

A Research for Hokuriku Gakuin Standard: Situation of English Education in Hokuriku Gakuin and Progress toward the Future

北陸学院スタンダード構築の研究：北陸学院における英語教育の 現状と未来への模索

Hideyuki Asakura^{*1} Sakiko Yoneda^{*2} Gavin Lynch^{*3} Craig Woods^{*4}
Masami Ikenaka^{*5} Maureen McKeurtan^{*6} Michiyo Uchino^{*7}
Takaya Higashi^{*8} Naoko Kawai^{*9} Mitsuru Inou^{*10} Sayuri Nakayama^{*11}
Brian Sole^{*12} Etsuko Yamamoto^{*13} Sayo Endo^{*14} Hiromi Chabatake^{*15}

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to establish a consistent/coherent English system from kindergarten level to university level of the same school organization at Hokuriku Gakuin by using a global standard, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR). Being in a world of rapid globalization and with Japanese legal regulations and requirements for each school level all the way from kindergarten to university, Hokuriku Gakuin has started to create one consistent educational philosophy and put it into practice, which should be effective internationally. As a first step, globally recognized tests, the Cambridge examinations, which have a connection to the CEFR, have been conducted to grasp the current students' abilities from at each level elementary school to university. The results show that, although a large number have not yet reached a level high enough to correspond to the CEFR specified range of ability, some could reach the CEFR's B2 level range.

Keywords : CEFR, Cambridge Examinations, Hokuriku Gakuin Standard, consistent, linked, education system, kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, high school, junior college, university

アブストラクト

この研究の目的は、国際社会に対応できる人材の育成を目指して、北陸学院スタンダードを構築しようとするものである。世界スタンダード(外国語の学習、教授、評価のためのヨーロッパ共通参照枠：CEFR)を基にして、幼稚園から大学まで一貫した基準を用いて、北陸学院に学ぶ幼児から大学生に至るまで、英語力と国際社会に対応する力をどのように伸ばしていくべきかを研究するものである。本研究では、CEFRに照らし合わせた評価をする手立てとしてケンブリッジ英検を用いて、小学生から大学生までの学力を調査した。結果では、多くの生徒・学生がCEFRの基準の枠内に達しないことが示された。その一方、上位の者はCEFRの6段階のうち3位のB2レベル近くまでの力を持っていることが分かった。

キーワード：幼稚園から大学までの一貫教育、世界基準、CEFR、ケンブリッジ英検

*1 朝倉秀之
北陸学院大学短期大学部 コミュニティ文化学科
英米文学
*2 米田佐紀子
北陸学院大学 人間総合学部 幼児児童教育学科
児童英語教育
*3 リンチ・ギャビン *4 ウッズ・クレイグ
*6 モーリーン・マキユールタン
北陸学院大学短期大学部 コミュニティ文化学科
スピーチコミュニケーション

*5 池中雅美
北陸学院大学短期大学部 コミュニティ文化学科
英語音声学
*7 内野道代 *8 東豪弥 *9 河合那保子 *10 井篁満鶴
*11 中山佐百合 *12 ソウル・ブライアン
北陸学院高等学校
*13 山本悦子 *14 遠藤彩代 *15 茶畑広美
北陸学院中学校

1. Introduction

This is the first research of the English education field of the Hokuriku Gakuin (Education) Standard which was adopted by Hokuriku Gakuin and funded by Hokuriku Gakuin University's Co-Research Fund. The purpose of this research is to establish a consistent philosophy of English education all the way from kindergarten to university. This research uses the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) and globally recognized tests, the Cambridge examinations¹ to evaluate the students' levels of English from an international point of view.

Hokuriku Gakuin has two kindergartens, an elementary school, junior and senior high schools, a two-year-college and a university and has been building new educational guidelines in the five fields of Religion, Japanese, Arithmetic/Math, English, and Education to Work since 2007.

We have a history of over 120 years and have been known as "Hokuriku Gakuin of English". But is this still true? Is English education at Hokuriku Gakuin still vibrant? Answers to this may be found in the improvements which have continued in recent years. The kindergarten began including English lessons in 2000; the elementary school, since 1964, and commenced the current system of English teaching in 2003; the high school was chosen as a Super English Language High School (SELHi) by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) from 2004 to 2006; the college and the university began using the same textbooks based on the CEFR from 2008. Before this event, English textbooks based on a chosen common theory were not in use from kindergarten to university. Books were chosen based only on the needs and official requirements of each level, and were not chosen in the context of a larger, overall framework.

It could be seen that there was a variation in the methods our teaching staff used, in the textbooks they chose and in the focus they had. Some degree of variation is normal in any environment. However, by having all the teachers teaching their students based

on the same globally recognized standard and also by using the same style of examination we had more control over the quality of the lessons being taught. The results of the examinations could be compared to each other, irrespective of the class or teacher. This is the first step in the future of Hokuriku Gakuin English education and will help our teachers and our students have a clearer idea of where that education will be in the years to come.

In this paper, first the CEFR will be described, followed by a description of the Hokuriku Gakuin Standard (of English Education). Then, the situations of each school level will be elaborated on by referring to the CEFR when possible.

2. Hokuriku Gakuin Standard and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment

Hokuriku Gakuin has been known for its practical English education since it was first founded by an American Christian missionary over 120 years ago. However, Japan as a whole nation finds itself in a world of greater mobility or globalization now, which requires more effective international communication and more intensive personal interaction not only in one's personal life but also in one's professional life such as in the workplace. As a leading school in English in the Ishikawa area, Hokuriku Gakuin made a decision to state their goals of cultivating its students to enter the world of rapid globalization. It is necessary to evaluate the students' abilities based on a world standard. From this, it is logical that the criteria used should be ones which are recognized worldwide. These discussions have led to establishing the Hokuriku Gakuin Standard (of English Education) based on the CEFR, upon which the above evaluation criteria have been built.

In this chapter, we first describe what CEFR is and then discuss how the Hokuriku Gakuin Standard is related to it.

2.1 What is CEFR?

The CEFR has been developed by a group acknowl-

edged by the Council of Europe. This project started in 1971 and many members of the teaching profession across Europe and other countries including Canada and the U.S have collaborated on it. The CEFR, as the name indicates, provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It employs taxonomy to handle the complex human language by breaking language competence into separate components³. Even though the CEFR focuses on Europe, it is useful for other countries like Taiwan and Japan to adopt it in their education systems due to its comprehensive approach to language, language teaching, and language learning in societies of the rapidly changing world.

The following are the driving forces behind the establishment of the CEFR and are commonly shared in many parts of the world⁴.

1. A further intensification on language learning and teaching in (European Union) member countries is necessary in the interests of greater mobility, more effective international communication combined with respect for identity and cultural diversity, better access to information, more intensive personal interaction, improved working relations and a deeper mutual understanding.
2. To achieve these aims language learning is necessarily a life-long task to be promoted and facilitated throughout educational systems, from pre-school through adult education.
3. It is desirable to develop a Common European Framework of Reference for language at all levels, in order to:
 - promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries.
 - provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications.
 - assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts.

The CEFR takes a viewpoint of plurilingualism which is seen in the context of pluriculturalism. Language is not only a major aspect of culture, but also a means of access to cultural manifestations.

The CEFR tries to be multi-purposed, flexible, open, dynamic, user-friendly, and non-dogmatic. Trying to be ‘comprehensive,’ the CEFR sets forth their own criteria based on a large amount of their research⁵. It attempts to specify a range of language knowledge, skills and use, and describes language usage in terms of objectives. The CEFR also tries to differentiate the various dimensions in which language proficiency is described, and provide a series of reference points (levels or steps) by which progress in learning can be calibrated. The features of the CEFR are transparency, explicitness, and coherency and these make it available and readily comprehensible to users.

The approach adopted here is action-oriented as it views users and learners of a language primarily as ‘social agents’, that is, members of society who have tasks to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action⁶.

The CEFR recognizes language learning as a life-long task, and the development of a young person’s motivation, skill and confidence in facing new language experience out of school is of central importance. From this point of view, the CEFR proposes the European Language Portfolio (ELP) to provide a format in which language learning and intercultural experiences of the most diverse kinds can be recorded and formally recognized.

The Common Reference Levels, a conceptual grid facilitating comparison between different systems of language qualifications, have been developed to help people describe the levels of proficiency required or specified by existing standards and examinations. A scale of reference levels in a common framework is designed to meet the following criteria: description issues and measurement issues⁷. According to these issues, the criteria must be:

1. Context-free but also context-relevant.

2. The categorization and description must be theoretically grounded but also remain user-friendly.
3. The points on the scale at which activities and competences must be objectively determined in that they are based on a theory of measurement to avoid systematizing error through adopting unfounded conventions.
4. The number of levels adopted should be adequate to show progression.

