

[報告]

# A Report on the 2011 Pilot Program for the Department of British and American Studies New English Language Program

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## 1. Introduction

The Department of British and American Studies (DBAS) is the largest department in Nagoya University of Foreign Studies (NUFS), with an average annual intake of over 350 students in recent years. In response to increasing demand for curriculum change, DBAS undertook a substantial review of its English language curriculum and launched its new English Language Program (ELP) in April 2012, covering the four years of undergraduate English language study.

Ahead of the introduction of the new ELP, it was agreed to run a pilot program with two first-year classes during the 2011 academic year, involving the core courses of the proposed new program in order to prepare for the implementation of the ELP in 2012 starting with the first-year courses. This report will first give an outline of the ELP and its aims, before presenting reports of the three experimental courses run by Astley (General English), Kumamoto (Writing), and Umegaki (Intensive Reading) that were part of the pilot program.

## **2. The New English Language Program**

As a result of the growing demand to reform the department's curriculum, an English language program working group was set up by the department in academic year 2009 to carry out reform of the English language curriculum. During the course of the 2010 academic year, the ELP Working Group put together a proposal that was approved by the department meeting. A steering committee, tasked with the implementation of this proposal, then worked on the details of the new program with the aim of introducing it from 2012. Below is a brief discussion of the issues identified by the ELP Working Group that informed the formulation of the proposal for the new English Language Program together with the aims of the new program in light of the rationale for change in the curriculum. This is followed by an outline of the new English Language Program itself.

### **2.1 Background and aims of the new English Language Program**

In addition to external factors driving the demand for curricular change, a number of factors at the university and departmental level also came into play. One of the factors involved in the request to set up the ELP Working Group related to concerns expressed by the university with regard to the department's language program as a result of student feedback. This, coupled with a concern over student dropout rates, was felt to be sufficiently good cause for a review of the curriculum when taken in the context of the wider issue of the changing needs of society as identified by the university. While it was difficult to quantify and evaluate such concerns objectively in this context, members of the Working Group identified a number of issues pertaining to the department's language program at the time that needed to be addressed, which included the following:

- the lack of full-time language-teaching staff and a low teacher–student ratio;
- the coordination of content in individual courses and in the language program as a whole;
- the need for better access to language instructor feedback and support for students;
- the lack of agreed standards in the language program;
- the low level of basic English skills among students in terms of grammar/structure and vocabulary;
- the need to prepare students to be capable of carrying out academic work in English in the 3rd and 4th years.

On this basis, the Working Group worked toward formulating a proposal that would address these issues, which pertained to both content and delivery of the curriculum. In particular, the lack of full-time staff to deliver the language-teaching component of the curriculum was felt to be a key issue. Indeed, the department had an unusually high dependency on part-time teaching staff, with a large number of part-time instructors — around 90 in total, including as many as 46 native speakers — responsible for the teaching of some 250 of the 339 courses offered by the department in 2010. By any measure, this is a large proportion of departmental courses to be taught by part-time teaching staff. Further, since the 2009 academic year, classes for yet more language courses were planned to be split into two for pedagogical reasons, so that as of 2012 all first-year English language courses are being delivered to smaller classes of up to 20 students. This doubling of a significant number of core language classes would put a further burden on the department’s reliance on part-time teaching staff to deliver the bulk of the language program. It was felt that delivery of a coordinated language program would require the core teaching staff to be

full-time to facilitate ongoing discussion and development of the program and similarly to provide a satisfactory level of consultation and feedback to students. Thus, the proposal incorporated the appointment of a new team of instructors to assist in the delivery of the proposed new English Language Program.

The aim of the new English Language Program, then, was to benefit the students of British and American Studies in the following ways:

- smaller classes;
- greater access to full-time language instructors for feedback and consultation;
- better in-house coordination across the English language program so that clearly stated learner outcomes can be aimed for and achieved;
- fairer assessment methods according to agreed standards of means of assessment;
- better structured teaching of grammar and vocabulary;
- greater opportunity for students to develop themselves academically in English.

## **2.2 Outline of the new English Language Program**

In academic year 2011 the ELP Steering Committee's proposals for the course structure of the new program were approved and the hiring of a new team of full-time language instructors to help deliver the program was undertaken.

The English Language Program encompasses the department's entire English language curriculum covering the four years of study, which are notionally divided into two stages. The first stage, covering the first two years of the program, is highly coordinated and creates a platform for more independent study at the advanced level and for studying abroad.

The second stage, providing two years of advanced language study at third- and fourth-year level, is intended to be less rigidly coordinated with each course having a larger degree of autonomy with the aim of having students capable of dealing with authentic English materials — written and verbal — and capable of producing advanced-level spoken and written work in the form of discussion, presentations, and essays.

The English Language Program in the first two years comprises four main sections of language study: General English, Writing, Reading, and Culture Studies. General English is a two-year program taught twice a week in English by the same instructor throughout a semester. Reading is a four-year program also involving two classes a week, divided into intensive and extensive reading programs, which are taught in Japanese during the first two years. Both the Writing and Culture Studies programs involve one class a week taught in English. The Writing program is part of a three-year program that develops skills in academic writing, while the Culture Studies program comprises one year of Film Studies, in which students study the English language through the medium of film, and one year of Culture Studies, in which students are exposed to cultures from around the world where English is spoken.

In the third and fourth years of the English Language Program there are three main sections of language study: Oral Communication, Writing, and Reading. Oral Communication comprises Advanced Topics in English in both years and Global Issues in English in the fourth year only. The final year in the three-year Writing program comprises the Advanced Writing course during the third year and it is taught in English. In the third and fourth years of the Reading program, Intensive Reading is taught in Japanese once a week, while Extensive Reading is taught in English once a week. The curriculum for the English Language Program can be summarized as below.

