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Anscomb-Iino John-Russell

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Post-College of General Education Non-Credit English Training: Problems and Perspectives from The Kyushu University Case Study

John-Russell Anscomb-Iino

This writer* has the dubious distinction of being Kyushu University's Institute of Languages and Cultures' only College of General Education faculty member assigned full-time to its still new, non-credit English (and other languages) Hakozaki branch institute for senior and graduate students from the Hakozaki and other senior campuses. As a result, I have rather a curious collection of teaching and administrative responsibilities. This, perhaps, makes me the most suitable candidate to introduce Kyushu University's response to the new responsibility of Japanese universities to provide post-college of general education students with further language training.

When the typical College of General Education language instructor, whether Japanese or native speaker, hears about my job, there tend to be comments as to how much more satisfying my job and how much easier my obligations must be than his. While he feels trapped in overly-large classes of immature first and second year students, I appear free to limit my classes to just the right number of mature senior students. Although his reluctant students' only apparent interest appears to be a passive search for the easiest way to acquire the required credits that have brought them there, it is assumed that my students attend voluntarily and are sufficiently self-motivated to participate in the institute's credit-free classes because of a perceived need to acquire certain English skills. I generally just smile self-consciously at the instructor's comments.

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*It is hoped that purists will excuse "this writer's" decision hereafter to employ the personal pronoun because it is more appropriate to the personal reportage style of this article.

I know that the instructor wants sympathy for himself rather than a critical analysis of our respective teaching situations. I also realize how easily my Hakozaki job could have been as unsatisfying as his is and how much heavier I have chosen to make my teaching and organizational responsibilities in order to ensure myself of a higher degree of teacher-student satisfaction than I might otherwise have had. In addition, I cannot help remembering that some of my most conscientious students at the Hakozaki branch institute have been first and second year College of General Education students who have been sufficiently motivated to travel all the way over to Hakozaki campus just to take the institute's courses. Although this is technically illegal, it has been difficult to reject them because many of them cannot afford the private language schools and overseas "home stay" programmes that so many College of General Education students attend because they really want to learn English and do not feel that they can do that in the language programme offered by the College of General Education's Institute of Languages and Cultures.

When Kyushu University was granted the opportunity to be one of the first Japanese universities to provide non-credit English (and other language) courses to post-College of General Education students, some very fundamental decisions had to be made. It had to be decided whether to provide these students with "more of the same", by continuing where the College of General Education language courses had left off, or to offer the students something new in terms of approach, content, and method. It also had to be determined whether to implement a random set of independent courses designed, taught, and administered at the option of the instructor, in the Japanese tradition, or to establish an actual programme of language courses operating within a fixed framework of goals, standards, and criteria, along the lines of language courses taught at most universities overseas and at most enlightened language schools in Japan.

At least in the minds of those who had fought hardest for this opportunity, most notably Dean Kenji Noguchi, Professor Tetsuo Yoshida, and Professor Fumio Miyahara, there seems to have been some kind of consensus that there were many limitations in the College of General

Education language system which, if once introduced to the Hakozaki branch institute, would become too institutionalized to be later reversed. As a result, student needs and expectations were considered to a degree that has not been considered necessary in College of General Education language programme planning. The College of General Education system provides only limited input from either native speaker instructors or internationally-accepted language teaching methods. Instead, it continues to be dominated by the translation approach, which has ensured that generations of Japanese would find language study unnecessarily difficult and time-consuming by concentrating on materials that are unreasonably beyond the grasp of the students, important only to the instructor, and relevant to language study rather than to language learning, and which has also guaranteed that both the instructor and the students would be safe from any actual need to use the foreign language. By contrast, in the Hakozaki branch institute, native speaker instructors and communicative courses have been emphasized, providing a delayed opportunity to proceed with the actual process of language acquisition for the limited number of students able to participate. The rationale used to avoid not only the College of General Education language programme but also any apparent criticism of that programme appears to have been that, as these post-College of General Education students had different needs, motivations, and objectives, these would be best served by introducing a new approach to the new endeavour. In reality, however, although these differences might apply to the graduate students and faculty members taking Hakozaki branch institute courses, they can hardly apply to the many students who have recently left the College of General Education without benefit of metamorphosis and are still in second or third year of university.