The CEFR posits a framework of six broad levels giving an adequate coverage of the learning space relevant to European language learners for their purposes. It is stated that there appears in practice to be a wide consensus on the number and content of levels appropriate to the organization of language learning and the public recognition of achievement. The levels of ability are: Breakthrough, Waystage, Threshold, Vantage, Effective Operational Proficiency, and Mastery (Appendix A). These are presented in a simple ‘global’ representation as single holistic paragraphs in order to make it easy to communicate the system to non-specialist users and also to provide teachers and curriculum planners with orientation points⁸.

As the CEFR states that these references are suggestive⁹, some claim that these comprehensive references are too vague to adopt in practice and at the same time, the CEFR has to be comprehensive to be available for any possible and plausible situations.

2.2 What is the Hokuriku Gakuin Standard?

As it was discussed before, the CEFR has the aims and contents that meet the following needs of the world that the students at Hokuriku Gakuin will enter after they graduate from the school:

1. Global aspect: The CEFR is focused on Europe but its philosophy and contents are globally recognized. It is created due to the need to enhance language education (English education in the case of Hokuriku Gakuin) with the purpose of educating people/students to be good language users in terms of a global standard.
2. Good approach: The CEFR adopts an action-

oriented approach based on the work of researchers, who are academically recognized worldwide.

3. Clear criteria: The CEFR presents six broad levels which show what student are capable of doing (can-do statements) for each level of ability, which makes it easier for teachers/students to understand what is expected.

At the same time, the CEFR may have some problems:

1. Different situations: In contrast to Europe, where the CEFR was created and focuses on, Ishikawa prefecture does not have much exposure to cultural and linguistic diversity. Students cannot feel the necessity of using a second language in their daily lives or see it in the lives or workplace of their parents.
2. Language distance: Language distance between Japanese and English plays an important role. The Japanese word order, the writing system, and the phonetic and phonological rules are very different from those of English. Students need to learn how to look at a language from a different point of view, which takes a lot of time when they do not have a lot of access to English around them. First graders in elementary school need to learn four writing systems: hiragana, katakana (both phonographic writing systems that use one symbol for each syllable resulting in a character that cannot be analyzed based on its constituents: a consonant and a vowel), kanji (Chinese logographic symbols), and the English alphabet¹⁰.

These issues, however, cannot be seen as “excuses” not to perform well enough in this rapidly changing world. Despite their language being distant from English, Japanese need to catch up with the outside world in terms of its standard of English.

Based on these discussions, the Hokuriku Gakuin Standard was devised and is stated as shown in Table 1.

As Table 1 shows, the school system of Hokuriku Gakuin encompasses all the levels from kindergarten

Table 1 The Hokuriku Gakuin Standard of English

school levels	CEFR	Communicative Skills		
		linguistic aspects: can-do's in terms of four skills	cultural aspects	chances to be exposed to native speakers/exchange programs/overseas experiences
University	B1 Threshold	1. Can listen, speak, read and write everyday English. 2. Can convey one's opinion about their major/favorite subject.	1.Be interested in different cultures in everyday life/the Internet. 2.Try to know more about them (foreign cultures).	Trip to foreign countries Overseas Study Programs to the US, Canada and Australia Native speaker teachers' classes
English Course at Junior College	B2 Vantage	Enhance four skills more.		
Junior College	B1 Threshold	1. Can listen, speak, read and write everyday English. 2. Can convey one's opinion about their major/favorite subject.		
High School	B1 Threshold & A2 Waystage	1. Can comprehend the information of what they want by listening and reading; can speak and write about their interests, i.e. school life. 2. Have good sense of language. 3. Can listen, speak, and read in natural speed.	1. Be interested in national/international affairs including literature. 2. Try to enhance their knowledge earned in junior high school.	Overseas Trip Overseas Study Programs Native speaker teachers' classes
Junior High School	A1 Breakthrough	1. Can listen to, speak, read and write about their everyday life in limited English. 2. Can listen to a counterpart and respond with one's opinion. 3. Can read writings in simple English. 4. Can write essays in basic English. 5. Get a good sense of English.	1. Be interested in foreign languages and cultures and actively study about them. 2. Try actively to communicate using English. 3. Can tell the different systems of Japanese and English by relating the rules to those learned in their everyday classes.	Overseas Trip Native speaker teachers' classes
Elementary School	(A0) (Pre-Breakthrough)	1. Can listen to/speak about their family, friends, and school lives. 2. Learn English through chants, songs, and plays. 3. Can read and write using phonics. 4. Can read and write English about themselves and their surroundings. 5. Earn good sense of the language and make a good foundation of the language.	1. Be interested in foreign languages and cultures. 2. Try actively to be involved in communication using English. 3. Can tell different rules of English and Japanese and get interested in the system of language.	Exchange Program with a sister school in Australia (Gib gate School) Team-teaching by Japanese and English speaking teachers
Kindergarten	N/A	1. To give the kindergarten children a chance to encounter the English language and its sounds, and a different culture, with the purpose of having children feel the language as a whole. 2. To establish a basic interest in foreign cultures and positive participation in language learning.		Team-teaching by Japanese and English speaking teachers

to university, which makes it ideal to see the progression of a learner using a single coherent system of criteria. As a feature of a small private school in a city with a population of 456,000, students' academic levels can vary. Not all of the students may be able to achieve the goals set out in the Hokuriku Gakuin Standard. This is one of the big problems that needs to be solved.

The Hokuriku Gakuin Standard has two sets of aspects: linguistic aspects and cultural aspects. Also, to give students hands-on experiences, each school level has its own cultural exchange programs with foreign countries where the main language of use is English. These programs have been effective in motivating students to learn more English and about other cultures.

In terms of linguistic aspects, the goals of each school level are correlated with the CEFR as shown in Table 1. Being more realistic than optimistic, Hokuriku Gakuin Standard describes criteria and goals in a

rather abstract way. The higher the school level gets, the bigger the gap becomes between the low students and high students. So Table 1 presents the highest achievement goals in general rather than to guarantee that all the students achieve the levels shown.

As the CEFR states, we need to be coherent and comprehensive. At the same time, there are some regulations we need to follow legally and socially. All of the following are not connected with the CEFR in general:

1. Junior high school and senior high school have to use textbooks following a Course of Study from the MEXT.
2. Students need to be prepared for university entrance examinations.
3. STEP¹¹ and TOEIC¹² examinations are the most widely known and used in Japanese society.

To deal with the many factors involved, including

Table 2 Correlation of CEF and other examinations

Highest Achievement Goals of each School Level	CEFR	Cambridge Examinations	TOEIC	STEP (EIKEN)
English Course in the Community and Culture Department	B2 Vantage	First Certificate in English	660-730	Pre-1st Grade
University/Junior College	B1 Threshold	Preliminary English Test	450-520	2nd Grade - Pre-1 Grade
High School				
Junior High School	A2 Waystage	Key English Test	310-450	3rd Grade - 2nd Grade
	A1 Breakthrough	Movers	info unavailable-220	4th Grade - 3rd Grade
Elementary School	(A0 Pre-Breakthrough)	Starters	information unavailable	5th Grade - 4th Grade
Kindergarten	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: "A0 Pre-Breakthrough," our term, is not included in the CEFR.

sources: ケンブリッジ大学認定試験センター (Cambridge University Certified Testing Center) <http://www.camb-hg.com/exam/exam.htm> retrieved on January 20, 2008

Cambridge ESOL <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/index.html> retrieved on January 20, 2008

aswho <http://www.aswho.com/abroad/test/level.htm> retrieved on October 5, 2008

varying student backgrounds and abilities, a tool was needed to evaluate the students and see how their ability correlates to one standard, the CEFR. The examinations of Cambridge ESOL¹³, which was involved in the development of the CEFR, were a solution for our situation. There is a defined relationship between the levels in the CEFR and those of the Cambridge ESOL exams¹⁴. Therefore, conducting the Cambridge exams, the students' levels can be evaluated objectively in correlation to the CEFR. Advantages of using the Cambridge examinations are not limited only to close correlation with the CEFR, but also include objective evaluation of students across four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) using a world standard. Disadvantages of using the examinations are the high cost, time consumption, British English vocabulary, and lack of wide recognition in Japan. Since most of our students have taken STEP tests and TOEIC but not Cambridge exams, the correlation table (Table 2) was needed, which helped us to grasp our students' levels to start our research. The correlations with the CEFR and other well used exams (TOEIC and STEP exams) are shown in Table 2. As Cambridge does not publish such detailed correlations, information from various sources was combined to create Table 2.