**Table 1. Department of British and American Studies ELP Curriculum**

1<sup>st</sup> Year (from 2012)

	General English	Writing	Reading		Culture Studies
Semester 1	General English 1 (2 classes)	Writing 1	Reading A-1	Reading B-1	Film Studies 1
Semester 2	General English 2 (2 classes)	Writing 2	Reading A-2	Reading B-2	Film Studies 2

2<sup>nd</sup> Year (from 2013)

	General English	Writing	Reading		Culture Studies
Semester 1	General English 3 (2 classes)	Writing 3	Reading A-3	Reading B-3	Culture Studies A/B
Semester 2	General English 4 (2 classes)	Writing 4	Reading A-4	Reading B-4	

3<sup>rd</sup> Year (from 2014)

	Advanced Topics	Advanced Writing	Advanced Reading	
Semester 1	Advanced Topics in English 1	Advanced Writing 1	Advanced Reading A-1	Advanced Reading B-1
Semester 2	Advanced Topics in English 2	Advanced Writing 2	Advanced Reading A-2	Advanced Reading B-2

4<sup>th</sup> Year (from 2015)

	Advanced Topics	Global Issues	Advanced Reading	
Semester 1	Advanced Topics in English 3	Global Issues in English 1	Advanced Reading A-3	Advanced Reading B-3
Semester 2	Advanced Topics in English 4	Global Issues in English 2	Advanced Reading A-4	Advanced Reading B-4

### 3. Pilot Program: Aims and Outline

It was mooted as part of steering committee discussions toward the end of the 2010 academic year that it would be useful to operate a pilot of the program in 2011 in a reduced form to provide a platform for the introduction

of the English Language Program from 2012. The pilot would provide us with an opportunity to see to what extent coordination was possible among full-time teaching staff and to test the new materials proposed for the new program. Astley, Kumamoto, and Umegaki cooperated and took part in the pilot commencing April 2011 with first-year students. Two classes comprising 17 students each (referred to here as Class A and Class B) were timetabled for two classes per week of General English (Astley), one class of Writing (Kumamoto), and one class of Intensive Reading (Umegaki). Having been granted special dispensation, the two General English classes used the timetabled slots for Oral Communication and Extensive Reading (A-1/2 and C-1/2 respectively under the old curriculum), core elements of which were incorporated into the pilot General English course. Table 2 shows the schedule for the pilot program below.

**Table 2. 2011 Pilot English Language Program Schedule**

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
<b>1</b>	READING Class A Umegaki				
<b>2</b>	READING Class B Umegaki				
<b>3</b>		GENERAL ENGLISH Class A Astley		GENERAL ENGLISH Class B Astley	WRITING Class A Kumamoto
<b>4</b>		GENERAL ENGLISH Class B Astley		GENERAL ENGLISH Class A Astley	WRITING Class B Kumamoto

Coordination took the form of regular meetings among the pilot teachers to discuss syllabuses, materials, common topics, testing, student progress, and student issues. The opportunity to exchange ideas on such matters

proved mutually beneficial as well as stimulating in terms of professional teacher development and it also proved extremely useful as a means of assessing the level of coordination that may be possible in the fully-fledged program. Progress reports were given at the steering committee meetings and a number of reports were also presented to the department meeting. The pilot teachers took great interest in the progress of the pilot students and although the pilot was not set up to provide specific data on how the new curriculum fared against the old curriculum, the pilot team was still able to collect some useful, if subjective, pointers in this respect. The results of the various measures of student performance during the pilot program are given below in the respective sections, which are followed by some comments on the experience of coordination in the pilot program.

## **4. Pilot Program: General English**

### **4.1 Outline**

General English (GE) is conceived as a two-year, integrated four-skills course based on a multi-strand approach to the syllabus. From 2012, two 90-minute periods per week are assigned to GE in both the first and second year of the ELP. Classroom activities include oral communication practice, listening tasks, brief reading and writing tasks, and pronunciation practice, accompanied by grammar and vocabulary instruction and practice.

GE takes an essentially communicative approach both to the acquisition and development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills and to the teaching of grammatical structures. The material employed is topic-based to stimulate interest in practicing target language structures and items and to achieve the language objectives involved. In addition, the topic-based approach allows for vocabulary building and also for the recycling of language and skills in other areas of the ELP, which will help



reinforce student learning patterns. Phonological aspects of the language-learning process are treated through the practice of pronunciation at both phoneme and word level as well as stress patterns at the word, phrase, and sentence level.

The broader aims of GE within the context of the ELP as a whole are to build students' English language proficiency to allow them to be able to study abroad; prepare students for advanced-level study in Years 3 and 4, particularly in the advanced oral communication courses; develop students' all-round competence for dealing with all forms of communication in English; and develop students' social skills so that they are comfortable with dealing with foreign people. Specific course aims of GE include developing the four core skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing to enhance students' general ability to communicate effectively in English; facilitating the understanding of grammar structures and their practice in appropriate contexts; improving pronunciation and fluency; employing effective oral communication strategies; vocabulary-building; and learning dictionary skills.

