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Brian T. Quinn

Introduction

The basic premise of this paper is that there is an ever growing need to implement a more focused and result oriented approach to English language teaching at the college and university level in Japan today. The author will expand on this assumption by presenting some strategies to ultimately achieve such an objective and by suggesting that the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), especially in regard to utilizing the teaching of specific Business English skills, may provide Japanese university students with a better opportunity for achieving a higher degree of communicative competence than the traditional open-ended non-specific general English courses that presently prevail in most Japanese institutions of higher education.

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The Need for English in Japan Today

There has recently been a steadily growing demand in Japanese society for its university graduates to become more international, both in their thinking and their outlook. In Japanese society, however, just what exactly constitutes "international" is still quite obscure in its meaning. For most people, to be international means that a person can communicate with foreigners and understand them as well as explain their own culture to other people from different nationalities all over the world. As a result, for the average Japanese becoming a "**kokusaika**" or an "internationalist" still tends to equate uniquely with "being competent in English," since English has widely become the "lingua franca" of the modern industrialized world.

With this in mind, competence in English is , therefore, becoming a highly regarded commodity in Japanese society and this is no more true than in the Japanese business world which, as everyone knows, has expanded their worldwide trading and manufacturing operations almost exponentially in the past twenty-five years. Today, not just the traditional major trading and manufacturing companies, but even the small- and medium-size corporations are ever more actively out to recruit university graduates, who are proficient at both speaking and comprehending spoken English. This recruiting development is no more valid than for students at commerce, economics and law (this is an undergraduate program in Japan) departments at universities all over Japan, who traditionally make up the bulk of candidates for careers in Japanese businesses. Yet, at the

same time, it is a fact that the majority of all college graduates from the humanities also end up either working for the government in the civil service or for private companies in which the competent use of English is also becoming ever more important.

Japanese companies are still discovering, much to their dismay, that despite all the talk about revitalizing English education all across Japan, the millions of dollars invested into language programs, audio-visual laboratories and even hiring numerous full-time and part-time native speaking English instructors, that the overwhelming majority of university graduates even from the so-called "top" universities, to say nothing of the middle to lower prestige institutions, are leaving school after some ten odd years of English study possessing almost no practical skills whatsoever in the English language itself. This means that after literally thousands of hours of instruction, the students, on the whole , do no even have the most basic abilities needed in business such as in: making introductions, making appointments, talking socially, taking and giving messages, negotiating, etc. As a result of this ultimate failure of the Japanese educational system, many companies find that when new recruits enter the firm that besides having to train the new employees in the business basics of the company, they must also often spend large quantities of both time and money to train their new staff in English, as well. As most observers of the Japanese scene can attest to, the new employees work long and hard hours the first few years on the job while slowly absorbing all the knowledge and information they will need to eventually become successful in their careers as stalwart company employees. Such

Spartan work conditions, however, leave precious little time and even less energy to devote to the study of English in their remaining spare minutes, when they do not happen to be either commuting long distances from the company dormitory to the offices located in the urban centers around Japan or toiling away at the office often until late at night. The above situation often results in scores of young Japanese company employees in their late twenties to early thirties who regularly go into a state of combined panic and shock when they suddenly realize that, due to a departmental transfer or some imminent upcoming assignment, that they absolutely, categorically have to "master" basic communicative English in order to successfully carry out their duties and eventually get that hoped for promotion that everyone prizes so much.

Owing to the abundance of such scenarios as the one briefly depicted above, the teaching of English conversation at private schools and salons has grown fantastically over the past twenty years to become an extremely lucrative business in itself, in order to meet the needs of the many young to middle aged adults who have to actually learn to speak the language for their careers.