It should be noted that each test, including the STEP and TOEIC, has its own style, so these comparisons should not be taken as a rule, but only as an aid to read

and compare the scores of the different tests. Based on the entire information available, it was posited that passing the Preliminary English Test can be the highest achievement goal for the general body of students at Hokuriku Gakuin.

3. Methods of Evaluation in terms of the CEFR:

Cambridge Examinations

As referenced earlier, Cambridge ESOL has developed globally recognized English tests by closely working with the CEFR. To evaluate our students in terms of the CEFR, Cambridge examinations are the best methods available at this moment. Another merit is that Cambridge examinations evaluate students' four skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing all the way from the beginners' level to the advanced level as well as all the way from (elementary) school children to adults. With one scale, we can grasp the achievement of the entire students of our whole school system.

Cambridge ESOL has several kinds of tests like "General English," "Professional English," "Academic English," and so on¹⁵. Among those, examinations in the "Main Suite" and "Young Learners English Tests (CYLE)" are suitable for our students, whose goals of English study can be varied. Table 3 shows the guided learning hours for candidates to take examinations and shows the reference to the CEFR.

Table 3 Main Suite of Cambridge Examinations: CEFR and Guided Learning Hours

CEFR	Main Suite	Guided Learning Hours (from beginner level)
C2 Mastery	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)	Approx. 1,000—1,200
Effective C1 Operational Proficiency	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)	Approx. 700—800
B2 Vantage	First Certificate in English (FCE)	Approx. 500—600
B1 Threshold	Preliminary English Test (PET)	Approx. 350—400
A2 Waystage	Key English Test (KET)	Approx. 180—200

source: University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/exams-info/faqs/main-suite.html>

CYLE is for learners aged 12 and under, and consists of three levels: Starters, Movers, and Flyers. According to Cambridge ESOL, Movers are equivalent to A1, and Flyers are equivalent to A2 of the CEFR¹⁶. Starters consists of Listening (20 minutes for 20 items), Reading and Writing (20 minutes for 25 items), and Speaking (3-5 minutes for 5 parts) sections. Candidates at the Starters level are tested on their knowledge of prepositions, basic vocabulary like colors, and spelling¹⁷, and the difficulty and content increases as students progress to higher levels.

The Main Suite examinations have five levels, as can be seen in Table 3. The Key English Tests, the lowest level of the Main Suite, was decided to be conducted since it was considered to be the most suitable to grasp the students' achievement levels all the way from the junior high school to the university for the current study.

According to the Cambridge criteria¹⁸, candidates at the KET stage will:

- have a basic command of the spoken language
- be able to convey basic meaning in very familiar or highly predictable situations
- be able to produce utterances which tend to be very short – words or phrases – with frequent hesitation and pauses
- be dependent on rehearsed phrases with limited generative capacity
- only be able to produce limited extended discourse
- likely have pronunciation which is heavily influenced by L1 features and may at times be difficult to understand
- likely require prompting and assistance by an interlocutor to prevent communication from breaking down.

In the following chapters, by using the Cambridge exams above (except for the kindergartens), the situations of each school level will be laid out in detail.

3.2 The Outline of the Mock Test (KET)¹⁹

The final mark a candidate receives in KET is an ag-

gregate of the marks obtained in each of the three papers (1. Reading and Writing, 2. Listening, and 3. Speaking). There is no minimum pass mark for individual papers. The Reading and Writing paper carries 50% of the marks and Listening and Speaking each carry 25% of the total marks. Results are reported as one of four grades, two passing grades (Pass with Merit and Pass) and two failing grades (Narrow Fail and Fail).

'Pass' ordinarily corresponds to about 70% of the total marks. 'Pass with Merit' ordinarily corresponds to approximately 85% of the total. A 'Narrow Fail' grade means that the candidate is within 5% of the 'Pass' level.

As for the aims of reading, they are as follows: Making use of the limited structural and lexical resources at their (the students') disposal, KET candidates should be able to understand the main message, and some detail, of a variety of short factual reading texts: for example, signs, notices, instructions, brochures, guides, personal correspondence and informative articles from newspapers and magazines. They should also have strategies for dealing with unfamiliar structures and vocabulary.

For writing, KET candidates need to be able to produce items of vocabulary from a short definition, select appropriate lexis to complete one-word gaps in a simple text, and to transfer information from a text to a form. They also need to show their ability to complete a short everyday writing task appropriately, coherently and showing reasonable control of structure, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.

3.2.1 Reading and Writing section

These parts of the test together take 1 hour and 10 minutes and have a total of 56 questions worth a maximum of 60 points. The paper is divided into 9 parts:

Part 1 - *Gist understanding of real world notices: Reading for main message*

The candidates are tested on their ability to understand the main message of a sign, notice or other very short text. These texts are of the type usually found on roads, in railway stations, airports, shops,

restaurants, offices, schools, etc.

Part 2 - Lexical: Reading and identifying appropriate vocabulary

Candidates are tested on their knowledge of vocabulary. They are asked to fill the gap in each of five sentences with one of the 3 options provided. The 6 sentences are all on the same topic or are linked by a simple story line. The answer to the first sentence is provided. Candidates should deal with each sentence individually but be aware that the overall context will help them find the answer.

Part 3 - Functional language: Reading and identifying appropriate response

Candidates are tested on their ability to understand the language of the routine transactions of daily life. The first 5 questions are multiple-choice, each with 3 options. The candidates are asked to complete five short conversational exchanges.

The next 5 questions are matching exercises. Candidates are asked to complete a longer dialogue, by choosing from a list of eight options. These dialogues take place in shops, hotels, restaurants, etc., and in various work, study and social situations.

Part 4 - Reading for detailed understanding and main idea(s)

Candidates are tested on their ability to understand the main ideas and some details of longer texts of about 230 words. These texts come from authentic sources, such as newspapers and magazine articles, but are adapted to make them accessible to candidates. Texts may include vocabulary which is unfamiliar to the candidates, but this should not interfere with their ability to complete the task.

The questions in this part may be multiple-choice comprehension questions with 3 options. Alternatively, candidates may be asked to decide whether, according to the text, each one of a set of statements is correct or incorrect, or whether there is insufficient information in the text to decide this.

Part 5 - Reading and identifying appropriate structural word

In Part 5, candidates are tested on their knowledge of grammatical structure and usage in the context

of a reading text. As with Part 4, texts are adapted from newspaper and magazine articles, encyclopedias and other authentic sources. Words are deleted from the text and candidates are asked to complete the text by choosing the appropriate word from three options. Deletions mainly focus on structural elements, such as verb forms, determiners, pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions. Understanding of structural relationships at the phrase, clause, sentence or paragraph level is also required.

Part 6 - Reading and identifying appropriate lexical item, and spelling

Candidates are asked to produce five items of vocabulary and to spell them correctly. The five items of vocabulary will all belong to the same lexical field, for example, jobs, food, things you can find in a house, etc. For each word they have to write, candidates are given a 'definition' of the type you can find in a learner's dictionary, followed by the first letter of the required word and a set of dashes to represent the number of the remaining letters in the required word.

Part 7 - Reading and identifying appropriate word with focus on structure and/or lexis

In Part 7, candidates are asked to complete a gapped text. Texts are short and simple and are of the type candidates at this level may be expected to write, for example, notes and short letters. A text may take the form of a note plus a reply to that note, or may be a single letter. Deletions in the text focus on grammatical structure and vocabulary. Candidates are only asked to produce words which students at this level can be expected to actively use. Correct spelling of the missing words is essential in this part.

Part 8 - Reading and writing down appropriate words or numbers with focus on content and accuracy

In Part 8, candidates complete a simple information transfer task. They are asked to use the information in one or two short texts (note, email, advertisement, etc.) to complete a note, form, diary entry or other similar type of document. Candidates have to

understand the text(s) in order to complete the task, and the focus is on both writing and reading ability. Candidates are expected to understand the vocabulary commonly associated with forms, for example, surname, date of birth, etc. The required written production is at word and phrase level, not sentence. Correct spelling is essential in this part.

Part 9 - *Writing a short message, note or postcard in 25-35 words*

In Part 9, candidates are given the opportunity to show that they can communicate a written message (25–35 words) of an authentic type, for example a note or postcard to a friend. The instructions indicate the type of message required, who it is for and what kind of information should be included. Candidates must respond to the prompts given. All three prompts must be addressed in order to complete the task fully. Alternatively, the candidates may be asked to read and respond appropriately to three elements contained within a short note from a friend.