The GE course is assigned two blocks in the timetable, twice a week, in both the first and second years. For academic year 2012, first-year students are divided into ten classes of around 37 students so that there are twenty half-sized classes of 18 or 19 students. As the twenty classes are allocated two blocks in the timetable, this means that there are ten classes taught concurrently. The two first-year GE classes are held on Monday mornings (Periods 1/2) and Thursday afternoons (Periods 3/4), while the second-year GE classes are held on Tuesday mornings (Periods 1/2) and Friday afternoons (Periods 3/4). GE is delivered by a team of full-time instructors, led by eight newly appointed full-time EFL instructors teaching eight of the ten classes per block, with the remaining two classes in each

block covered with support from departmental full-time teaching staff. The language of instruction is English and so the GE team is composed of native or native-level English speakers experienced in EFL teaching and educated overseas. The ideal is to have a range of nationalities and backgrounds, and currently the GE team is represented by instructors from the United States, Australia, Britain, Spain, and Japan. The twice-weekly classes are taught by the same instructor throughout a semester, but classes are assigned a new instructor each semester, allowing for exposure to different accents, styles, and cultures over the course of two years of GE instruction.

As for the course content, GE follows a prescribed course of instruction, coordinated among the GE team via weekly meetings to discuss target language points, materials, possible teaching methods, and weekly aims within the context of overall course aims. The means of assessment is also prescribed, with the scheduled mid-term and end-of-term tests taken by all students. Language items are introduced and practiced through a range of tasks, based on application of the four core skills, while grammar is taught through concepts and notions. Conversation strategies to promote fluency as well as confidence to build a conversation are to be integrated into GE and their use and deployment is planned to be developed in coordination with the Power-Up Tutorial program. Course content is thematic to allow for the sharing of content and recycling of language items, particularly vocabulary, in other areas of the ELP. The main aim of the GE pilot was to choose course materials and assess their suitability, as is discussed below.

## **4.2 The GE pilot**

Astley was responsible for running the General English course in the pilot program and developing a curriculum for the two years of the GE program. The GE course, taught twice a week by a dedicated team of

full-time instructors with coordinated content throughout the first two years, represented a new approach in the department and so, as indicated above, the principal aim of the pilot was to try out and decide on course materials for the introduction of the new GE program in 2012 and put together a syllabus.

The textbook proposed by Astley was the general EFL textbook *Language Leader* (Longman), with the first-year course to use the pre-intermediate-level text and the second-year course to use the intermediate-level text. The *Language Leader* series is developed in accordance with the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and was proposed by Astley based on his observation of its successful adoption as a core textbook at the University of Sheffield's English Language Teaching Centre in the UK and at the University of Tasmania's English Language Centre in Australia. Units in the *Language Leader* series are topic-based, with grammatical structures being introduced sequentially within the scope of the CEFR, and allow ample room for the use of supplementary materials to complement the textbook. The twelve units at each level can be divided roughly into half such that the first six units can be covered in the first semester and the second six units can be covered in the second semester. Themes covered by the pre-intermediate-level textbook planned for adoption at first-year level include weather, people, science, health, and the environment, themes that it was felt had sufficient scope for using in the Writing and Reading programs, thus allowing for the potential to share topics across the ELP. At least 90 to 120 classroom contact hours are required to cover the textbook in depth, but the approximately 80 hours available to GE per academic year was felt to be sufficient to meet the aims and the needs of our program.

In order to run the GE pilot, the two timetabled slots for Oral Communica-

tion and Extensive Reading were used, with components of each syllabus incorporated into the teaching. Thus, the students used the recommended textbook for Oral Communication (Tom Kenny and Linda Woo, *Nice Talking With You 1*, Cambridge University Press, 2011) and were taught oral communication strategies and used the Speaking Lab for video-recorded conversations. Also, they were required to read extensively using books from the Graded Readers series from the university library and write book reports and give presentations on the books in groups of four or five. The schedules planned for teaching units from the textbook in the spring and fall semesters for the GE pilot were as below in Tables 3 and 4. Note that because of the time constraints due to the incorporation of the extra elements, it was only possible to cover Units 1 to 5 during the spring semester. In the fall semester, six units, from Units 6 to 11, were covered.

**Table 3. 1st Year General English 2011 Pilot Program: Spring Semester Schedule**

Wk	Date	Lesson content	Date	Lesson content
1	12 April	Orientation; Pre-Test	14 April	Introductions, Family
2	19 April	Unit 1: Weather	21 April	Unit 1: Weather
3	26 April	Unit 1: Weather	28 April	Unit 1: Weather
4	10 May	Unit 2: People	12 May	Unit 2: People
5	17 May	Unit 2: People	19 May	Unit 2: People
6	24 May	Unit 3: The Media	26 May	Unit 3: The Media
7	31 May	Unit 3: The Media	2 June	Unit 3: The Media
8	7 June	Test: Units 1–3	9 June	Unit 4: Health
9	14 June	Unit 4: Health	16 June	Unit 4: Health
10	21 June	Unit 4: Health	23 June	Unit 5: Natural World
11	28 June	Unit 5: Natural World	30 June	Unit 5: Natural World
12	5 July	Unit 5: Natural World	7 July	Unit 6: Society and Family
13	12 July	Unit 6: Society and Family	14 July	Unit 6: Society and Family
14	19 July	Unit 6: Society and Family	21 July	Review: Units 4–6
15	26 July	Test	28 July	Course review