For the Hakozaki branch institute's first two terms, there was "an offering" rather than a real "programme". The new system meant little more than a utilization of any available native speaker and Japanese teaching faculty who were interested in something other than the translation approach to language study, who were not afraid to have their

language and teaching skills challenged by senior students with good English skills, and who were willing to commute to the Hakozaki campus. Most of these instructors taught independent courses which were classified under a general skills categorization and divided into two, undefined ability levels. In fact, however, their course descriptions tended to emphasize particular language skills, and there was no arbitrary line drawn between the two levels of difficulty.

Because of a lack of any programme or organization, the instructors had to face problems on their own which were as much administrative as pedagogical. With no guarantee of acceptance into any course, no real idea of their language ability (as the university entrance exam system had certainly not evaluated that and the College of General Education had been totally unconcerned about it), and no clear lines drawn to indicate the suitability of students to courses and courses to students, students felt that it was necessary to apply to every course fitting their schedules in the hope of increasing their chances of being accepted to even one course. The results were short-term pandemonium and long-term difficulties. The tendency was for the instructor, faced with two or three times the number of desired students, to waste the first class giving an often inappropriate written test and to select those who had written the most sophisticated or creative essays. This was great for the egos of the instructors but not very fair to the students. There was no machinery to coordinate the results among the classes. Many of the 'top' students were accepted into most of the classes, even at both levels and with the same instructor. Considering the size limitations of the programme, this gave these students an excessive opportunity to improve their already 'good' English skills as well as the chance to drop out of their less suitable courses after it had become too late to fill any vacancies with more needy students. The 'bottom' students, who needed the courses most, often weren't accepted into any of the classes and soon gave up taking these tests, which they were doomed to fail, and trying to gain access to the Hakozaki branch institute, however much they may have needed it. Perhaps because of the unsuitability of the tests and the varied abilities

of the students applying, instructors tended to end up with a range of students that was still too broad to be able to meet everyone's needs. This made the teaching inefficient and created student/teacher dissatisfaction. Because of the insularity of each class and the absence of any administrative machinery, there was no way for any adjustments to be made, such as having students switch classes or filling any class vacancies. Unless a student stayed with the same instructor for succeeding terms, there was no guaranteed sense of progress when a student 'graduated' from one class to his next. It was still all very "hit and miss" and even lacked the reassuring stability of the conscripted College of General Education system. In my case, faced with all those students wanting to learn and unable to decide who was most sincere or deserving, I began adding classes so that I could accept them all, trying to divide them into different levels, and scheduling class times suitable to the majority of each group. To protect myself — if for no other reason — something had to be done.

It does not require an advanced degree in TEFL/TESOL to realize that language instructors cannot maximize their teaching skills when their students have a wide range of abilities and capacities and to understand that students cannot learn a language effectively when the material taught is considered irrelevant to all but English majors, too easy for a lucky few with advanced English skills, or so difficult for the majority that they must either stumble through it using dictionaries for every other word or purchase student translations from previous years. Nevertheless, that remains the general situation in the College of General Education language courses because the administrative and pedagogical obstacles to reform are, rightly or wrongly, considered almost insurmountable. Considering the wider range of student types, skills, and needs at Hakozaki, the hurdles to establishing a rational system for the programme there should have proven even more insurmountable. Yet, after only one trial term with a limited placement test system and three levels of skill courses, I was able to propose an administrative and educational package that gained general acceptance first from the students in the trial pro-

gramme and then from those who would teach the courses.