3.2.2 Listening Section

As for the main skill focuses, candidates should be able to understand and respond to dialogues and monologues, including telephone conversations and recorded messages, in both informal and neutral settings on a range of everyday topics. The texts are delivered at a pace which is slow but not unnaturally so. Candidates should be able to extract relevant factual information from what they hear.

This part of the test takes about 30 minutes and has a total of 25 questions worth a maximum of 25 points. The paper is divided into 5 parts. Each question is worth 1 point for a total of 5 points.

Part 1 - *Listening to identify key information (times, prices, days of week, numbers, etc.)*

In Part 1, candidates are tested on their ability to identify simple factual information in five separate short conversational exchanges. The short conversations are either between friends or relatives, or between a member of the public and a shop assistant, booking office clerk, etc. The information focused

on in these dialogues is, for example, prices, numbers, times, dates, locations, directions, shapes, sizes, weather, descriptions of people and current actions. On the question paper, the candidates see a short question and three multiple-choice options based on pictures or drawings. There are five questions in Part 1.

Part 2 - *Listening to identify key information*

In Part 2, candidates are tested on their ability to identify simple factual information in a longer conversation. The conversation is an informal one between two people who know each other. The topic is one of personal interest to the speakers, for example, daily life, travel, occupational activities, free-time activities, etc. Candidates show their understanding of the conversation by matching two lists of items, for example, people with the food they like to eat, or days of the week with activities.

Part 3 - *Taking the 'role' of one of the speakers and listening to identify key information*

In Part 3, candidates are also tested on their ability to identify simple factual information. The listening text is usually an informal conversation between two people who know each other about a topic of personal interest to the speakers. It is sometimes a transactional exchange, e.g. a person making enquiries in a travel agent's. In this part, candidates show their understanding of the conversation by answering five multiple choice questions, each with three options.

Parts 4 and 5 - *Listening and writing down information (including spelling of names, places, etc. as dictated on recording)*

In Parts 4 and 5, candidates are tested on their ability to extract specific factual information from a dialogue or monologue and write it down. The dialogue or monologue is in a neutral context, for example, in shops, offices, etc. A monologue may be a recorded message. The information to be extracted is of a practical nature, for example, opening times, entrance fees, etc. Candidates are asked to complete a memo, message or notes on the question paper by extracting information from the listening text and

writing it down. Information to be written down consists of numbers, times, dates, prices, spellings and words. In each case, candidates are required to write down one or two words or numbers. Completely accurate spelling is not required, except where a name has been spelled out in the listening text or when it is a simple high-frequency word.

3.2.3 Speaking Section

The KET Speaking Test is conducted with a pair of students (hereafter referred to as Candidate A and Candidate B). A teacher acts as an interlocutor, with another teacher grading, but not interacting with the candidates during the test. The students are paired according to similar ability, based on their performance on the reading, writing and listening portions of the test.

Two candidates are called into the examination room and sit across a table from the interlocutor and the other teacher. Each test takes approximately 10 minutes per pair. The test consists of 2 parts: Interview and Prompt Cards.

Part 1 – interview: The interlocutor asks Candidate A one main question and 1 or 2 follow up questions, and then asks Candidate B a different main question like “What do you like to do in your free time?” and 1 or 2 follow up questions like “Where do you do that?” If candidates cannot respond, the interlocutor repeats it or changes the question to a predefined backup question. Part 1 of the test takes 5-6 minutes.

Part 2 – prompt cards (see Appendix B): The candidates interact with each other. The interlocutor explains the task to the candidates. Candidate A receives a prompt card with factual information. Candidate B receives a prompt card with key words and phrases. Candidate B uses these key words and phrases to formulate complete questions and Candidate A answers them, using the information provided. The questions and answers are related to daily life and every day expressions covering places, times, prices and services.

As for assessment, the candidates are assessed on their own individual performance, but their level of interactive communication is also taken into account. Both the interlocutor and the other teacher grades the candidates during the test. After completing all the tests, the marks are averaged together for each candidate to determine the final score.

The candidates are scored according to 3 criteria: Grammar and Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication for both Part 1 and Part 2. The scoring was on a scale of 1-5 as follows: 5= excellent; 4= good; 3= acceptable; 2= unsatisfactory; 1= poor.

The candidates are graded using a mock KET standardized rubric (see Appendix C). The total score is out of 30 points. This global achievement score correlates with the following grades: 0-19 points (64% and below) = fail (F); 20 points (65 – 69%) = narrow fail (N); 21-25 points (70 – 84%) = pass (P); 26-30 points (85% and above) = pass with merit (M).

4. The Situation of English Education, “English Time”, at the Kindergartens

Hokuriku Gakuin has two kindergartens. English Time at the kindergartens started in 2000. It was included in the curriculum of the kindergartens so, for several years, it was held once a week in the morning. However, the flow of child care seemed to be interrupted by English Time. Therefore, until 2007, we had English Time in the afternoon, which means it was considered as an activity outside the kindergarten curriculum with the children who wished to join (or their parents wished them to join) attending. The whole program is supervised by a teacher at college.

Since Hokuriku Gakuin adopted the Hokuriku Gakuin Standard in 2008, we started a new English Time syllabus at those kindergartens. It is now included in the curriculum again. The aims of English Time are the following:

1. To give the kindergarten children a chance to encounter the English language and its sounds, and a different culture, with the purpose of having children feel the language as a whole.
2. To establish a basic interest in foreign cultures

and positive participation in language learning.

4.1 Current Situation

English Time is held once a week at each kindergarten. There are 2 classes – one for four-year-olds and one for five-year-olds. Class time is 20 minutes for each class. It is team taught by a native speaker, who is a full-time teacher at Hokuriku Gakuin Junior College, and a Japanese teacher who is hired from outside our school. Kindergarten teachers also attend English Time to observe and take care of the children.

In English Time, teachers teach basic expressions such as greetings, asking and answering their names, weather, and feeling words in the first semester. Also the vocabulary for body parts, colors, food (fruit and vegetables) is introduced. Animals, numbers, and other vocabulary is introduced in the second semester. Vocabulary is taught through listening and speaking, without using the English alphabet. Reading and writing skills are not introduced.

This year, 2008, we have arranged more cultural activities than last year, not only within the language itself, but also differences in culture are emphasized in English Time. The current native teacher in charge of kindergarten is from Scotland. Therefore, some elements of Scottish culture were introduced, such as kilts and shortbread, with the children having the opportunity to eat together in class. Introducing different cultures gives the children the message that differences are not bad. Judging the differences as right or wrong does not mean anything and accepting the differences as they are is important.

4.2 Issues for Discussion

Although the changes which accompanied the adoption of the Hokuriku Gakuin Standard improved the former English Time, there are still issues which need to be addressed.

There has been much research carried out on the effects of early English learning. According to JASTEC Kansai Project Team²⁰, English learning experience from an early age produces greater interest and eagerness to study English and a positive attitude towards

communicating with foreigners. In Hokuriku Gakuin's case, teachers visit kindergartens only for English Time. Even during the limited period of English Time, the children are able to get intercultural experiences. However, if the English Time teachers could visit the kindergartens at a time other than during the regular English Time to join the ordinary activities, We assume that it would be good to let the children know that English is not an unusual thing and it is not something only to be used during English Time but at anytime in daily life. We would like to survey how the children react when English Time teachers visit kindergartens at other times next year.

As for language teaching, the pronunciation and the rhythm of English are important elements. Children learn by imitating the pronunciation of native speakers. Nishio mentioned about the effect of the starting age on learning English pronunciation²¹. She found out from her experiment that there are some phonemes that can be acquired more easily when children start learning before entering an elementary school than after. There should be greater emphasis placed on pronunciation within English Time activities.

The content of the English Time syllabus should be examined. There are differences in comprehension between four-year-olds and five-year-olds. The content should be examined carefully and prepared according to the age groups. For the five-year-old classes, various ways of teaching new materials could be undertaken and more words could be taught than in the younger classes. The two-year curriculum of English Time needs to be re-evaluated and re-structured. The curriculum of the five-year-old class must be a continuation of that of the four-year-old class. English Time is the first stage of learning English at Hokuriku Gakuin and this experience should be linked to the next stage, when children start learning English as a subject upon entering our elementary school. There are many kindergartens carrying out English activities nowadays. However, English Time at our kindergartens aims to differentiate itself from that of other kindergartens through the integrated English education we propose and are carrying out.

5. The Situation of English Education at Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School

Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School has had English as part of its curriculum since 1964. However, as time has moved on, so has the need for reviewing the methods and goals of English education for elementary school age children. The following will describe what the current situation is and also outline some recent changes which have led to this situation.