**Table 4. 1st Year General English 2011 Pilot Program: Fall Semester Schedule**

<b>Wk</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lesson content</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lesson content</b>
1	20 Sept	Orientation; Review	22 Sept	Unit 7: Science
2	27 Sept	Unit 7: Science	29 Sept	Unit 7: Science
3	4 Oct	Unit 7: Science	6 Oct	Unit 8: The Night
4	11 Oct	Unit 8: The Night	13 Oct	Unit 8: The Night
5	18 Oct	Unit 8: The Night	20 Oct	Unit 9: Work and Industry
6	25 Oct	Unit 9: Work and Industry	27 Oct	Unit 9: Work and Industry
7	1 Nov	Unit 9: Work and Industry	8 Nov	Review: Units 7–9
8	10 Nov	Unit 10: Global Affairs	15 Nov	Unit 10: Global Affairs
9	17 Nov	Unit 10: Global Affairs	22 Nov	Unit 10: Global Affairs
10	24 Nov	Unit 11: The Environment	29 Nov	Unit 11: The Environment
11	1 Dec	Unit 11: The Environment	6 Dec	Unit 11: The Environment
12	8 Dec	Unit 12: Sport	13 Dec	Unit 12: Sport
13	15 Dec	Unit 12: Sport	20 Dec	Unit 12: Sport
14	22 Dec	Review: Units 10–12	12 Jan	Test
15	17 Jan	Test	19 Jan	Course review

In the first scheduled class students were required to take a pre-test in the form of a simple, grammar-based placement test to obtain a rudimentary indicator of their level. The placement test supplied by textbook publishers Longman was adapted and restricted to the first fifty questions, which are regarded as sufficient to give a reasonable indication of student ability at the lower levels. The Longman placement test supplied was to be divided into sections of 25 questions for level placement purposes. According to publisher guidelines, students scoring less than 17 on the first section (Qs 1–25) were to be placed in the elementary level, while students scoring less than 17 on the second section (Qs 26–50) were to be placed in the pre-intermediate level. Figures 1 and 2 show the results, indicating that both classes, averaging 18 and 17 respectively for Class A and Class B, would be suited to the pre-intermediate level given that the test only assessed

basic grammar knowledge and did not take into account oral communicative competence, which can be expected to be considerably lower.

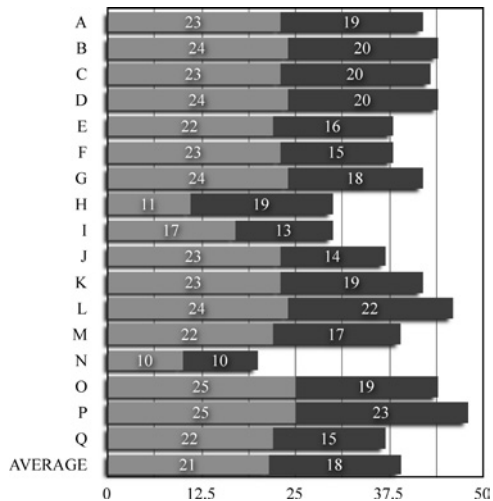


Figure 1. Pre-Test Results: Class A

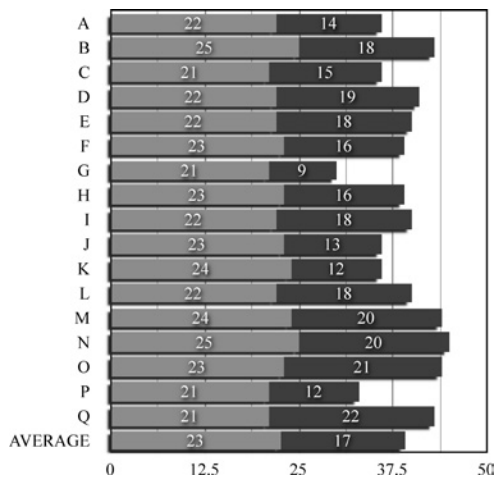


Figure 2. Pre-Test Results: Class B

Students did indeed find the textbook material challenging, especially during the early units in the first semester, but once oral communicative competence had caught up to a degree with their grammar-based levels, students became more confident and comfortable with the materials and were able to engage in brief discussions on issues related to the topics in the textbook.

With regard to content taught from the textbook, the *Language Leader* series is divided into four sections per unit in the pre-intermediate book (used in the first-year course) and five in the intermediate book (used in the second-year course). In the pre-intermediate book, the main language items are introduced in the first two sections, with the third section involving extended practice to apply new language and the fourth section treating study and writing skills. Thus, the aim during the pilot program was to cover the main language items in the first two sections only and use the Language Reference section at the back of the book in conjunction with exercises from the Student's Workbook in order to consolidate learning of the main language items. Although less than the 90 to 120 hours of classroom time required to utilize the book to the full was available, this was achieved for all units except Unit 12 and the book was received well by the pilot students. Thus, although it means a certain degree of cherry-picking tasks and materials from the textbook, from the experience of the piloting of GE in 2011, it is not felt that this will be a serious impediment to the achieving of the overall aims of the GE program. Although the time available for using the content from the *Language Leader* textbook was somewhat restricted, running the pilot for GE was a most useful exercise for a number of reasons:

- assessing the potential for use of the materials in the textbook;
- confirming that the materials are indeed suitable both in terms of level

- and interest to students;
- appreciating the benefit of seeing the students twice a week in terms of developing a rapport with them and being able to monitor their development more closely;
  - assessing the potential benefit of a structured approach to learning grammar.

## **5. Pilot Program: Writing**

Kumamoto was responsible for the delivery of the Writing course in the pilot program. This section will first explain our students' essay writing background in high school and assess their TOEIC scores to give a rough idea of their levels. It will then describe the content of the course, materials that were used, and finally it will examine improvement over the year measured by in-class writing tests. Kumamoto also taught two other writing classes that were following the old curriculum, which for the purposes of this study are identified as Class C and Class D and referred to as the "general group". The results for these classes are presented here for the purpose of comparison.