It is a well accepted fact that learning a foreign language at eighteen or nineteen is far easier to accomplish than at thirty or forty years of age. However, numerous Japanese workers continually put off learning "real live" English until it can wait no longer, and then, often in desperation and despair, frequently spend exorbitant sums on private tutors, tapes and videos which are even then commonly to no avail. The fact remains, nevertheless, that the vast majority of such company employees who aspire to be instantly fluent in English never

quite succeed in becoming adequately proficient in the language. This sad state of affairs in English education is even perhaps one of the greatest single contributors to the presently growing feeling of animosity in the trade friction between Japan and various trading partners including the United States, Great Britain and the countries of the European Community. This lack of ability to communicate and articulate ones feeling and intentions clearly and concisely has also played a role in the ensuing phenomenon of "Japan Bashing" which is continuing to grow unabated in both Europe and North America. Since so many mid-level Japanese managers and government officials are still frequently unable to adequately express their views or discuss various issues openly and squarely, the misconceptions and animosities continue to grow on both sides of the Pacific.

The tragedy in all of this lies in the fact that higher education in Japan, especially at universities and colleges, tends to be all form and little substance when it comes to foreign language education. What this means is that, whether public or private institutions, most administrators tend to be primarily concerned with simply maintaining a well balanced curriculum with a certain number of required credits in English (be it 6,8 or 10 such credits), while not really worrying much at all about what exactly is being taught in those classes. If universities could instead gradually adapt their programs to both the real linguistic and intercultural needs of the students, as well as both the nation's and business world's growing international needs in general, then, without a doubt, great progress could quickly be made in Japan's ever elusive goal of making its best and brightest young students true "internationalists."

The Background of English Education in Japan

Despite all the recent talk of "internationalism" that is so popular these days, Japan remains ever so much an insular society. It is precisely this society that, in the end, is perhaps the most to blame for the ineffectiveness of English education on all levels in Japan. Japanese society places high value on getting into famous or prestigious schools, from nursery school through university, but such factors are often just stepping stones to the all important end of getting a good job, wife, social status and so on. Japanese society actually places very little value on what exactly a student learns or how well a student learns, for only the end result (i.e. getting into a good school, getting a good job, etc.) has real significance in Japanese society. This strange phenomenon is nowhere so true as on the university level all across Japan. The lucky freshmen have finally ended up in the university of choice, even though for some students it may have only been their third or fourth choice, but from that point on, according to the Japanese ranking system of universities, it has been pretty much decided what kind of company a person can enter, not based on what one learns at the university, as is the case in most Western societies, but based merely on what university one enters. Therefore, even if a student were to do outstanding work throughout four years of university study he could barely change his fate of entering a second class company if he indeed finds himself at a second class institution. Thus, most students are hardly even expected to study at all at the university except for a cosmetic week or so at the end of each semester for the term exams. It is a rare

student who manages to flunk out of a university without really intentionally trying to do so by such behavior as never attending classes, only writing his name on the top of the test papers and so forth. Students in such a situation clearly have almost no motivation to study and this fact is perhaps no more evident than in the field of required English education at the university level.

Ironically, neither parents nor teachers really expect the students to truly gain any modicum of fluency during the two or three years of the required university general education large class lectures on English grammar, literature, or whatever subject area happens to be selected by the teacher. Even numerous English professors who have, somehow or another, managed to become semi-fluent in English, often treat the students with complete disdain, knowing full well that if a student really wants to become fluent, he will just have to do it all by himself the way the professor did or go and live in a foreign country for an extended period of time, again as the professor probably did in his own more youthful days. Thus, with societal expectations being so low, it can be no surprise to any observer that the students often tend to very accurately fulfill those far from lofty expectations of both their teachers and society. In fact, beyond the rather superficial level of English competence and knowledge of the world generally felt necessary to be considered educated, Japanese, for the most part, have very little incentive to master English or any other foreign language for that matter. In fact, too much contact with or sympathy for a foreign culture can often have a decidedly negative effect upon the standing of a Japanese within his own culture. Reischauer has expanded on this trait and states that: "Fear that the Japa-

nese might further lose their Japaneseness is probably one of the major, though unspoken, reasons why the Japanese have not really tried to reform the teaching of English and why some people advocate that foreign languages should be taught less in Japan rather than more. Their argument is that a few should be taught English better but that most Japanese should be spared the time and effort that now goes into learning it inadequately. Hidden in the argument is the feeling that this would also spare them the corrupting influence of a foreign language which might further erode their Japaneseness." (Reischauer:409-10) In this brief passage Reischauer has identified the so caller "gate keeper" philosophy in which some Japanese feel a need to only train a few elite members of society to translate interview and become the mouthpieces of the nation. Such thinking is not at all uncommon even today and does a lot to exacerbate the problem. The fact remains that with record numbers of Japanese tourists, students and businessmen going outside of Japan every year there is a real and pressing need for the generally well educated individual to be able to communicate, no matter how basically, with the outside world.

