exercises. In addition, each listening unit includes a section on natural pronunciation to help students become familiar with different native-speaker accents. A “Learning by Doing” section offers active learning exercises based on the unit’s materials. Each unit concludes with a “Mini-test” over all material in the lessons.

2-3 Testing formats.

The seminar also covered the general organization of the TOEIC listening and reading sections. Each section contains 100 questions. As discussed in the previous section, the listening test consists of four parts. Part 1 provides ten photographs and a voice recording delivers four statements related to the photograph. Test-takers select the most appropriate statement from the choices provided. Part 2 presents 30 question-response statements. Here, test takers hear a spoken question or statement and are offered three possible responses. They select the most appropriate response after listening to the three choices. This section is wholly aural, with neither visual nor reading material provided. Parts 3 and 4 have 30 questions per section. Each section contains either a lengthy conversation or statement followed by several multiple choice questions. The listening section is allotted 45 minutes for completion.

The TOEIC reading section follows a similar pattern to the listening section. Part 5 has 40 incomplete-sentence questions. Test takers read each sentence and are offered 4 options from which they are to select the grammatically correct answer. Part 6 includes 12 text-complete questions. Each passage is in the form of a brief letter, an article, or email correspondence and contains a few blank portions. Test-takers read the passage and select from 4 available choices the most appropriate answer to complete the blank area(s). Finally, Part 7 is a reading comprehension section consisting of 48 questions. Reading materials might be email correspondence, product information and labels, advertisements, meeting memos, letters, and notifications, often including simple tables, charts, and graphs. The total time allotted for the reading section (Parts 5 through 7) is 75 minutes.

3. Sample Active Learning Lessons

One of the seminar’s highlights was applying the textbook to improve English language acquisition, with the aim of achieving a significant increase on Kanazawa University TOEIC scores by the end of the first year. The facilitator demonstrated a few lessons using active learning approaches. Every demonstration lesson covered one major function of each of the listening and reading test sections.

3-1. Active learning approaches for the TOEIC listening section.

The demonstration highlighted three key elements: knowledge and skills in prediction, common distractors, and content reading. It was suggested that instructors who teach the photograph section use a guessing game in class to help students predict questions that would likely be asked about the photograph on the test. Students can become more engaged by using their own pictures or finding pictures from their own sources to create TOEIC-like questions. Discussing the content of the photographs as a group may also encourage more speaking practice.

Likewise, an activity for the question-response section of Part 2 was demonstrated using a coin-toss pair activity. Each pair of students decides which sides of the coin denote “Yes” and “No.” Then, one student will ask a question and the other student will flip a coin. The other student’s answer must answer the question positively or negatively (depending on the result of the coin flip) with a short sentence. The instructor should explain beforehand that the TOEIC listening section contains common predictors, which should be detected and avoided when selecting correct answers.

Part 3 and Part 4 involve reading while listening to an audio recording. Therefore, successful completion of these sections requires sufficient reading speed and accurate interpretation. To enhance these skills using active learning, instructors can use TOEIC listening multiple choice answers. In this example exercise, a set of multiple choice answers without questions is given to each student or group of students. One of the first tasks is to read the answers within a short time period (e.g., 40 seconds for 4 sets of 4 multiple choice answers) and underline the content words. Based on the reading students will then predict a possible question for each set of multiple choice answers. If it motivates students better, this activity can be a competitive team effort where results are ranked based on each team’s speed and predictive accuracy.

3-2. Time management for the TOEIC reading section.

It is important for students to have good time management skills for successful performance in the reading section, particularly for the first 40 questions of the reading section, Part 5. The seminar introduced a 2-pass method so that students go through the questions twice. The first time, students are only allowed 10 seconds to answer each question. After completing one set, they return to the incomplete questions but are now allowed 20 seconds to answer. Instructors should encourage students to answer as quickly and accurately as possible and leave no unanswered questions at the end. Completing this section in 20 minutes will allow more time to work on Part 6 and Part 7, which require more reading.

Explaining common test question permutations can also be helpful for time management. Typical TOEIC reading questions come in four types covering: specific information, vocabulary, main idea(s) or inference, and questions with one incorrect choice. Knowing the types of questions that will appear can help students develop an approach for each type of question. For example, one of

the easiest questions asks for a specific answer included clearly in the text. Similarly, vocabulary questions require reading only a few sentences before and after the reference word to identify the context and most appropriate synonyms. In other words, students may not need to read the entire passage to answer these questions. If they do this the correct answer may be identified within a relatively short amount of time, leaving more time for questions that require reading a full passage. Unlike the two question types above, identifying an answer that is not directly in the text is much more difficult because the passage must be read thoroughly to discover something not included. Likewise, main idea and inference questions also require a general understanding of the passage contents. Cutting down time spent on the questions that are easier to answer quickly can be quite helpful for time management during the exam.

4. Online Materials Workshop

Sakie Ishibashi from OUP facilitated a workshop introducing online materials associated with the textbook. Two identical 70-minute workshops were offered on different days. The workshop provided step-by-step instruction using detailed PowerPoint slides and started by explaining how to access the OUP website to create an account as both an instructor and as a student. After creating an account, the facilitator demonstrated how to access online practice materials and tests included in the textbook package. A brief introduction to this content was also provided. During the online workshop, two basic functions of the OUP Learning Management System (LMS) were highlighted. One short tutorial focused on how to create an online class, and another covered assigning tests, homework, and tracking of student achievement and learning progress. Customer support information for online materials was also shared toward the end of the workshop. The workshop presentation concluded with a list of frequently asked questions about customer service and online materials, which eased several participants' concerns about online material application and the practicality of classroom learning and homework assignments.

5. Conclusion

Higher education has experienced strong efforts toward increasing campus internationalization and Kanazawa University is no exception. Although English education in Japan has been moving toward improvements in communication development, recent changes in K-12 curriculum have not translated into changes in college English education environments. Kanazawa University welcomes campus internationalization and is working to adopt curriculum reform with the goal of improving student achievement. FLI faculty planned and organized several seminars and workshops throughout the academic year in order to help English instructors transition to the new curriculum driven by implementation of the Super Global University Initiative at Kanazawa University. The

OUP textbook seminar and online materials workshops were part of this effort. After each seminar and workshop, facilitators reserved time and the participant question and answer sessions. At those times English instructors' concerns and anxieties related to the new textbook were voiced and addressed. Thus the seminar and workshop also provided FLI TOEIC committee members with additional issues to be considered when utilizing online materials in practical settings, such as dealing with unfamiliar LMS functions at the beginning of each eight-week term. Many instructors teaching even a few classes would be expected to handle 100-120 student accounts across three to four different classes at once. Some participants proposed that an administrative representative from the FLI handle all the student accounts (over 1,600 in the new school year) to smooth transition at the beginning of each quarter but this resource will not likely be available. Given these issues, some instructors scheduled to be teaching reading and/or listening using this textbook are interested in online materials but others are not. If online materials are to be implemented under the common syllabi, all instructors should be informed and able to integrate materials into their learning activities. To make a smooth transition to the new curriculum, online account issues must be discussed and workable solutions proposed as soon as possible.

Reference

Trew, G. (2013). *Tactics for the TOEIC Test, Reading and Listening Test, Introductory Course*. Oxford, United Kingdom. Oxford University Press