### **5.1 Our students' writing background and their TOEIC scores**

At the beginning of the first semester, students' English writing background was surveyed through a questionnaire. Students in the pilot group, as well as in the general group, were surveyed. The result shows that though many students took an English writing course in high school, most of them have no experience in writing anything longer than a sentence. In many cases, writing classes are reportedly used for other activities, such as grammar exercises. Table 5 shows the number of students who answered "yes" to the following questions:



Q1. Did you take a writing course in high school? Yes/No

Q2. If yes, did you experience paragraph writing? Yes/No

Q3. Did you practice writing essays in Japanese? Yes/No

**Table 5. Students' English Writing Background**

	Q1	Q2	Q3
A (n=17)	16	1	13
B (n=17)	17	2	4
C (n=16)	14	1	5
D (n=17)	14	1	7

The TOEIC scores of the pilot group classes are compared with those of the general group classes in Table 6. As will be discussed later, students' TOEIC scores are not always a good indicator of their writing ability.

**Table 6. TOEIC Scores of Pilot and General Classes**

	May		December	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
A (n=13)	412.5	78.8	505.4	73.4
B (n=17)	475.0	78.8	519.7	88.4
C (n=11)	391.8	58.5	469.5	48.6
D (n=11)	510.5	117.5	561.8	108.7

## **5.2 How the classes were taught**

In the first semester of 2011, the pilot group classes were taught in a different way to the general group classes in terms of the materials used and the focus of teaching. The topics covered in the pilot group were those that had been covered in either GE or Reading classes — healthy eating and world heritage sites, for example — with the focus on logical paragraph development. The general group, on the other hand, followed the same content from the previous year, writing about students' past experience and their reflections. The main differences are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7. Pilot/General Class Differences (First Semester 2011)**

	ELP Pilot	General
Textbook:	Oshima & Hogue (2007), <i>Introduction to Academic Writing</i>	printed materials
Content:	3 paragraphs + 1 essay with citation	1 paragraph + 3 essays without citation
Focus:	logical order, general to specific flow	narrative, descriptive
Reading:	related to GE and R content	independent
Grammar:	covered in GE and R	weekly grammar quizzes, dictation
Tests:	take-home test with citation, in-class test (advantage/disadvantage)	in-class test (narrative/descriptive)

In the second semester, these classes were taught in a similar way in terms of the content, except that the pilot group received grammar/dictionary support and some background reading in GE and Reading classes. The reading passages were loosely connected to the prompt; for example, a passage on family and marriage was used for arguing whether women should have a job while raising children. There was no directly related reading for the last prompt, arguing for or against nuclear power generation, which seemed to have caused most difficulty for both pilot and general group students. See Table 8 below for comparison.

**Table 8. Pilot/General Class Differences (Second Semester 2011)**

	ELP Pilot	General
Textbook:	printed materials	printed materials
Content:	4 essays 2 without citation 2 with citation	4 essays 2 without citation 2 with citation
Focus:	argumentative, counter-argument	argumentative, counter-argument
Reading:	3 essays, loosely related to GE and R; 1 essay, independent	independent
Grammar:	covered in GE and R	weekly grammar quizzes
Dictation:	topic related to an essay prompt	topic related to an essay prompt
Tests:	take-home test with citation, in-class test	take-home test with citation, in-class test

### 5.3 The quality of students' writing

With regard to the students' improvement in English essay writing *per se*, the pilot group students showed steady improvement in their writing skills, while the general group seemed to progress in a less tangible way. This was measured by the three in-class tests given in April, July, and December to pilot group students, and the two tests given in July and December to general group students. In April and December the same prompt was set for comparative purposes: "Should parents hit their children as a form of discipline?" The prompts given in July were different, reflecting the first semester content in each group. The prompt used for the pilot group required more logical organization: "What are the advantages and disadvantages of getting our news from the Internet?" while the prompt for the general group was similar to those they had had in class: "Think of a place that has made a big impression on you. Describe it and why it impressed you." All the essays were measured holistically, using a three-criteria rubric, which included content, vocabulary, and accuracy, on a scale of 20. See Table 9 and Figure 3 below for the results.

Table 9. In-class Test Results

	May		July		December	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
A class (n=17)	11.4	0.9	13.9	1.0	15.0	1.1
B class (n=17)	12.3	1.7	14.6	1.3	15.2	1.0
C class (n=14)			14.1	0.9	14.3	0.9
D class (n=14)			13.6	1.2	14.2	1.3

In order to see if the pilot group, or the experimental group (A and B), and the general group, or the control group (C and D), belonged to the same population in the July test, several t-tests were applied. No significant difference was found between A and B classes ( $t = -1.549$ ,  $d.f. = 32$ ,  $p =$