Another major problem regarding English education on the university level is class size, where classes traditionally have from forty up to one hundred or more students in classes which may even bear the course title of "English Conversation" or "Active English." Such classes can, of course, never even hope to create the necessary environment for true English learning, especially communicative learning, to take place. By only maintaining English class sizes of no more than twenty students per class and then further separating the students ac-

cording to ability, i.e. absolute beginners, false beginners, low intermediate, upper intermediate, etc., a great step forward would be made in addressing the question of student needs vs. course goals and objectives.

In addition to class size, the content of the actual English class needs brief mention here. Even though Japan has made phenomenal progress in numerous scientific, economic and social fields these past one hundred years since the Meiji Restoration hit full steam, foreign language education has made very little progress as exemplified by the Japanese professors' admitted devotion to the "translation method." With course content often having little connection to any field or subject area the students might even vaguely be interested in except for the generic term "English," the students in a typical class read some kind of English text, often no more than a few pages a day, on topics ranging from such memorable titles as "Tales from the Middle Ages" to "The History of Greece" without any discussion or comments and finally at the end of the course the students have to translate several obscure passages from the text just studied. Admittedly such a class might on occasion have some pedagogical value, but in Japan this is frequently the only class most students ever see at a university. Such unfortunate methodology leaves bright students bored and stifled and poor students sound asleep since they can in no way comprehend the text. However, it is important to note that practically all Japanese professors have been educated in this manner and are quite proud of their own linguistic accomplishments, which, in all fairness, are often quite impressive. In addition, regardless of the applicability to the particular students desires or language needs, they often use

books which they themselves have "edited" (written some explanatory notes on the vocabulary and language usage). Japanese English professors, as well as professors in most educational fields, generally feel that "if it was good enough for us, then it's good enough for them!." This leads to an environment where less than dynamic changes tend to occur. Ironically, many professors are also far from fluent in English themselves. Hansen has perceptively noted that: "Perhaps most importantly, the translation method stands as a symbol, in a sense sacred, of the traditions and spirit of the Japanese university itself. It is a ritual shared by all educated Japanese, and whatever its faults, it represents a rite of passage, considered by many English professors to distinguish the Japanese university experience. As a result, there is a strong, inarticulate, emotional attachment to the translation method." (Hansen:152). This widespread opinion among the majority of English teachers at the university level presents another problem when it comes to a definition of what actually constitutes a qualified English teacher in the first place? According to the basic tenets of modern foreign language education, good language teachers are supposed to be fluent in the target language , abreast of the latest developments in the field of language education and highly skilled in teaching lively communicative classes. In Japan, however, Japanese English educators at the universities are scholars first and teachers second. Japanese English professors tend to specialize in a very narrowly defined field of expertise, be it linguistics, English poetry or literature, and after choosing a particular area of specialization a professor will then immerse himself in research for some forty odd years and maybe eventually publish a book

or two on his special subject. Not only does the typical English professor often have little knowledge of other subject areas dealing with English education outside their own field, but in the majority of instances they are not even the least bit interested. Professors' promotions and prestige come exclusively from their quantity and quality of scholarship, which can generally be translated into the number of published papers, articles and books. A professor's teaching ability, or lack of it for that matter, plays absolutely no role in his career development in Japan. Younger teachers, often recently returned from several years of graduate studies abroad, who may therefore happen to possess excellent classroom teaching skills and put a considerable amount of time and energy into teaching, are often openly disdained by their older colleagues who see such effort put into meaningful classroom instruction as totally wasted and better put to quiet steady scholarship. In such an academic environment it is clear to see that mediocre teaching not only continues as the norm, but indeed thrives.