Since the institute's third term, a student placement test system and a five-level programme of courses in six skill-areas have been operating at Hakozaki within a general framework of goals, standards, and criteria designed to make the teaching/learning process more efficient. During this time, however, there has been a lot of concern from members of the College of General Education's Institute of Languages and Cultures that the restrictions of the placement test and the five-level, six skill-area system of courses might be discouraging student applications. The apparently larger number of applications in the first year of operation compared with the present number of applications is cited as proof.

The evidence is, however , very unscientific and inconclusive for a large number of reasons. First, when the institute was initially established, the university was blitzed with oral and written advertising so that most students had heard about the institute. Now, however, my formal surveys of bulletin boards during the application period and my informal talks with students and the comments on a 110-student survey (described later) make it clear that there is now almost no advertising at Hakozaki and that many senior students do not know about the institute. This means that applications are not coming from as large an informed student population as they once were. Second, no records exist for the applications to several courses in the first term of operation, making any data incomplete and comparison impossible. Third, several courses in the first term were (very popular) summer intensive courses rather than the regular term courses that have since been taught, while fifteen English courses were offered in the first terms and only fourteen courses (to permit the introduction of a Spanish course) have been offered in the last few terms, making a numbers' comparison inappropriate. Fourth, because of the specialized nature and relatively high English level of some of the courses presently available, the number of applicants to such courses must come from a much more limited source than the applicants for a course merely labelled English and open to everyone. Most damaging to the arguments of the detractors, however, is that their data is based

upon the number of applications, rather than the number of applicants, for which records for the first few terms do not exist. At the beginning, many students were forced to submit an application to all of the courses in the hope of being accepted to one or two. Now, however, students can only apply for courses for which they are eligible, which restricts them to a maximum of about seven course applications (In fact, this limitation restricts them still further when the availability factor is considered as they should have a higher rate of availability for the total fourteen time-periods throughout the week than for a pre-determined set of seven time-periods.), while the norm is only about two applications per student because students can be relatively confident of getting the courses for which they apply under this system. Thus, the number of applications has been purposely restricted in order to improve the selection process and to improve classroom efficiency in the hope of satisfying students and increasing the number of applicants.

That these objectives of the system have been achieved can be demonstrated in several ways. A three-page survey completed by 110 students, many of whom had participated in the institute's courses both before and after the change, declared overwhelming support for both the placement system and the five-level, six skill-areas programme. In this connection, it is useful to analyse the applications to institute courses taught by Japanese instructors because (unlike the native speaker instructors) it is their option to participate in the programme only to the extent to which they desire. After beginning to apply the level standard to applicants, one Japanese instructor reported an increase in enrollment and greater satisfaction with his class although the class period and course content had not changed from the previous term. The number of applicants to a new course taught by the same instructor the next term was also significantly higher than the number applying to a Japanese-taught course which did not utilize either the five-level or the six skill-areas systems, which emphasized the original, general approach, and which was strongly advertised during the placement test/application period as being suitable for any students who did not want to be limited by their placement test

scores or were unable or unwilling to take the placement test. Yet, the 110-student survey identified the day/time slots occupied by the course operating outside the programme as being one of the seven "best" times for many more students and one of the seven "worst" times for far fewer students than the day/time slot occupied by the course operating within the programme. This suggests that it is not just native speaker teachers who support the need for such a system in language training and that, when the system is properly understood, it has a positive effect on the number of applicants and a constructive effect on the number of applications.

The primary objective of a standardized placement test system was to establish as equitable and efficient a student selection process as possible. With such a test, there was no longer any danger that the 'top' students would always be accepted and the 'bottom' students would always be rejected. There was no more need for each instructor to waste his first class (of approximately a dozen) testing students, the following week selecting from among them, and his second class trying to adjust his plans to the class 'level' and preparing the students for the third class when the course would really begin. Instructors could now establish a course at a set level with the confidence that only students with appropriate language skills would be accepted.