5.1 Current Situation

English is taught to the elementary school children at every grade level, beginning at grade 1 and continuing until they graduate from the school (grade 6). A team teaching approach is used, a team being comprised of one native Japanese teacher proficient in English and one non-Japanese teacher (a foreign teacher from the point of view of Japan) whose mother tongue is English. Both speak English in class, with explanations given in the students' first language (L1) by the Japanese teacher as necessary.

Currently two Japanese teachers, one of whom is a teaching professor at Hokuriku Gakuin University and the other hired from outside the school system, and two foreign teachers, both Hokuriku Gakuin University lecturers, are made available to the elementary school. The elementary school classes are divided between the teachers by grade and English classes are held for each grade, taught by a team as mentioned above. Class hours are 40~45 minutes in length and, since 2005, have been held twice a week for all grades. Under this system, students who graduate will have had a total of about 390 class hours of English during their 6 years at Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School, based on the averages from 2005 to 2007.

5.2 Teachers' Responsibilities

The teachers are responsible for creating a suitable learning environment in which students are given as many chances as possible to use English. Teaching and students' ability is defined in terms of skills and comprises the four skills of reading, writing, listening and

speaking. Knowledge and student participation are both important and methods of maximizing them are devised and discussed by the teachers and include the usage of textbooks, writing sheets, activities, speaking assignments, etc. Teachers are also responsible for writing lesson plans and these are stored securely on the school server for reference in later years. Along with using the same series of book throughout the grades, this helps in ensuring consistency in teaching, regardless of staff turnover or changes in schedules.

The foreign teacher is expected to use only English with the students as much as possible and this is made feasible by working with a Japanese teacher in the classroom. Both teachers are responsible for controlling the class and the homeroom teacher may, on occasion, be also asked to attend if help is needed. Testing and grading is regarded as an important part of education and students are given in-house created tests based on content recently learned. These tests have sections which are described by the skills and knowledge being tested and the results are recorded, by skill, into computer grading sheets. The results are discussed and sent to the children's parents at the end of each semester, along with comments.

Teachers also train the students for events such as the English performance at the annual school performance day, publically available English tests such as the STEP, and the students' cultural trip to a foreign country.

5.3 Landmark Changes

A major change was in 2003 when Hokuriku Gakuin University (then, Hokuriku Gakuin Junior College) took over control of the elementary school English curriculum and assigned members of its teaching and research staff to the English program. The new teaching staff used their experience of and research into educational concepts, such as the teaching of children using a 4 skills style of education, phonics etc, in the classroom and put in place the system of team teaching that is still used today. The teachers were based at the college, on the same campus as the elementary school, and prepared their classes before walking

down to the elementary school. Because of this, the college's resources were made more available to the elementary school giving it an advantage over others that did not have such support.

A period of stability, in terms of low staff turnover and educational methodology, followed and the college teachers saw they had a chance to evaluate the fruit of their efforts over the entire six years of a student's attendance at the elementary school, as well as an opportunity to re-evaluate their teaching methods²². In 2005, the use of outside standardized testing was decided on and the Cambridge Young Learners English Tests (CYLE) were chosen as they were an objective, globally recognized standard which tested students in the 4 skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. This event was the beginning of another major change in English education in Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School.

The students were to be tested at the end of their 6 years of education at elementary school (the school year being from April to March of the following year). The first set of CYLE tests endeavored to provide information on what the students gained from one year of English education at 6th grade. It was undertaken by all members of the 6th grade class at around the beginning of their school year, in May, 2006. This class had been taught for 3 years under the older system of education and for 3 years under the new system. The test papers were corrected by Cambridge ESOL (in England) and the results were sent to back to the school. A

CYLE test was carried out again in March 2007, the end of their school year. The results (Table 4) showed that students' performance had improved markedly during the one year of English education, across all 4 skills²³.

It was decided to conduct the test every year to get more reliable data and to continue to gauge the ability of the students after 6 years of elementary school English education. The following year's students, who would have received 5 of their 6 years of English education under the new system upon graduation, took the examination 4 months earlier, in November 2007. This was due to timetabling clashes and not part of the research planning. Analysis of their results showed that they had not performed better than the previous year's students, which indicated that the extra 4 months of English education may have had an effect on the previous year. (Table 5).

Analysis of the results from the March 2007 and the November 2007 examinations, and using data from Cambridge ESOL, showed that the students were performing better in the test than their peers across the country who had also taken the test, but it could also be seen that our students were not performing as well as those in other countries in Asia such as Korea and Taiwan (Table 6). This result showed to us that the education style being used was producing good results when compared to others in Japan, but opened our eyes more to what was going on in the rest of the world. Another interesting point that was noted was

Table 4 Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School YLE Results. May 2006 vs. March 2007. Same class tested twice.

	Listening	Reading and Writing	Speaking	Total Score
Hokuriku Gakuin 2006 (May)	3.38	2.75	4.13	10.25
Hokuriku Gakuin 2007 (March)	4.15	3.30	4.20	11.65

Table 5 Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School YLE Results. March 2007 vs. Nov. 2007. Different classes (years of graduation).

	Listening	Reading and Writing	Speaking	Total Score
Hokuriku Gakuin 2007 (March)	4.15	3.30	4.20	11.65
Hokuriku Gakuin 2007 (Nov.)	4.35	3.00	3.63	11.19

Table 6 Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School Results vs. Korea, Taiwan and Japan

	Listening	Reading and Writing	Speaking	Total Score
Japan (04,05,06)	3.58	2.56	3.78	9.92
Hokuriku Gakuin (Mar 07, Nov 07)	4.25	3.15	3.92	11.32
South Korea (04,05,06)	4.19	3.16	4.46	11.81
Taiwan (04,05,06)	4.20	3.54	4.50	12.24

that the results showed a more even balance across all four skills for students at Hokuriku Gakuin than for their peers either in Japan or in Korea and Taiwan. This was seen as a verification of the method of teaching using the 4 skills based approach, since 2003. It should be noted that results per country were only available until 2006 at the time of comparison and that the results are averages based on the total number of entries in each country.

The students who are due to graduate in March 2009 were tested in November 2008. These students' results, not yet available at the time of writing, will be of particular interest as they have received their English education entirely under the new system, since entering the school as first graders. We will finally be able to see what has been realized by conducting elementary English education using the 4 skills based approach over the entire 6 years of elementary school.

5.4 Following Graduation from Elementary School

The success of our students in the Cambridge examinations led us to think about if our students continued to make progress in English after graduating from elementary school, and what support would be needed to help them. It has been mentioned before in this paper that Hokuriku Gakuin includes schools from kindergarten all the way up to university level. As many of our students continued to Hokuriku Gakuin Junior High School and beyond after graduation from elementary school, it was felt that there should be a way of ensuring their English education would continue from where they left off and that they would build upon what they had learned instead of restarting from the beginning, as is often the case in Japanese junior high schools.

The Hokuriku Gakuin Standard was proposed around this time and allowed us to begin realizing our goals for English education over a longer term. A lot of research was also being carried out into the different levels of schools in Hokuriku Gakuin at the time. The research which was being conducted into the CEFR by the same researchers was used as a base to develop a model to be followed for English education at each stage of a student's development. The first two steps of the Cambridge upper level suite of exams (PET and KET) were decided on for post elementary school student as using Cambridge would allow one standard with stages requiring increasing ability to be used throughout the entire Hokuriku Gakuin system (omitting the kindergarten as testing was not deemed as suitable at that level).

What had started as disparate research into the ability of elementary school students and other research into the various levels of the Hokuriku Gakuin system had become one Standard of education supporting our students and helping them to perform to the best of their ability, with results being objectively verifiable based on global standards. Refinement of methodology and reviewing of student needs will continue at Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School in the future, but it will not just be in the context of the elementary school only. It will be in the context of the students' English education as a whole, until they graduate from university, and with an eye on what is required when working in the global community.

6. The Situation of English Education at the Junior High School and High School

6.1 Current Situation

Hokuriku Gakuin has a junior high school and a

high school for the secondary education. The Junior High School has two courses: Chuko Ikkan Shingaku Course (Advanced Course) and Chuko Hatten Shingaku Course (Regular Course). The students in the Advanced Course study English at a faster speed than in the Regular Course. The students finish all 3 volumes of English textbook in 2 years and 3 months, and do progressive study aimed at an entrance examination. Students in the Regular Course study at an ordinary speed, the same speed as shown by the MEXT. They study English using all 3 volumes of English textbook in 3 years. The junior high school has been chosen as a prefectural representative for a prestigious national championship contest, Prince Takamado's English Oratorical Contest²⁴ for the past six years (2003-2008) in a row. In 2008, two Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School's graduates were nominated to attend the national championship contest.