The most central problem of English education at the university level rests, perhaps, with the almost complete lack of any organized departmental controls of course content, goals, minimum competence levels, testing and so forth. As mentioned earlier, Japanese professors are afforded great freedom in choosing texts and course materials. Even in English education , which ideally should be a step by step program with students gradually attaining higher levels of proficiency in a pyramidal progression, Japanese academic tradition allows each professor to follow his own personal preferences in developing his own course curriculum. As a result, a typical non-English major student in a either a private

or public institution may indeed take up to eight English courses during his first two years, but these supposedly related subjects will most often consist of a totally disjointed, even illogical series of courses linked only nominally by the term "English." An outside observer would likely imagine that a freshman, for example, would get easier reading materials to study than a sophomore and so on, but since the series of eight courses are all taught by different instructors, half of whom are generally part-timers, none of the eight teachers have even the faintest idea what is being taught or studied in the other English classes. As a result, in Japan, with very few exceptions, almost all foreign language education for non majors is done is a relative vacuum. Several of the most popular texts used in such courses are even deemed difficult by native English speakers (i.e. having obviously incompetent students read articles from Time magazine, etc.). Due to the total lack of any coordination on the part of the faculty members, the series of eight English classes are doomed to produce dismally ineffective results. It is also interesting to note that practically all students pass such courses by merely memorizing a few arcane passages which have been conveniently pointed out by the teacher a few days before the test and thus all the students can continue on their merry way and smoothly eventually graduate with the basic assumption that they have "learned" English or at least survived the ritual of English education at Japanese universities. Due to this relative mirage of language learning that the students somehow wander through, over the years many Japanese students become indelibly affected by the immensity of this grammar-translation process and so by the end of as much as ten years of at least some

regular exposure to English they have become what could be called "GOGAKU KIKEIJI" or almost permanently linguistically handicapped. What this means is that not only do most Japanese students lack English proficiency upon graduation but large numbers of them have become semi-brain damaged since their whole mental process and outlook in regard to foreign languages has been distorted and malformed, which ultimately prevents many people from ever being able to learn a foreign language at all due to the warped version of so-called language which has been thrust upon them for some ten long arduous years. In any event, most Japanese come to a fatalistic resignation that learning a foreign language is quite an impossible task to accomplish due primarily to the fact that they were born a Japanese.

Recently many universities are increasingly hiring more part-time native English lecturers to teach General Education (ippan-kyoyo) courses for non-majors of English with the specific aim in that doing so will magically bring the students some meager level of competence which, up to now has remained ever so elusive. The poor unwary native teacher, however, is often thrown to the wolves, so to say, by being placed in a class of fifty or more students, who already think of English as one big joke (and rightfully so in many instances) and therefore the students generally take the teacher about as seriously as they do the subject matter. Most native teachers are able to survive by doing easy listening, cloze or writing exercises and then holding abbreviated exams on selected sections previously covered and specifically outlined by the teacher for preparation before the exam. Therefore, even the well intentioned introduction of

numerous native teachers into the English classroom is doomed to failure unless the universities can find the foresight and courage to develop well thought out and integrated learning programs.

As can be seen from the above persisting trends, no real changes are taking place at Japanese universities regarding English education , especially for the non-English majors in various fields. It would therefore be desirable that higher education, starting at the university level, began to gear their programs to meet the actual needs and requirements of today's increasingly international society and business world. Universities must first look to English education and language, in particular, in its totality by taking into account the culture and value behind the words and not just concentrate on readings and translations. It is time for students to have the opportunity to be introduced to real living language and to be shown the true importance of achieving some level of communicative competence in English. Once we can point them on the right path, then numerous students will take it upon themselves to continue studying even after graduating from the university. If students find themselves in a meaningful program for which they can readily see its practical usefulness, especially in regard to their future work environment, then motivation will grow dramatically and students will find an interest in continuing to learn English and can thus eventually become true "internationalists." There would be many advantages for private universities in particular for developing such a program because with the approaching "baby bust" and the projected steady decrease in college age applicants in the near future, the development of an English language program which

has a reputation for producing effective results would also do a lot to add to an institution's prestige.