The T.O.E.F.L. was selected as the Hakozaki institute's placement test because of its international application and reputation. Unlike the typical Japanese university entrance exam system, which tends to focus on academic tricks and irrelevancies in order to separate students according to their academic knowledge of a language and their test-taking training, the T.O.E.F.L. provides students with an analysis of something approaching their real levels of English language competence in comparision not only with other Japanese students but also with all other non-native speaking students who have taken the T.O.E.F.L. Student respect for the T.O.E.F.L. results in a natural curiosity in their scores and a willingness to submit to a rather lengthy test that might not be achieved with the institute's own, or another, test. Indeed, some students who do not intend

to take the institute's courses take its placement test just to check their English skills.

Hopefully, information about their scores helps to persuade some of these students that they haven't had too much grammar and reading practice (as they tend to believe); just the wrong kind of grammar and reading training. Hopefully, this information helps to convince these students that conversation classes and the communicative approach are not all that is required to cure their foreign language inadequacies. Hopefully, it also shows these students that they need formal training in realistic grammar patterns (stressing today's simplified forms and verbal idioms and ignoring the artificially-contrived constructions and anti-quated expressions that have created the need for Japan's cram school system) and in reading structure, content, and implication (as opposed to a very limited, word-to-word, translated 'understanding'). There can be no doubt, however, that the placement test tells students where they stand with regard to their English skills and suggests where they should proceed from there. Thus, even if the test were not necessary for the pro-gramme, it would still provide a useful service to the students.

The College of General Education should be troubled by the fact that an average of 15% of the testees (admittedly including some Chinese foreign students) score below 400 on the placement test. According to the generally-accepted interpretation of T.O.E.F.L. scores, this places them at the basic, or beginner, level—notwithstanding the fact that they apparent-ly scored high enough on the university's English entrance exam and were somehow able to pass the required English courses in the College of General Education. Although the College of General Education might feel encouraged by the fact that approximately 10% of the students score in the 550-600 range (as required for admission to all but the best U.S. graduate programmes), any casual interview with these students demon-strates that their scores are the result of overseas' travel or education, private language schools, or self-study. The College of General Educa-tion should be embarrassed that these two sets of students have previous-ly been forced to attend College of General Education language classes

with each other without regard to their special needs or abilities. Some College of General Education instructors might also be embarrassed to discover that, despite the emphases and alleged strengths of the Japanese high school and university systems, a surprising number of students have listening (speaking) scores that are higher than their grammar or reading scores. During the four terms of testing, the combined total of testees whose lowest score was either the grammar or the reading sections has roughly equalled the number of applicants whose lowest score was the listening section—although the forced pace of the listening section should provide the most trauma for first-time test-takers. This indicates that the language priorities, needs, and abilities of Japanese university students are changing without regard to the static nature of the language teaching offered in the colleges of general education across the nation.

Although the basic two-hour, three-section T.O.E.F.L. has been adopted unaltered as the institute's placement test, the scores have been adapted for the institute's five-level, six skill-area programme. To determine student course-suitability, the listening score is used for listening-skill and speaking-skill courses, the grammar score is used for writing-skill courses, the reading score is used for reading-skill courses, and the total score is used for English-for-special-purposes (E.S.P.) courses such as debating and test-taking. Each score fits into one of five score ranges into which the total T.O.E.F.L. score range has been divided. Each of these score ranges matches one of the five course-levels offered.

