

# The Impact on English Education of Adopting the Quarter System at Hiroshima University

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Most Japanese universities used to adopt the semester system; however, under pressure to “globalize”, many of them have moved to term systems. Hiroshima University started to adopt the quarter system, a type of term system, in 2016, and from 2018 English classes have been taught with the quarter system. This report describes the changes in English education at Hiroshima University. First, the changes in course patterns between the semester and quarter systems are depicted in detail. Second, English instructors’ responses from a survey on the quarter system are summarized. Finally, advantages and disadvantages are discussed in relation to the course patterns.

## BACKGROUND

### Issues Related to the Term System

The beginning of discussions on term systems dates back to 2007 when the The Second Report by the Education Rebuilding Council suggested the facilitation of university entrance from September, and starting the Japanese version of a gap year. After this suggestion, the Educational Law was changed to allow the president of each university to decide when to start and end an academic year. Then, in 2013, “Standards for Establishment of Universities” was changed so that more flexible course styles, such as meeting twice a week for eight weeks instead of the traditional once a week for 16 weeks, were permitted. These changes aimed to facilitate the study exchange between universities in Japan and overseas, contributing to so-called globalization in Japan.

Moving toward globalization, universities in Japan have started to change their academic system. Nishimoto (2017) cited the result of a survey implemented by the 53rd National University Liberal Arts Education Organization, and reported that about 30% of national universities had already introduced a term system. Moreover, it was reported that 34.6% of universities planned to introduce a term system and 23.1% had actively examined the possibility of doing so. These results indicate that most universities were moving toward some kind of term system. More importantly, different universities adopted different types of term systems. For example, Hiroshima University adopted a quarter system, which consists of four terms (to be explained in more detail in the section “The Types of Quarter System at Hiroshima University”). Other universities including Chiba University and Yokohama National University use six-term systems where summer and spring breaks are used as terms. The University of Tokyo has a quarter system with 105-minute classes for 13 weeks.

During this period of change, there have been only a few reports on how the introduction of the quarter system has influenced universities. Chikada (2018) reported the case of Kobe University, where the quarter

system was introduced in 2016, noting the following six issues:

- Deans of faculties, faculty members, office staff, and students all disagree with the quarter system though they are in different positions.
- Many of them indicated that more burden would be placed on instructors and office staff for educational affairs.
- Both instructors and students said that class management is less flexible and class content is less than before.
- The more time students spend in the quarter system, the more positive opinions and less negative opinions they tend to have.
- Little by little, more students are going overseas, and students are spending more time on studying.
- Fewer people use their university library and fewer books are checked out than before.

(Chikada, 2018, p.115)

Chikada (2018) further addressed three concerns from the abovementioned results. First, it would take some time for instructors and students to feel the benefits of the new system because they were familiar with the old system. Particularly, the instructors might have psychological barriers to accepting the new system. Second, the change toward the quarter system produces varieties of course patterns. It is necessary for people in the university to be more flexible in order to find the best way to offer a course while thinking whether the course should be taught in a quarter system or a semester system. Third, this change may influence the way of grading students. Grading for the even number term would be done along with teaching courses in the odd number term, which makes the instructors busier than before. The instructors may choose some less time-consuming ways of grading. This may mean easier and simpler quizzes or exams, with more cheating and plagiarism likely to occur. All these concerns should be taken into account when implementing the change toward the quarter system.

There has been a good deal of intense discussion on implementing the change at Hiroshima University, and various issues, including those mentioned in Chikada (2018), have been raised. Eventually, Hiroshima University changed the academic system to the quarter system in 2016. The next section briefly introduces the purposes of adopting the quarter system at Hiroshima University, and is followed by an outline of English courses before and after the quarter system.

### **The Purpose of Adopting the Quarter System at Hiroshima University**

Hiroshima University previously used a semester system, where the first semester started from April and ended late July, and the second semester started from October and ended late January. One semester consists of 15 classes and a final exam, which makes a 16 week course. The quarter system that Hiroshima University has adopted since 2016 splits the semester into half, with classes being taught twice a week. Hiroshima University offers two main reasons for adopting this type of quarter system:

1. To improve the educational benefits by allowing students to take courses intensively for a shorter period of time.

As a lecture for one subject will be held for 2 course-hours (either consecutively or a combination of Monday and Thursday, Tuesday and Friday, etc.), the number of fields of study that students have to learn in a week during each Term will be reduced by half. Therefore, the educational benefit will increase due to learning in an intensive manner.