Tailoring Course Content to Better Meet Student Needs

Many language teachers, this author included, are frequently guilty of putting the horse before the cart regarding foreign language education. That is to say that many teachers are frustrated when students are unable to meet their general expectations of language performance and proficiency, while, at the same time, often failing to realize that they are guilty of essentially asking the students to perform tasks that they have neither been previously taught or trained to do. Such problems are not just related to speaking skills but are equally found throughout the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

At Japanese universities teachers, on the one hand, expect their students to have generally mastered the basics of English grammar and syntax while also possessing an adequate vocabulary. On the other hand, few teachers expect their students to be capable of utilizing English on anything close to a level of relative fluency. Thus, most teachers choose to concentrate on improving at least one of the 4 basic skills and this leads to the proliferation of reading, writing or listening comprehension oriented classes. There is nothing essentially wrong with this approach since, owing to the nature of the Japanese education system, it is often better to concentrate on one alone than on none in particular. The most popular courses remain by far those in which teachers select general reading texts con-

taining short excerpts and with the object of helping students with their overall reading comprehension/translation skills as well as vocabulary building. Other teachers will man the language labs and work fastidiously on improving the students listening comprehension skills. Some teachers will even give weekly writing assignments and finally a small minority (often native English speakers) will try and bolster the students general speaking skills.

One problematical aspect of the above mentioned common strategies for language improvement is the highly uncoordinated nature of such approaches, which normally leave the students with having "covered" a lot of general language learning on various topics or drills in English but, at the same time, leaving them with very little that the students can later point to of a concrete nature that they have actually mastered. Such an English language regime, which is more or less similar to that experienced by most university students, leaves them with only having "survived" a wide array of language classes but without having acquired any coordinated sense of the English language as a whole. Therefore, after graduation if such Japanese students really want to acquire some kind of competence in English they generally have to do so on their own free time or if such English skills are considered essential to their jobs then it become the responsibility of the company to provide language training to meet specific language needs such as socializing, talking on the telephone, discussing world events, negotiating and even arguing politely in English.

In this regard, it is considered that most of the holistic language needs commonly attributed to the business world are, in fact, more often than not just as

important to any young university student who, while realizing full well that he will probably never attain a high degree of fluency, still strongly desires to somehow develop a degree of communicative competence in English so that he can be more effective both in his career as well as in his leisure and thus be able to stay better in touch with domestic and international developments in the rapidly changing post-cold war world.

Teaching Business English Skills to University Students

Since almost all university lecturers of English in Japan have a completely free hand in selecting texts and study materials for their classes, many of the selected materials may admittedly be somewhat interesting but, in the end, do little in actually helping students to reach any clear language skill objectives. On the other hand language materials designed for businessmen out in the real world have an extremely practical appeal.

When exploiting materials generally designed for the business world the teacher must be careful to select those books and materials that are not too business specific and also not too advanced. The most appropriate materials are generally those designed for students who have reached a lower intermediate level of English proficiency. The materials should be cohesive and ideally gradually increase in difficulty as the course progresses. Such a course should offer opportunities to practice all four language skills but ultimately focus particularly on exercises which stress listening and speaking skills since they continue to be

the areas which need the most improvement by both general students of English and business people alike. Abundant role-play and pair work activities should be provided in the ideal text in which the students can continually refer to their own life experiences when performing communicative exercises.

In using business based texts the teacher can allow the students to concentrate on an array of skills especially needed by people in the working world including practice in performing such work related activities as: telephoning, making presentations, participating in meetings, socializing, making arrangements and plans, etc.

One more reason for utilizing Business English texts is that, regardless of their respective majors, the majority of university students do eventually enter companies and the ever more international working world. As a result, such young employees enter into a business environment where successful cross-cultural communication is constantly called for. Most Japanese who eventually do use English after graduation will generally do so in work related situations, whether they work in the private sector, for the government or even in academia. Thus, there is much to be said for teaching specific business language skills to university students in order to be better able to deal with such highly predictable needs.