The placement test (which changes each term) is offered from eight to ten times during the approximately two-week application period and is taken by all new students wishing to apply for the institute's English courses and by any existing students wishing to improve their scores in order to upgrade their course eligibility. It may only be taken once a term. After I administer the test, I have the students correct each others' papers (although computer equipment could be used). By the next working day, I prepare institute cards showing the students' scores and levels. After picking up their cards, students may submit an application at the general office for each course which matches or is reasonably

below their levels for the relevant skills. Special permission is required (from me) for students wishing courses at a skill level which their scores have missed by one or two points, thereby introducing some flexibility into an otherwise arbitrary system. Students must list all the courses they want in preference order on both their applications and the application log. At the end of the application period, I consult with the appropriate instructors to evaluate the applications. Under-subscribed courses accept all eligible applicants. Over-subscribed courses select students based on the students' levels and scores, the students' course preference orders, the number of already successful applications from these students, and the students' application dates. The placement test system and the accompanying application process have proved painless to implement, easy to administer, and well-received by both students and instructors because they are straightforward and uncomplicated and because they are perceived as being fair, efficient, and necessary.

The general, every-day coordination of the programme has proved much more difficult than the management of the placement test system and the application process. This difficulty is the combined result of the general university situation, conflicting demands on student time, the institute's limited teaching resources, the Japanese concept of 'academic freedom', and advertising problems. Most of these problems are beyond the control of the Hakozaki institute, its programme, and its instructors because of the nature of its non-credit courses. These problems will continue to limit, and even to jeopardize, such a programme either until the Japanese university system and, perhaps, Japanese society have made further adaptations to modernization and internationalization or until the institute can offer credit courses. In the meantime, all that can be done is to accommodate and to minimize these problems with the resources at the institute's disposal.

One problem that inconveniences the programme both administratively and educationally is its relatively high drop-out rate. Until this phenomenon became better understood, it depressed and disappointed many of the instructors. Yet, once an examination of the excuses given for with-

drawing became possible, it indicated that course dissatisfaction has had surprisingly little bearing on these withdrawals and that little can be done to cut these generally unrecoverable losses as long as the university system remains as it is. Instead, it is the function of the institute's administrative system to make whatever adjustments can minimize the damage caused by these losses.

One group of unrecoverable drop-outs results from academic calendar and course-scheduling problems. The faculties on the Hakozaki and other senior campuses all seem to have very different start/finish/exam schedules from each other. Thus, it remains sufficiently difficult for the Hakozaki institute to fit in with the schedules of enough faculties for it to be worthwhile to adopt a calendar which would be different from the calendar for Ropponmatsu's College of General Education and which would, therefore, require the Hakozaki institute's instructors to work under two, conflicting calendars. As a result, the Hakozaki institute's calendar almost duplicates the College of General Education's calendar. This calendar starts its terms much earlier than do the faculties on the Hakozaki and other senior campuses. In addition, many faculties do not publish their final course schedules or even make provisional schedules available until just before their classes begin. Thus, students must choose either to wait politely until they know their faculty schedules and it is probably too late to be assured of acceptance to the institute's "first-come, first-served" courses or to apply for the institute's courses as early as possible in the optimistic hope that their faculty requirements will not later force them to withdraw. Often it is not until the second or third week of the institute's classes that students discover that the times for their faculty courses conflict with those of the institute's. A related problem is the number of professors in other faculties who do not feel tied by their faculty schedules and change their class times mid-term to suit their convenience without regard to their students' other commitments. In addition, there are always a number of special courses or training programmes sponsored by the other faculties which seem to start up about half-way through the term, with students finding out only then that

they either may or must attend. Withdrawals resulting from problems such as these are beyond the control of either the students or the institute. All that the institute can do is to minimize the drop-out damage. It is partly because of these problems that the institute accepts applications for the vacancies remaining in any classes for approximately three weeks after initial registration has closed and permits appropriate transfers for the following three weeks. Actually dealing with the problems causing these withdrawals, however, requires a university solution. At North American universities, most faculties operate on the same, or similar, schedules, relevant cross-faculty class conflicts are considered as much as possible in course scheduling, and timetables are produced months, and even years, in advance for the convenience of students. Perhaps the Japanese universities will have to remedy these scheduling problems when the importance of "double degrees" and multi-disciplinary study is finally recognized by Japan's governmental and industrial sectors, requiring students to be able to take credit courses from several university departments or faculties without unnecessary impediment. Before that time, however, universities will have to realize that they are there to serve the needs of the students, rather than the dictates of academic research. Perhaps the end of the baby-boom and the resulting competition for students will assist this process.