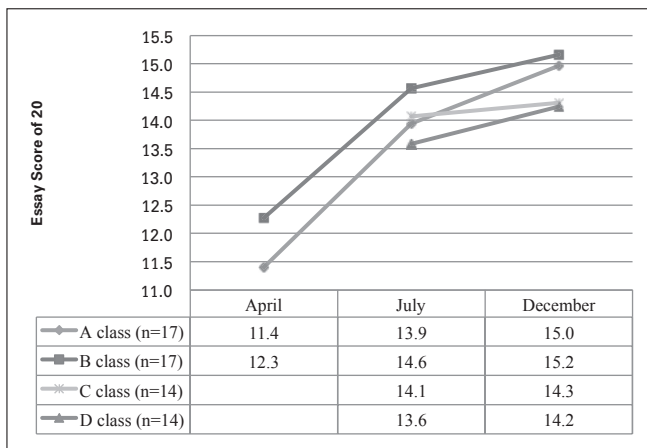


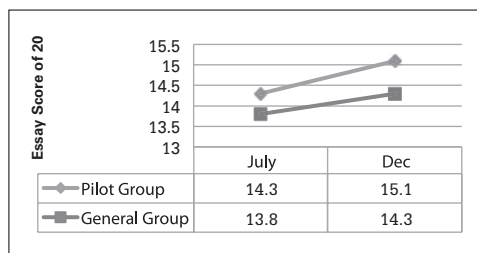
Figure 3. In-class Test Results

.131) or between C and D classes ( $t = 1.221$ ,  $d.f. = 26$ ,  $p = .233$ ). Next, the pilot (A/B) and the general (C/D) groups were compared, but no significant difference was detected ( $t = 1.479$ ,  $d.f. = 60$ ,  $p = .144$ ). See the comparison between the pilot and the general groups (Table 10 and Figure 4 below). Both the pilot and the general groups showed significant improvement between the July and the December tests (the pilot group, with  $t = -5.364$ ,  $d.f. = 33$ ,  $p = .000$ , and the general group,  $t = -2.508$ ,  $d.f. = 27$ ,  $p = .018$ ). When the difference in the December test was compared between these two groups, however, the pilot group outperformed the general group at a significant level of .01 ( $t = 2.873$ ,  $d.f. = 60$ ,  $p = .006$ ). A detailed discussion of the difference will be made in a separate article; presently, a few major points will be briefly mentioned.

One possible reason might be that in the case of the pilot group, time was allowed for understanding logical organization of paragraph in the first semester, while the general group immediately started writing essays that required only narrative and descriptive organization. The awareness

**Table 10. In-class Test Results (July and December)**

	July		December	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pilot Group	14.3	1.2	15.1	1.0
General Group	13.8	1.1	14.3	1.1



**Figure 4. In-class Test Results (July-December)**

of logical organization also affected the quality of second semester writing, when they challenged more demanding argumentative essays. This understanding of the nature of fundamental logical structure seems to have given the pilot students confidence to write longer, more difficult essays in the second semester, and further expand and transfer their skills in other kinds of activities. Another possible explanation could come from our coordinated content. The pilot group students were more aware of the importance of accuracy and appropriate vocabulary use, due to the instruction and activities given in GE and Reading classes. It can also be said that previous reading activities in other classes could have formed students' habit of thinking deeper. These factors may explain why a class like Class D, whose average TOEIC scores were higher than those of other classes did not perform well. To compose a meaningful discourse with appropriate structure and vocabulary is a synthetic activity, which can be supported by tasks of careful reading and critical thinking.

## 5.4 Awareness of transferability of skills

Finally, another significant point that was noticed was the pilot group students' stronger awareness of the transferability of their skills. In the year-end questionnaire given to both pilot and general groups, the pilot group not only had a stronger awareness of such possibilities, but they thought they actually transferred their skills more often than the general group. The open-ended questions only asked for the "possibility" of transferring. However, as a number of answers mentioned actual cases of use, such tokens were tabulated separately. Two of the three questions asked are introduced here in Tables 11 and 12:

Q2. Do you think the skills you learned in this class useful? If so, how and when do you think you can use them?

Q3. How much do you think writing ability influences other skills, such as reading, speaking, and listening?

**Table 11. "Writing Skills Are Useful"**

	Think they will be useful	Actually used in W	Actually used in R	Actually used in S	Actually used in L
A class (n=16)	8	4	2	4	1
B class (n=16)	8	7	0	1	0
C class (n=14)	12	1	0	1	0
D class (n=16)	10	5	0	0	0

**Table 12. "Writing Ability Influences Other Skills"**

	Think it will influence other skills	Actually influenced R	Actually influenced S	Actually influenced L
A class (n=16)	4	7	6	1
B class (n=16)	2	6	8	1
C class (n=14)	5	7	1	0
D class (n=16)	3	8	1	1

## **6. Pilot Program: Reading (Intensive Reading)**

Umegaki was responsible for the delivery of the Reading (Intensive Reading) course in the pilot program. This section will first explain the purposes of the two Reading courses in the department's English language curriculum and then make some observations regarding the reading skills with which our students enter the university. By juxtaposing these two, what the students need to acquire in their first year will become clear. Finally, this section will provide an outline of how the Reading classes were taught.

### **6.1 Purposes of the reading courses**

Under the old curriculum, there were two Reading courses: English C (Extensive Reading) and English D (Intensive Reading). As for the Extensive Reading course in the first two years of study, it was coordinated within itself since the program was launched more than ten years ago, with all the teachers using the Graded Readers series both in class and outside class for homework. While the instructors of Extensive Reading courses exchanged and shared information regularly, the Intensive Reading courses lacked coordination: the selection of the textbook and content of the courses were all left to each instructor. As it is a key feature of the ELP as a whole, coordination within the Reading program is of critical importance and the direction of the course has to be determined and shared among the instructors. With this in mind when participating in the 2011 pilot program, the following three goals were set for students to become autonomous learners through the Intensive Reading classes in order to make the coordination with GE and Writing classes easier and more fruitful:

- 1) To acquire global knowledge through reading with accuracy.
- 2) To prepare for writing and discussing through reading critically.
- 3) To express opinions in Japanese and in English based on reading.

## 6.2 Our students' reading skills background

At the beginning of the semester, the following tests were given to assess the students' reading skills. The same tests were given to both classes of the pilot group students: A and B.