Japanese are extremely context oriented in their way of thinking, speaking and acting. This can easily be seen in the use of their own native language with its complex use of polite language. In this vein, if a Japanese can understand his counterpart's position, status or rank then it is usually much easier for him to

conduct a conversation than if the same Japanese person were instead unsure of such factors. In this same regard, the Japanese are extremely fond of rather narrowly defined rituals such as gift giving, making speeches, answering interviews, etc. Both at work and play the Japanese remain very context oriented and usually know what to say or do depending on the circumstances. If they have a solid grasp of the context in which something is taking place (such as the hierarchical ramifications of the sempai/kohai or superior/subordinate relationships) and if they clearly understand the topic or task at hand, then, contrary to the commonly held assumption that they are poor communicators, the Japanese can usually communicate quite adequately. However, in the absence of such clearly defined roles and tasks, effective communication often becomes bogged down and problematical. In the following pages I will attempt to outline some possible alternatives for achieving real progress in fostering an atmosphere of confidence in students so that they may be better able to use English as a truly international language.

Why Business English?

What all students need to realize at the more progressive stages of their language learning is that although there may, of course, be a certain amount of vocabulary that can be described as special "business" vocabulary, most so-called business English is simply regular English used in business contexts, and it is in no way a special language in itself. As a result, competence in "Business

English" fundamentally means that a person is a good communicator in English.

Therefore, what students need most at this level of learning is a course that can provide a wide range of business settings and situations in which they can practice and improve their basic English skills, in order for them to become more confident, fluent and accurate in their language usage. Students at this stage also need a lot of unrehearsed practice in reacting spontaneously to problems associated with various situational tasks just as one must do in the real business world.

Typical Course Content

Today the TEFL textbook market is almost overflowing with new and dynamic textbooks about "Business English," but instructors must be very careful when selecting a textbook that will be appropriate for use on the university level. Luckily there are at present several interesting, colorful and easy to use textbooks that are now readily available in Japan. The ideal book should provide self-contained chapters that concentrate on such skills as:

Meeting People

Describing your Company / Club / School

Telephoning

Making Presentations

Talking about Personal History

Giving Opinions

Dealing with Personal Problems

Correspondence

Effective Cross-cultural Communication

Entertaining People

Saying the Right Thing (in a Given Situation)

Giving and Taking Messages.

Describing Things

Making Reports

Socializing

Taking Part in Meetings

Making Arrangements

Describing Trends

Discussing Results

Comparing Alternatives

Making Plans

Traveling

Negotiating

Giving a Tour

Discussing Achievements

Analyzing Systems and Processes

Most books tend to have about twenty such self-contained chapters on many of the above topics. After selecting a text which appears the most promising for use on the university level the teacher must invariably make adjustments with some of the materials since his students are not yet actually members of the working world, except for some occasional part-time employment. Yet, many of the textbooks today need very little modification on the part of the instructor.

It is also not necessary to cover such content areas in order as they appear in the book, unless the chosen text has a continuing company story line. However, such books should be avoided by the university English instructor at all costs since after a few weeks they tend to become rather boring for all except those few whose interests coincide with the company described therein.

Which skill areas are the most essential ones that the students will likely need when they enter the working world? A recent survey of sixteen major Japanese companies with international operations, revealed that 87% of their employees lacked the necessary English language skills to adequately perform their jobs (ICRA:1984). In light of this worrisome statistic, there is a constantly growing need for more students to learn specific job-oriented skills through English rather than just continuing generic English courses. As a result, there has recently been fantastic growth in the field of ESP (English for Specific Purposes). Offering a wide array of ESP courses as electives after the completion of the first two year general education requirements would also allow upper level students the opportunity to learn numerous skills that they will regularly need to utilize after they enter the working world.