The second group of largely unrecoverable drop-outs are only indirectly the result of the Japanese university system. It consists of many of the optimists who think that they'll be able to acquire English in ninety, easy classroom minutes a week. Many of the optimists from the science and technology faculties are undergraduates or master's students in their first term at Hakozaki who sign up at the institute knowing that they need English for their future studies but drop out realizing that their faculties (especially their labs) require a lot more time and energy than they were prepared for. The optimists from the arts faculties include those who sign up for the institute's classes even though they have faculty classes at the same time in the belief that they will be able to skip faculty lectures — at least until they find out that their grades depend on attendance. (For

example, at least twice, an instructor has had three students, or ten percent of his class, withdraw on the same day to attend the same faculty course.) Other optimists also apply for part-time jobs during the hours when they are free from everything but our non-credit courses. If they get the jobs, they must then give up the institute's courses. There are also the super-optimists who sign up for every club and activity that they can, only to have to give up the slower, more demanding ones, such as language classes, when they must become either more realistic or more deperate about time. Finally, there are those optimists who think that they'll be able to get out of bed on Monday mornings for a non-credit 8:30 class or that they'll be able to forgo most of their weekend social activities to attend enough Friday evening classes even though they are habitually late-risers or perpetually socially-active. Being optimists, some members of each of these categories will occasionally make 'guest' appearances in their classes — usually when the instructors least need an extra body who doesn't know what is going on — and will generally remain registered in their courses until it is too late to find a student replacement. Eventually, however, they always mean one more empty seat. Although it is hard to get really angry with an optimist, the institute must do what it can administratively to minimize the damage caused by these student drop-outs.

Since the withdrawal form statistics show that most of the withdrawals are not the fault of the instructor, improving the institute's academic programme does not provide a solution to the drop-out problem. Any cure must be administrative. As long as students remain what they are and the system remains what it shouldn't be, however, the best that the administrative process can do is to minimize the resulting confusion and inconvenience caused by empty classroom seats and dead names on class lists. The most obvious compromise has been to start the term by over-registering classes by almost 25%. Thus, 37 students are allowed to register for a 30-student class, with the extra seven gone within the first week or two. In classes in which this is not possible, such as those using the 30-seat language laboratory, a waiting list is kept so that students

may be quickly replaced. The existence of a centrally-administered system doing the necessary paperwork and organization also makes it possible for some students who have been forced to drop one class to transfer into an appropriate substitute class. In addition, the establishment of a centrally-administered penalty system, in which students who have simply disappeared join a 'bad boy' list and are barred from registering in the following term, has resulted in a very high percentage of students promptly utilizing the formal withdrawal process. As soon as students submit their withdrawal forms at the office, both the office records and their instructors' records and class lists are updated. As a result, student substitutions can be made before it is too late and instructors can function with some confidence as to which students are actually taking their courses.

There are also a large number of endangered but 'recoverable' students attending the institute's courses. These students are those who are absent either frequently or for extended periods of time. Initially, instructor reaction to this group was very negative. Because the absences were misunderstood, it was incorrectly assumed that the students were to blame and that such absences indicated disinterest in institute courses. Idealistic instructors tended to be strict about attendance and demanding about course assignments. Unfortunately, such an approach made it increasingly difficult for students to return after an absence. Instead, there was a tendency for them either to withdraw formally or simply to disappear. Under the new system, however, the administrative process has provided the necessary machinery to correct the instructors' view of the situation and to facilitate student re-entry into the system.