The junior high school consists of graduates of Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School as well as those of public schools not only from Kanazawa City but also from the suburbs of and cities surrounding Kanazawa. The ratio of the two, i.e. students from Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School and those from the other schools, depends on the year. English at all elementary schools in Japan in general has not been a subject like math and Japanese, some students enter the junior high school with no formal English education. Due to the various quality and quantity of English education given to the students at the elementary school age, the first year junior high students' English abilities are varied. Students, like Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School students, who already know how to read simple sentences by using phonics rules, have to start again from the English alphabet with their peers in the beginning. This has been a hold-back for advanced students. For low ability students, doing things over again in junior high school could be a useful remedial study.

The High School has three courses: Ippan Shingaku Course (Regular Course), Eiri Shingaku Course (English-Science Course), and Tokubetsu Shingaku Course (Advanced Course). The high school consists

of three kinds of students: (1) graduates of Hokuriku Gakuin Junior High School who attended Hokuriku Gakuin Elementary School, (2) graduates of Hokuriku Gakuin Junior High School who attended other elementary schools, and (3) students from other junior high schools. The students' levels are more varied than those at the junior high school.

6.2 Landmark Changes

Hokuriku Gakuin Junior and Senior High Schools have been active with their English education not only inside school but also outside. They have had overseas programs since 1977²⁵ as well as having native speaker teachers, even at the time when other schools did not yet have official native speaker (JET) instructors²⁶. However, these outstanding features are not outstanding any more nowadays as other schools now have overseas programs and native speaker teachers. Hokuriku Gakuin had to find new ways to distinguish itself.

The senior high school was assigned to be a Super English Language High School (SELHi)²⁷ by the MEXT for 2004-2006. SELHi is a project to "implement practical research into progressive English education in high schools."²⁸ It is a competitive project to be assigned, so it was an honor for the school.

The focus of Hokuriku Gakuin High School was reading strategy (RS) to improve students' reading skills.²⁹ This project made some things clear: (1) teaching RS was effective to improve the students' reading speed as well as enhancing their vocabulary, but (2) teachers' introduction were necessary to motivate/inspire students for books, especially those dealing with foreign cultures the students are not familiar with, and (3) the goals of each class must be clearly stated in teachers' minds. This project was conducted using the English Course (the former name of the English-Science Course) only, and it is necessary to try and see if these methods could be applied to other courses or not. The school is now in the stage of "Post SELHi."

6.3 Evaluation of Junior High School and High School by Using Mock Tests of the Cambridge Examinations (KET)

6.3.1 Listening, Reading and Writing Test

Hokuriku Gakuin Junior High School and High School had a group of their students for an in-house trial of the Cambridge ESOL Main Suite of examinations to see the students' achievement toward the end of each school level. The candidates were the two classes of the third year of the junior high school and the three classes of the senior high school. This was carried out using past papers, with the results corrected by teachers based on Cambridge's published standards. Students all took the first level of the Main Suite examinations, the Key English Test or KET, which is equivalent to A2 level or Waystage of the CEFR. At this level, a person is expected to communicate simple tasks on familiar matters like personal information, shopping, and local geography.

70% and higher score is required to pass the KET. 59.5 (70% out of 85 points in total) is considered passing for this mock test. It should be evaluated from a 4 skills point of view, but due to the time limitations, interviews were not given to all the students, but to only some. The scores from the three skills are taken into account to evaluate. The results are shown in Table 7:

A total of 105 students completed both sections of the paper. The school average was 37.1 out of 85 (or about

44%) with a standard deviation of 20.1. This standard deviation is very high. It suggests that the English ability varies considerably across the school. There were 2 junior high school classes, shown by JHA and JHB. There were four senior high school classes, and the results of the top two and bottom two classes were put together and called SHA and SHB. The reason for grouping them was that their scores were almost the same and it allowed us to talk about an 'A' class and a 'B' class for both junior high school and high school. The best performing classes were JHA and SHA. These classes scored significantly higher than the other classes.

It was observed that some students struggled with different vocabulary of the KET from that of Japanese English textbooks like "chemist" and "mechanic". While most of the students tried their best, some students lost interest and didn't complete the test. Most of the questions were simple for students of the English-Science Course and the Advanced Course, however, spelling seemed to be problematic for other students. Students who had a good basic understanding of English worked on the test smoothly, and their results reflect this. On the other hand, students who don't have a good basic understanding of English were hesitant to take the test and seemed to have little interest in the test.

Looking at the averages, JHA is almost passing the KET while SHA is over the passing score. On the

Table 7 The Results of the KET at Junior High School and Senior High School

KET	Listening Test (25 points)			Reading & Writing (60 points)			Total (85 points)				
	Class	No. of students	Avg	STD	No. of students	Avg	STD	No. of students	Avg	STD	Percent
	JHA	12	14.8	5.2	12	34.2	12.5	12	49	16.8	58%
	JHB	21	8.3	3.2	21	17.4	7.5	21	25.8	8.9	30%
	SHA	32	18.5	4	32	40.6	6.2	32	59.1	8.9	70%
	SHB	44	7.1	4.7	44	14.4	8.7	40	21.9	12.1	26%
	All Students	109	11.6	6.6	109	24.8	14.3	105	37.1	20.1	44%

Note: "JH" indicates Junior High School; "SH" indicates Senior High School.

other hand, the other classes are below passing. Two classes of the senior high school (marked as SHB) mark lower than the junior high school's score. These scores seem to show that students who have missed a chance to learn the basics of English in the junior high school have a hard time to catch up with their peers, and this gap between the low students and high students gets bigger as the time goes on.

Based on these results, we need to investigate how many of the well performing students at KET level could pass the Preliminary English Test (PET), which is equivalent to Threshold level of the CEFR. This level is considered to indicate independent learners who can keep studying by themselves. At the same time, we need to find out information about when the under-achievers had gotten lost in learning English and what can be done about it.

6.3.2 Analysis and Discussion of the Results of the Speaking Section of the KET

The KET Speaking Test was conducted with 12 candidates. Eight of the candidates were in the third year of high school and the remaining four were in their third year of junior high school. Their ages ranged from 14 to 18 years old. Eight candidates were female and four were male. Two students were selected from each of the third year junior high classes (JHA and JHB). From the high school, a pair of students were selected from each of the four homerooms, which included two students from the English-Science Course, two

students from the Advanced Course (combine to become SHA), and four students in the Regular Courses (SHB). The two students in each class with the highest scores on the reading, writing and listening portions of the KET exam were selected to take part in the interview testing. Two of the students had also spent at least a year on exchange programs in Canada and Australia.

The followings are the results are shown in Table 8:

The candidates at the high school and junior high levels averaged a score of 4.44 overall. In terms of passing, 4 students got a pass mark and 8 students got a pass with merit mark.

We could interpret the results (the high averages and passing rate of the students) as indicating that the junior high and high school students chosen to take part in the interview section of the test were likely to have English ability of a higher level than the KET exam. Most students were able to easily answer personal questions, use the prompt cards to ask for and give information and speak English with minimal or no L1 influence. The candidates who had not spent a significant amount of time in English speaking countries seemed to be more comfortable with one of either the interview portion, or the prompt card portion of the test. The two candidates who had been exchange students were comfortable and confident in both portions of the test.

Table 8 The results of the speaking section of junior and senior high schools

Sections	Grading Points	Average result (max: 5 for each)
Part 1	Grammar and Vocabulary	4.42
	Pronunciation	4.63
	Interactive Communication	4.54
Part 2	Grammar and Vocabulary	4.40
	Pronunciation	4.45
	Interactive Communication	4.20
	Average for above sections	4.44
	Total	26.6 /30 = 87.7% (Pass)

7. The Situation of English Education at the Junior College and University

7.1 The Current Situation

The junior college and university consist of students from Hokuriku Gakuin Senior High School as well as other high schools. Different from the senior high school, students are from not only the local area but other areas like Osaka and Niigata. There are two departments in the university and two in the junior college; Childhood Department and Welfare Department in the university, and Nutrition Department and the Community and Culture Department in the junior college. Students' interests and levels of English are varied and so are their majors. The first year students have to take 2 units of English in the first year, but other than those units, English classes are elective.