Table 13. Pre-Tests for Reading

	Test A	Test B
Forms of the test	Writing test	Multiple choice test
Language	English and Japanese	English
Content	Grammar and translation	Reading comprehension
Sources	English sentences chosen from the textbook (Unit 1 and Unit 8)	Reading comprehension tests provided by the publisher of the textbook (Unit 5 and Unit 6)

The result shows that the students' competence to grasp the English sentence structures is considerably low, thus making it difficult for them to explain in proper Japanese what they read in English. However, the students gave a relatively high percentage of correct answers to the multiple-choice questions. In other words, the result of the multiple-choice test does not necessarily reflect the students' ability to read with accuracy. Table 14 shows the number of students who answered correctly.

Table 14. Results of Test A (Writing Test)

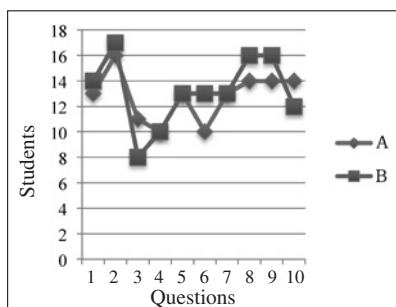
	Number of students who answered correctly	Percentage of students who answered correctly
A (n=17)	1	6%
B (n=17)	6	35%

Table 15 shows the number of correct answers to each question in the two sections of the multiple-choice test: one for Unit 5 and the other for Unit 6. See Figures 5 and 6 for the comparison of test results.

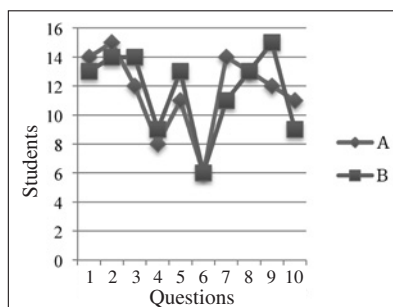


**Table 15. Results of Test B (multiple choice test)**

Number of correct answers (Unit 5)										
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
A (n=17)	13	16	11	10	13	10	13	14	14	14
B (n=17)	14	17	8	10	13	13	13	16	16	12
Number of correct answers (Unit 6)										
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
A (n=17)	14	15	12	8	11	6	14	13	12	11
B (n=17)	13	14	14	9	13	6	11	13	15	9



**Figure 5. Test B Unit 5 Results**



**Figure 6. Test B Unit 6 Results**

### 6.3 How the classes were taught

In the pilot program, the Intensive Reading classes were taught with an emphasis on promoting the following aims:

- 1) To increase awareness of the sentence structures to read with accuracy.
- 2) To make full use of the dictionary as the first step to becoming an autonomous learner.
- 3) To foster generic transferable skills through reading critically.

In order to motivate students and improve their skills in relation to points 1 and 2 above, Umegaki distributed paper dictionaries to all the students during class and gave instruction in how to use or read the dictionary when reading and writing.

Point 3 above is closely related to the issue of coordination with the other classes participating in the pilot program. The textbook selected for the Intensive Reading pilot program (*Reading Explorer 2*, Heinle, 2009) is based on articles from *National Geographic* (see Figure 7). It is a pre-intermediate textbook with Student CD-ROM, which includes audio material from the audio CD, video clips from the DVD, and additional video activities. Students were encouraged to read the *National Geographic* magazines stored in the library and to access the *National Geographic* website for further reading and information. With regard to the coordination, several units from the textbook were chosen to be read at a certain time of the semester so that the students could read, write, and discuss the same topics from various viewpoints with different approaches. (See Table 16 for the topics shared among GE, Writing, and Intensive Reading classes.)

Kumamoto found in the Writing pilot program that the advantages of coordinated teaching could be observed in three areas: (1) teachers' classroom management was easier; (2) the quality of students' writing was better compared with the control group; and (3) students' awareness and ability regarding the transfer of skills were more obvious. Similarly, Umegaki found in the Intensive Reading pilot program that classroom management was easier and also that students had an increased awareness and ability regarding the transfer of skills. Moreover, Umegaki noted the students' improvement in understanding the grammatical structures of the English sentences and the increased accuracy in reading in English and translating in Japanese, which was possibly related to the cumulative effect of teaching in a coordinated fashion, allowing students to reinforce their use of grammatical structures and vocabulary. In addition, most of the students have changed their attitudes toward how to use dictionaries, especially paper-based dictionaries, which were used in both the Reading and GE

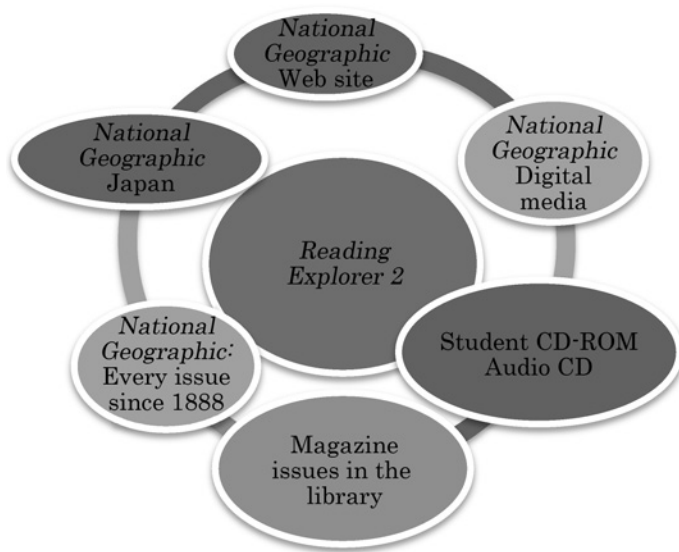


Figure 7. Textbook and the Teaching Materials

Table 16. Examples of Coordinated Topics in the Second Semester

	IR (Intensive Reading)	GE	Writing
1	Marriage Traditions	Society and Family	Essay on women at home
2	Marco Polo & Prince of Travelers	Science	Essay on technology
3	A Warming World	The Environment	Essay on nuclear power

classes on a regular basis.