With the advent of absence information, a proper understanding of the situation has made it clear how seldom the students can be blamed for their absences and that these absences have almost no bearing on student interest in a course. Although sleeping late and social commitments do cause infrequent absences among a large percentage of the institute's students and frequent absences among a small percentage of the institute's

students, most absences seem to be of a much more legitimate nature. Some of our most conscientious students are the most frequently absent as it follows that they will be even more conscientious about their faculty requirements. Science students cannot leave classroom experiments until they are successfully completed, regardless of how long they may take. Senior students frequently cannot leave their laboratories for days and even for nights when experiments are in progress. Many students, particularly medical students, drop out for weeks to concentrate on important exams. Physical science students often spend weeks away on field trips (especially at the beginning of term). Education students often go away for extended periods of in-school teacher-training. Some engineering and science students must spend several days a month at distant technical facilities. Graduate students and faculty from the richer departments often disappear for weeks of conferences in Tokyo and abroad. Students must also miss classes when their professors assign a couple of days for lab clean-up or when they are expected to participate in inter-departmental sports' competitions or seminar-group travel. Absences are also seasonal. First-term attendance is severely disrupted by the illegal job-hunting process. As a sizeable number of the institute's students are fourth-year undergraduates or second-year master's students, attendance remains unusually high during April and May while students (particularly in the Arts faculties) work on their English for job interviews. In June, however, students start disappearing to attend company visits to campus and interviews in Tokyo. By July, students without jobs become desperate, dropping everything for full-time job-hunting, while those with guaranteed jobs happily return to class long before job-hunting officially begins in August. Second-term attendance is disrupted at the beginning because second year students transfer to Hakozaki campus several weeks into the term for reasons which seem based more on the convenience of custom than on the logic of efficiency. Unfortunately, although the instructors must inconvenience their other students by beginning again several weeks into the term for those transferees who do manage to straggle in, many of the second year registrants

are so overcome by the requirements of their new faculties at Hakozaki that they never do manage to start their language classes. Second term attendance is also disrupted near the end of term as graduating students suddenly realize that they are running out of time. Everything is 'put on hold' in an effort to finish stubborn experiments or graduating theses by their deadlines. As disruptive as all this is to the teaching in the institute's programme, this is what the Japanese university system is all about. Thus, students should be facilitated in these endeavours rather than condemned for their absences.

To be successful, the institute's programme has had to develop an open system so that such absences can be accommodated. The general office acts as a clearing house for absence information. Students are encouraged to supply such information by the realization that instructors may expel them when they do not attend without excuse. Students fill out simple absence reports the week before or after an absence. The office passes these on to the instructors. In addition, the instructors have become much more flexible than they would be in their compulsory credit courses. Instructors provide information and materials for class assignments well in advance so that students have as much opportunity to prepare as possible for any classes which they can attend. Instructors minimize the continuity and carry-over of course materials from one week to the next so that students who find one activity inappropriate to their needs or level do not become disinterested and students who missed an earlier class do not feel discouraged about returning. In addition, instructors have the opportunity to make both past and future materials available at the general office so that absentees are able to do self-study and class preparation. With their absences already explained and legitimized through the absence report system and instructors providing every possible opportunity for irregular students to keep up with the class, students feel less embarrassed about returning to class after either repeated or extended absences. Under such a system, students who might otherwise be tempted to become drop-outs should feel no need to disappear — especially when disappearances are actively discouraged by

the 'bad boy' penalty system — and little need to withdraw formally, except in the most extreme cases of absenteeism.

There are, of course, definite drawbacks to a system facilitating academic compromises. There is no doubt that stricter academic requirements and course material continuity would improve language acquisition. Yet, even many of the students who are able to attend every class are unable to do out-of-class assignments and the self-study required for real language improvement because of their excessively heavy academic workload or other priorities. Thus, most of the reputed motivation of the institute's students is used up just in keeping the students coming and does not make the instructors' job that much easier. In the existing situation, the instructors can only provide the students with what the majority can use in the way of language study assistance. For these reasons, academic accommodations, such as the ones already made and described, will remain realistic and necessary as long as Japanese universities persist as they are now, institute courses are non-credit, and the institute continues to have weaker claims on the students' time than faculty requirements and future career interests.