The TOEIC Bridge test started to be used for all the students at both the university and junior college for dividing them into several groups. At the university the students are divided into four groups and Japanese teachers teach them mainly with grammar exercises and Japanese translation in the first semester and then in the second semester native English speaking teachers mainly have them practice the parts of conversation and pronunciation. A major difference is that the students get Japanese support from the Japanese teachers during the first semester, and the presence of native English speaking teachers ensures the class is conducted only in English during the second semester. At the junior college the students are divided into six groups and Japanese teachers teach mainly Japanese translation and grammar in the first and the second

semester (the entire year). Another important point is that we are using books based on CEFR.

7.2 Analysis and Discussion of the Results of the Reading and Writing section of the KET

The Reading and Writing part of the test was given to 98 university students and 154 junior college students. These parts of the test together take 70 minutes and have a total of 56 questions worth a maximum of 60 points. The paper is divided into 9 parts as described before.

The total scores are shown in Table 9:

Parts 1, 2 and 5 achieved the best results. Part 1 is a matching activity and deals with reading commonly found signs. Part 2 is a multiple-choice sentence completion activity. Part 5 is also a multiple-choice gap filling activity. All three parts have a reasonably high random choice success rate. For Part 1, the candidates match 5 sentences to 8 signs. In parts 2 and 5, there is a 1 in 3 chance of random success.

Clearly the most difficult part of the test was Part 6, with an average score of only 11.68%. The raw average score was *0.58 out of 5 points, with a standard deviation of *0.86. This could be interpreted as a severe deficit in either of two skills: knowledge of vocabulary and spelling of that vocabulary. The candidates are given the first letter and shown how many letters make up the required word, and they are provided with a sentence describing the lexical item. Even if they knew the word, but not the spelling, they would need a high level of phonetic skill to work out the correct spelling. The use of some British English

Table 9 The Total Scores of the University and Junior College Students in Reading & Writing Part

All Students	Average Score as Percentage	Task Focus
Part 1	69.37%	Gist understanding of real world notices. Reading for main message
Part 2	66.64%	Lexical. Reading and identifying appropriate vocabulary
Part 3	49.69%	Functional language. Reading and identifying appropriate response
Part 4	48.55%	Reading for detailed understanding and main idea(s)
Part 5	55.68%	Reading and identifying appropriate structural word
Part 6	11.68%	Reading and identifying appropriate lexical item, and spelling
Part 7	40.17%	Reading and identifying appropriate word with focus on structure and/or lexis
Part 8	32.17%	Reading and writing down appropriate words or numbers with focus on content and accuracy
Part 9	47.06%	Writing a short message, note or postcard or 25-35 words
Total Score	46.98%	

words, such as /chemist/ may also have reduced the students' scores in this part. Two other parts of the test had average scores well below 50%; Part 8 with 32.17%, and Part 7 with 40.17%. Part 8 is an information transfer activity which requires accurate reading comprehension in order to select the right words, and Part 7 is a gapped conversation activity focusing on structure and lexis. In Part 7, accurate spelling is also necessary, which, when interpreted in conjunction with Part 6, could go some way to explain the poor results here.

The especially low scores in Parts 6, 7 and 8 compared to other parts also shows a low ability to actively use English, while passive use seems to be more manageable. In these three parts candidates are not presented with possible answers. However, Part 9 required the candidates to write a short message, which is a production activity. For this part the average score was 47.06%, which was quite close to the total test average of 46.98%.

7.3 Analysis and Discussion of the Results of the Listening Section of the KET

The listening part of the test was given to 100 university students and 186 junior college students. This part of the test takes about 30 minutes and has a total of 25 questions worth a maximum of 25 points. The paper is divided into 5 parts.

The results are as shown in Table 10:

Part 2 achieved the best results, followed by Part 1. In both these parts, candidates must listen to identify key information. Part 1 uses multiple short conversations, and presents the information in graphical form

with the use of simple pictures. Part 2 is more challenging as it is a single conversation that holds 5 pieces of information, though again the candidates have the possible answers written down in front of them. For Part 1, there is a 1 in 3 chance of random success. For Part 2 the candidates match 2 lists of information, one of which includes excess choices.

Parts 4 and 5 proved the most difficult of the test, with average scores of 25.45% and 17.06% respectively. Unlike Parts 1 to 3, these parts are not multiple choice sections, and the candidates must write down information that they hear. There are, no doubt, many ways to interpret these results. One interpretation, based on findings from the Reading and Writing section results, is that the candidates lack the ability or confidence to accurately transcribe information that they cannot see. They must rely only on what they hear, rather than on interpreting or reading visually presented choices.

7.4 Analysis and Discussion of the Results of the Speaking Section of the KET

Students at the Junior College were tested using the Cambridge Key English Test, conducted in the same way as in the junior high school and high school. There were 28 candidates, all of whom were full-time junior college students. All were aged between 18 and 20 and all were female. The entire population of the Speech Communication classes, an elective course which aims to improve the students' level of oral communication, was tested. Their level was estimated before testing to be false beginner/elementary. The results are shown in Table 11.

Table 10 The Results of Listening Part of the University and Junior College Students

All students	Average score as percentage	Task Focus
Part 1	62.87%	Listening to identify key information (times, prices, days of week, numbers, etc.).
Part 2	67.62%	Listening to identify key information
Part 3	49.09%	Taking the 'role' of one of the speakers and listening to identify key information
Part 4	25.45%	Listening and writing down information (including spelling of names, places, etc. as dictated on recording)
Part 5	17.06%	Listening and writing down information (including spelling of names, places, etc. as dictated on recording)

Table 11 The Results of Speaking Section

Part	Grading points	Average result
Part 1	Grammar and Vocabulary	3.89
	Pronunciation	3.64
	Interactive Communication	3.64
Part 2	Grammar and Vocabulary	3.07
	Pronunciation	3.57
	Interactive Communication	3.39
Average for above sections		3.54
Total		21.21 /30 = 70.7% (Pass)

Table 12 The Overall Results

Section	No. of Students	Pass with Merit 85%-100%	Pass 70%-85%	Narrow Fail 65%-70%	Fail 0%-65%
Reading & Writing	286	4 (1.40%)	42 (14.69%)	15 (5.24%)	225 (78.67%)
Listening	286	2 (0.69%)	17 (5.94%)	11 (3.85%)	256 (89.51%)
Speaking	28	3 (10.71%)	13 (46.43%)	1 (3.57%)	11 (39.28%)
All sections completed	28	1 (3.57%)	7 (25.00%)	7 (25.00%)	13 (46.43%)

The highest average was 3.89 in the Grammar and Vocabulary criteria of Part 1, the interview part. The lowest average was 3.07 in the Grammar and Vocabulary criteria of Part 2, the prompt cards, indicating that, despite the key words and phrases provided, the candidates had the most difficulty accurately producing questions and answers without a model. As for pass/fail, 12 failed, 16 passed, and 6 passed with merit, giving a pass rate of 73.3% (22 students out of 28).

7.5 The Overall Results

Of the 286 candidates evaluated, only 28 completed all sections of the examination. This was due to time constraints on the part of the examiners conducting the speaking part. The overall results are shown in table 12:

The results for the speaking section are very different from the Reading & Writing and Listening sections. This makes sense as the students who took the speaking part were students taking multiple English classes,

including Speech Communication, a class which aims to improve the students' ability in using English orally.

8. Conclusion

Through the research, we can see the level of the field of English Education at Hokuriku Gakuin through an international standard, and are able to announce future plans and targets for English Education at Hokuriku Gakuin in the medium and long term, 10 and 20 years' time.

The results showed certain points:

1. The highest goal for general students to achieve in their 19-year education can be set at B1-B2 of the CEFR.
2. Students with a good score in the writing test tend to score well in listening and speaking.
3. A lot of work is necessary to improve the average of the low students to A2 of the CEFR, which is the passing stage of KET.
4. Investigation is necessary to decide the low stu-

dents' levels in terms of the CEFR. (The Main Suite exams are not available for this as those students score below the level of its lowest examination)

5. The high school's results tend to be similar to those of tertiary education. Junior High School could be the turning point.

At the same time, there are things that this research didn't show:

1. evaluation of cultural programs
2. evaluation of emotional/motivation aspects
3. progression of each student's English studies

This research was a benchmark of our school's history to evaluate the whole school system with one scale.

There are a lot of legal regulations and limitations in education, we need to keep them in mind while deciding on an effective way to keep moving forward to achieve our goal of cultivating our students to reach a high enough level of English to be of use in the world today.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to many people's understanding and cooperation, this work has been completed. Many thanks are given to Mr. Kiya, Mrs. Yamashita, and Miss Hosokawa for cooperating with us in conducting the KET examinations with their students.