The following list of potential ESP course content areas has been based on what 16 major Japanese companies (ICRA:1984) felt to be the most critical skills which need to be mastered by a successful international businessman. They are listed in their order of importance as follows:

1. Business correspondence
2. Word processing/typing
3. Telex/facsimile/message writing
4. Receiving telephone calls
5. Taking telephone messages
6. Making telephone calls
7. Meeting foreign clients
8. Entertaining foreign clients
9. Attending cocktail parties/social functions
10. Explaining the company organization
11. Explaining company products
12. Explaining features,applications, extensions, specifications of company products and technical processes
13. Conducting plant tours
14. Attending meetings in English
15. Participating in discussions
16. Participating in negotiations
17. Participating in sales presentations

18. Participating in technical presentations
19. Giving oral presentations
20. Writing notes/minutes of meetings
21. Writing reports/manuals
22. Reading reports
23. Attending overseas meetings/conferences
24. Training overseas clients
25. Overseas field service
26. Overseas management of operations, plants or representative offices
27. Opening joint ventures with overseas companies

While many of the noted skills would be inappropriate for a freshman or sophomore English class, such a list does help to show the teacher some of the most critical skills which need to be mastered by their students after graduation. After carefully reviewing such a list, several courses could easily be developed to meet some or several of these business needs with a course content that is clearly defined in terms of specific language skills and functions. These skills should be clearly specified in any course proposal or description and they should also be divided up into easily recognizable and teachable content areas.

Of the various excellent "Business English" textbooks available, I have found ***Business Objectives***, written by Vickie Hollet and published by Oxford University Press, to be among the most enjoyable resource materials presently on the

market for lower intermediate university students. This book provides extensive practice in the various "critical skills" needed to survive in an international environment. The content of the book is entirely international in scope. The book and accompanying cassettes cover American and British accents as well as a wide variety of non-native speakers. This is extremely valuable for improving the students listening comprehension skills and for also making the students cognizant of the fact that the majority of Japanese will have to use English in work related situations with non-native English speakers from such countries as China, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and all the countries from the European Community. However, spoken language is only one element of effective communication and there are also many opportunities for the instructor to present other elements of intercultural communication such as body language and cultural factors. The sixteen chapters in ***Business Objectives*** introduce many of the various business topics listed previously and all but a few of the chapters can be done easily without any detailed revisions of supplementation on the part of the instructor.

Many of the best Business English books on the market today also contain lots of information about many leading Japanese industries and corporations. Such textbooks need not be ruled out by the instructor for that reason since most Japanese tend to be quite proud of their nation's outstanding economic accomplishments over the past forty years and no matter what their specific major might be, most university students prove to be highly interested to learn more about famous Japanese companies and therefore using materials and activities

based on various information from such companies as Nissan, Toyota, Kobe Steel, Matsushita, SONY, etc., enables students to both learn English in authentic business contexts as well as, at the same time, acquire a wealth of interesting information about the business world itself. This book also leads itself to be used in either a one semester or full year English course. A full year course would be optimal in order to thoroughly master many of the specific language objectives, however, such a course can also accomplish a great deal even if restricted to only one semester.

To summarize, owing to the growing wealth of well designed and enjoyable learning materials it has become increasingly easier for the instructor to select outstanding materials to meet both his own tastes and the students' needs.

Conclusion

It is not essential, of course, for every English teacher in Japan to go out and start teaching Business English in all of their college classes. In fact, there will always remain a great need for a wide variety in the types of English courses that are taught on the university level in Japan. However, it is my belief that at the present time something appears to be lacking in the overall handling of English education for non-English majors at Japanese universities. It is my simple hope that all English educators will continually try to follow the newest developments in their field and experiment with new ideas and unique materials.

In closing I would like to reiterate the importance of raising the expectations

of how much English a typical university student is actually capable of learning during four years of university study. The lost opportunities of maximizing the potential for language learning on the college and university level in Japan still remain frustrating to numerous educators. Any future changes will likely be slow in coming and therefore it is up to all language instructors to make their own individual best efforts to adapt their teaching style and tastes in order to better meet the expectations of the new generation of students.

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