Table 17 shows the results of two final exams: one for the first semester and the other for the second semester. It shows the scores of one of the sections of the final exams that tested students' understanding of the English sentence structures, together with the ability to express the content they read in proper Japanese. Tables 18 and 19 and Figures 8 and 9 show the results of the questionnaires given at the end of the semesters, which include questions about the coordinated courses and use of dictionaries. (The same

questions asked twice at different times are italicized.)

**Table 17. Results of the Final Exam (on a scale of a hundred)**

	Semester 1: Final Exam		Semester 2: Final Exam	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
A (n=17)	50	28.9	73	23.1
B (n=17)	67.1	29.3	77.5	20.7

**Table 18. Results of the Questionnaire: Semester 1**

➤ Rate how much you agree with the statement. 5→strongly agree 4→agree 3→neutral 2→disagree 1→strongly disagree				
Q1. The coordinated classes helped motivate you and increased your awareness of the link between writing, reading, and speaking skills.				
Q9. To have a paper dictionary at hand during the class and to learn how to make full use of it helped improve your reading skills.				
<i>Q15. Through the Intensive Reading class, you realized the importance of learning how to use a dictionary.</i>				
<i>Q16. After taking the Intensive Reading class, you came to use dictionaries more frequently than before.</i>				
➤ Average scores for the above items.				
	Q1	Q9	Q15	Q16
A (n=17)	3.7	4.6	4.5	4.2
B (n=17)	3.8	3.9	4.1	3.7

**Table 19. Results of the Questionnaire: Semester 2**

➤ Rate how much you agree with the statement. 5→strongly agree 4→agree 3→neutral 2→disagree 1→strongly disagree			
<i>Q11. Through the Intensive Reading class, you realized the importance of learning how to use a dictionary.</i>			
<i>Q5. After taking the Intensive Reading class, you came to use dictionaries more frequently than before.</i>			
Q6. After taking the Intensive Reading class, you came to use a paper dictionary at home more frequently than before.			
➤ Average scores for the above items.			
	Q11	Q5	Q6
A (n=17)	4.5	4.7	3.6
B (n=17)	4.1	4.6	2.9

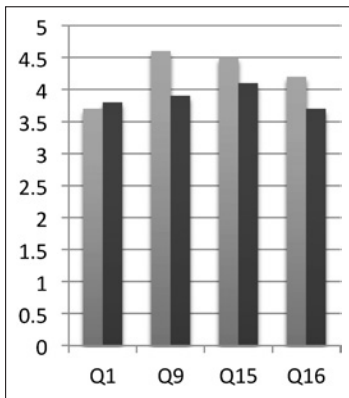


Figure 8. Questionnaire Results: Semester 1

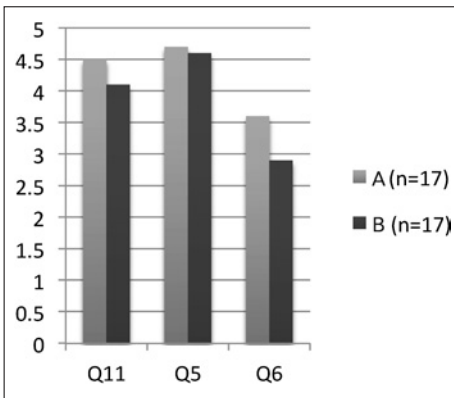


Figure 9. Questionnaire Results: Semester 2

## 7. Summary

The pilot program conducted in academic year 2011 was a most worthwhile exercise. Textbooks used and syllabuses developed in each of the pilot courses were adopted for the ELP in 2012 and it was valuable to have tried out the materials and developed the respective syllabuses in advance of the implementation of the department's entire language program. It was also extremely useful to have had the opportunity to exchange views with colleagues on curriculum design and the potential areas for coordination in the new curriculum.

Further, all three pilot instructors felt from their individual observations of student progress as well as from the results of tests and surveys that the pilot groups had made very satisfactory progress over the course of the year. The results of the tests and surveys may only suggest tentative conclusions for us at this stage, but there are two other observations to consider that may corroborate this view.

Firstly, one of the factors in the demand for curriculum change by the

university was reported to be the concern over student dropout rates. Throughout the pilot program, the three pilot instructors kept track of both the students' progress and their welfare. Kumamoto and Umegaki were assigned to the two classes as class advisors and, with regular updates among the pilot instructors, were able to give focussed support to their advisees in a timely manner. In addition, tutorials and feedback on academic performance were given by all three instructors at regular intervals during the academic year. It is not clear at this stage as to what precise role this coordination may have played, but for the General English, Writing, and Reading pilot courses there was a 100% pass rate for both classes in both semesters. All of the pilot students progressed to the second year of study. For reference, in Kumamoto's Writing course for the "general group", only 14 (82.4%) and 13 (76.5%) students in Class C and Class D respectively were able to complete that course.

Secondly, the university is putting a great deal of effort into promoting its study abroad program and offering scholarships for study abroad, yet the number of applicants remained relatively low this year. In this respect it is interesting to note that a high proportion of pilot group students have been accepted for study abroad: 7 out of 24, with 6 out of the 19 who were awarded scholarships. A further 5 students receiving scholarships are classmates of the pilot students and anecdotal evidence suggests that at least one or two of them have been motivated to study abroad by the pilot students. In any case, it is interesting that 11 out of 19 study abroad scholarship recipients are from just two of the ten classes and it will be interesting to see if the number of applicants for study abroad scholarships among the current 2012 first-years is significantly higher than in recent years.