Research team

Hokuriku Gakuin University

Hideyuki Asakura

Sakiko Yoneda

Gavin Lynch

Masami Ikenaka

Craig Woods

Maureen McKeurtan

Yuko Gotoda

Hokuriku Gakuin High school

Michiyo Uchino

Brian Sole

Takaya Higashi

Naoko Kawai

Mitsuru Inou

Sayuri Nakayama

Hokuriku Gakuin Junior High School

Etsuko Yamamoto

Sayo Endo

Hiromi Chabatake

Authors

Author Name	Section
Hideyuki Asakura	1., 7.1
Sakiko Yoneda	2., 3., 6.1, 6.2, 8.
Gavin Lynch	5.
Craig Woods	3.2, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5
Masami Ikenaka	4.
Maureen McKeurtan	3., 3.2.3, 7.4
Michiyo Uchino	6.3.1
Takaya Higashi	6.3.1
Naoko Kawai	6.3.1
Mitsuru Inou	6.3.1
Sayuri Nakayama	6.3.1
Brian Sole	6.3.2
Etsuko Yamamoto	6.3.1
Sayo Endo	6.3.1
Hiromi Chabatake	6.3.1

Editors

Hideyuki Asakura (leader)

Sakiko Yoneda

Gavin Lynch

Bibliography

aswho <http://www.aswho.com/abroad/test/level.htm>
retrieved on October 5, 2008

Comrie, Bernarad, Matthews, Stephen, & Polinsky, Maria 2003 *The Atlas of Languages* Facts on File, Inc.

Council for Cultural Co-operation, Education Committee, Modern Languages Division Strasbourg, 2006 *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge University Press (Translation: Yoshijima, Shigru, Ohashi, Satoe 2004 *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Asahi Press)

- Hokuriku Gakuin Junior High School <http://www.hokurikugakuin.ac.jp/junior/about.html> retrieved on October 25, 2008
- Hokuriku Gakuin Junior High School Senior High School <http://www.hokurikugakuin.ac.jp/senior/about.html> retrieved on October 25, 2008
- JASTEC Kansai Project Tteam The Influence of Early Age English Learning on University Students' Affective Factors *JASTEC Journal No. 27* 2008
- Langham, Clive S. 2001 *Putting English Language Proficiency Tests on the Curriculum* Tsukuba Women's University Journal
- MEXT <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/news/2002/07/020901.htm> retrieved on October 25, 2008
- MEXT <http://www.jetprogramme.org/j/introduction/index.html> retrieved on October 25, 2008
- MEXT <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/news/2002/07/020901.htm> retrieved on October 25, 2008
- Nishio, Yuri Effects of Age Factors and Learning Experience on the Accuracy of Japanese Elementary School Children's Pronunciation of Phonemes *JASTEC Journal No. 19* 2000
- Society for Testing English Proficiency <http://www.stepeiken.org> retrieved on October 16, 2008
- Test of English for International Communication www.ets.org/toEIC retrieved on October 16, 2008
- University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/index.html> retrieved on January 20, 2008
- University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/europe/cefr.html> retrieved on October 25, 2008
- University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/exams-info/faqs/main-suite.html> retrieved on October 25, 2008
- University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/young-learners/yle.html> retrieved on October 25, 2008
- University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/europe/cefr.html> retrieved on October 5, 2008
- University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate 2005 *Key English Test Handbook*
- ケンブリッジ大学認定試験センター <http://www.camb-hg.com/exam/exam.htm> retrieved on January 20, 2008
- Yoneda, Sakiko; Lynch, Gavin. 2007 "How Much English Can Japanese Children Learn in their Six-Year English Education in a Japanese School?—Evaluation using the Cambridge Young Learners Test" *5th Asia TEFL International Conference 2007, Pre-Conference Proceedings* (CD-ROM) pp.1-18.
-
- <注>
- 1 University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/europe/cefr.html>
 - 2 Council for Cultural Co-operation, Education Committee, Modern Languages Division Strasbourg 2006 *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, 1
 - 3 *ibid.* 1
 - 4 *ibid.* 5-6
 - 5 *ibid.* 7
 - 6 *ibid.* 9
 - 7 *ibid.* 21-22
 - 8 *ibid.* 24
 - 9 *ibid.* xiii
 - 10 Comrie, Bernard, Matthews, Stephen, & Polinsky, Maria 2003 *The Atlas of Languages Facts on File*, Inc. 55, 202, 204
 - 11 Society for Testing English Proficiency <http://www.stepeiken.org/>
 - 12 TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication www.ets.org/toEIC/
 - 13 ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages
 - 14 University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/europe/cefr.html>
 - 15 University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/exams-info/faqs/main-suite.html>
 - 16 University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/young-learners/yle.html>
 - 17 University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations *Cambridge Young Learners English Tests Handbook 2006*, 1-15
 - 18 University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations *Cambridge Key English Test Handbook 2005*, 48-49
 - 19 *ibid.* 5-11
 - 20 JASTEC Kansai Project Team The Influence of Early Age English Learning on University Students' Affective Factors *JASTEC Journal No. 27* 2008

- 21 Nishio, Yuri Effects of Age Factors and Learning Experience on the Accuracy of Japanese Elementary School Children's Pronunciation of Phonemes *JASTEC Journal No. 19* 2000
- 22 Yoneda, Sakiko; Lynch, Gavin. 2007 "How Much English Can Japanese Children Learn in their Six-Year English Education in a Japanese School? —Evaluation using the Cambridge Young Learners Test" 5th Asia TEFL International Conference 2007, Pre-Conference Proceedings (CD-ROM)
- 23 Yoneda, Sakiko; Lynch, Gavin. 2007 "How Much English Can Japanese Children Learn in their Six-Year English Education in a Japanese School? —Evaluation using the Cambridge Young Learners Test" 5th Asia TEFL International Conference 2007, Pre-Conference Proceedings (CD-ROM)
- pp.1-18.
- 24 高円宮英語弁論大会
- 25 Hokuriku Gakuin Junior High School <http://www.hokurikugakuin.ac.jp/junior/about.html>
Hokuriku Gakuin in Senior High School <http://www.hokurikugakuin.ac.jp/senior/about.html>
- 26 The JET program started in 1986. MEXT <http://www.jet-programme.org/j/introduction/index.html>
- 27 SELHi, MEXT <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/news/2002/07/020901.htm>
- 28 MEXT, 2002
- 29 北陸学院高等学校校 (Hokuriku Gakuin Senior High School) Super English High School 研究開発実施報告書 平成16年度～18年度 (A Report on SELHi, 2004-2006)





Appendix

Appendix A, *Common Reference Levels of the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment”*

Level	Can-Do Statements
C2 Mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. - Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. - Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
C1 Effective Operational Proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. - Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. - Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. - Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2 Vantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. - Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. - Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
B1 Threshold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. - Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. - Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. - Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
A2 Waystage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). - Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. - Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
A1 Breakthrough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. - Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. - Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Source: Council for Cultural Co-operation, Education Committee, Modern Languages Division Strasbourg. (2006). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.

Appendix B, KET Prompt Cards

<p>KET Candidate A prompt card 1</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A JOB?</p> <p>We need a Cook</p> <p>July – September in the Park Hotel</p> <p>25 hours per week</p> <p>\$6.40 per hour</p> <p>Call 776 2143</p>  </div>	<p>KET Candidate B prompt card 1</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p><u>Job</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● where / job? ● what / job? ● how much / earn? ● hours per week? ● telephone number?  </div>
<p>KET Candidate A prompt card 2</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p><u>School trip</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● date? ● what / visit? ● expensive? ● when / pay? ● time / return?  </div>	<p>KET Candidate B prompt card 2</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>School trip to</p> <p>Science Museum</p> <p>Wednesday 12th October</p> <p>leave school 7.30 a.m. return school 5.30 p.m.</p> <p>\$15 (with lunch in a restaurant)</p> <p><u>Pay School Secretary by 30th September</u></p>  </div>

Source: *Cambridge Key English Test Extra*, p135, p137, Cambridge University Press, 2008

Appendix C, KET Mock Rubric

		Grammar and Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication	Total /30	Grade
Candidate A	Part 1					
	Part 2					
Candidate B	Part 1					
	Part 2					

Source: Compiled from information contained in *Key English Test Handbook for Teachers*, UCLES, 2007

Grading – M P N F

M = Pass with merit = 85% or more

P = Pass = 70 to 84%

N = Narrow Fail = 65 to 69%

F = Fail = 64% or less

Scale: 5= excellent; 4= good; 3= acceptable; 2= unsatisfactory; 1= poor

Source: University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations 2005

<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/exams-info/faqs/ket-and-pet.html>