Far more difficult for me to understand than the idiosyncracies of the Japanese education system are the limitations that the institute must accept because of the Japanese idea of teachers' rights. Notwithstanding the fact that most science and engineering students have very limited periods of availability and prefer after-laboratory hours, such as evenings, Saturdays, and inter-term periods, the programme cannot accommodate these needs when its instructors are considered entitled to name their own hours of availability within a "nine to five" working day or when government regulations make teaching Saturday classes or intensive courses virtually impossible. This problem is less obvious than it might be only because there are usually enough students to fill institute classes at any hour. However, the problem of the students who thereby lose the opportunity to attend remains. Another problem arising from teachers' rights is that, although an efficient system would require a series of graded texts for each skill, permitting a systematic progression by students, there is

still a reluctance to tamper with the instructors' traditional right to use the materials they want, resulting in a very imprecise matching of materials and courses to each skill level and to other courses. Until the time comes when it is realized that the student-customer must be 'king', at least in a non-credit system, little progress toward real scientification of the language teaching process can be made.

The institute's programme also remains greatly restricted by its size. There just aren't enough instructors or teaching hours to offer a full five-level selection of either the four core-skills or the E.S.P. special skills and technical English courses that these students need. The limitations of fourteen courses also make it almost impossible to teach courses beyond the third level of the five-level system, resulting in only two having been taught. Instructors must spend their time teaching basic skills to students who should have learned them in the College of General Education so that they would now be able to work on the specialized language skills that they urgently need in the limited time that they have with the institute. As a result of the institute having to provide too many basic courses for this unnecessarily large number of lower-level students, those students who are ready for the advanced classes or specialized courses which their language skills warrant and their studies require cannot be adequately served because their relatively smaller numbers do not warrant the use of the institute's limited teaching hours. Finding a specific time when an instructor is willing to teach and enough students with advanced skills or a particular interest are available is also difficult. These problems of limited numbers for such classes could probably be solved by improving the institute's very ineffective advertising machinery, which does not reach a lot of potential students at the Hakozaki and other senior campuses. Cooperation from other departments has rapidly deteriorated to the point where an examination of all the bulletin boards on the grounds and on all the first floors of buildings of Hakozaki campus during a recent registration period produced only two signs on the science/technology half of the campus and four signs on the humanities' section, most of which were very obscurely placed. It is little wonder

that enrollment depends so strongly upon word-of-mouth and friends recruiting friends and that, with the graduation last April of the much better-informed first batch of undergraduates and master's students, the institute is suddenly heavily dependent on second and third year students who receive direct information about the institute while still at Roppon-matsu's College of General Education. However, as an improvement in the advertising machinery would produce an influx of many more students at all levels, such an effort would be counter-productive because any real increase in applicants could not be accommodated by the present number of classes and, therefore, the student selection process would become unreasonably difficult. Thus, until the institute's offerings can be increased, the scope and utility of the programme must remain limited.

There is, nevertheless, a definite need for the institute's programme, even in its present, limited format. The fact that former students keep coming back, even when they aren't getting everything they need, and classes continue to be filled by new students, even when the advertising is so limited, proves that the institute is serving a useful function within the university. Yet, I constantly hear requests for more specialized classes, even tighter control over the skill-levels of students being accepted into courses, more extensive facilities, such as a lending-library system for audio, visual, and written materials, and additional services, such as formal (as opposed to my informal) assistance for the increasing number of Kyushu University students with overseas study plans and more opportunities for language student socialization. These requests demonstrate that expansion is required both in course volume and offerings and in institute services. There is no doubt, however, that the institute cannot go much beyond where it now is without a change in attitude from those instructors teaching exclusively within the imagined safety of the College of General Education in order to permit an increase in the institute's teaching resources and a proper willingness to serve the language needs of a still larger part of the university community.