2. To promote students' independent learning experiences, such as studying abroad and participating in volunteer activities.

By making proper arrangements or being creative with the selection of courses for each Term, students may use a Term as a period of time that they can use on their own initiative, perhaps to study abroad, participate in volunteer activities, or pursue other creative endeavors. (For example, a student may complete all required credits in the first three Terms and study abroad during the Fourth Term.)

(Taken from [https://www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/en/sgu/page03\\_01](https://www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/en/sgu/page03_01))

The purposes posted on Hiroshima University's website are identical with ones indicated by a meeting on diversification of the academic calendar and gap terms held at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2015.

### **Liberal Arts English Education at Hiroshima University Before the Quarter System**

Liberal Arts English Education is offered to all the first- and second- year students at Hiroshima University. It is mandatory for the students to have either 6 credits or 8 credits from Liberal Arts English Education classes depending on their courses, majors or schools. Figure 1 shows the types of classes Hiroshima University offered as Liberal Arts English education before the quarter system was adopted. In the first semester, all the first-year students took two classes a week, Communication IA and IB. After the summer break, in the second semester, the students took two classes a week, Communication IIA and IIB. The maximum number of students in productive skills classes, speaking and writing, was 35, and receptive skills, reading and listening, 60.

The second-year students took one out of three Communication III classes (IIIA, IIIB, IIIC) in the third and fourth semester, which means they had an English class once a week for a year. All these classes lasted for 15 weeks, and the final exam was administered in the 16th week. The maximum number of the students for IIIA was 45, and for the others 60.

Basic English Usage I and II in the dotted box are online courses, where the students are instructed to study online for 15 weeks and have a final exam at the end of each semester. Basic English Usage I and II are for those who are required to take eight credits for liberal arts English. Enokida et al. (2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2018) provide more details on the courses.

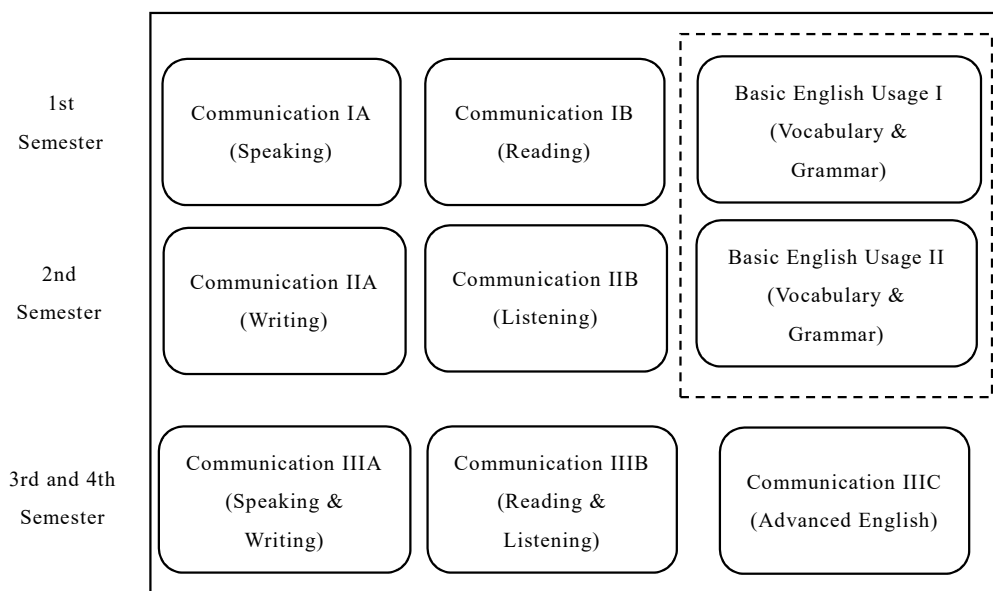


FIGURE 1. Liberal Arts English Education Before the Quarter System

### The Types of Quarter System at Hiroshima University<sup>1)</sup>

After a year of intense discussion, Liberal Arts English Education changed to the quarter system in 2018. Because of several practical issues, there are three patterns of courses as follows:

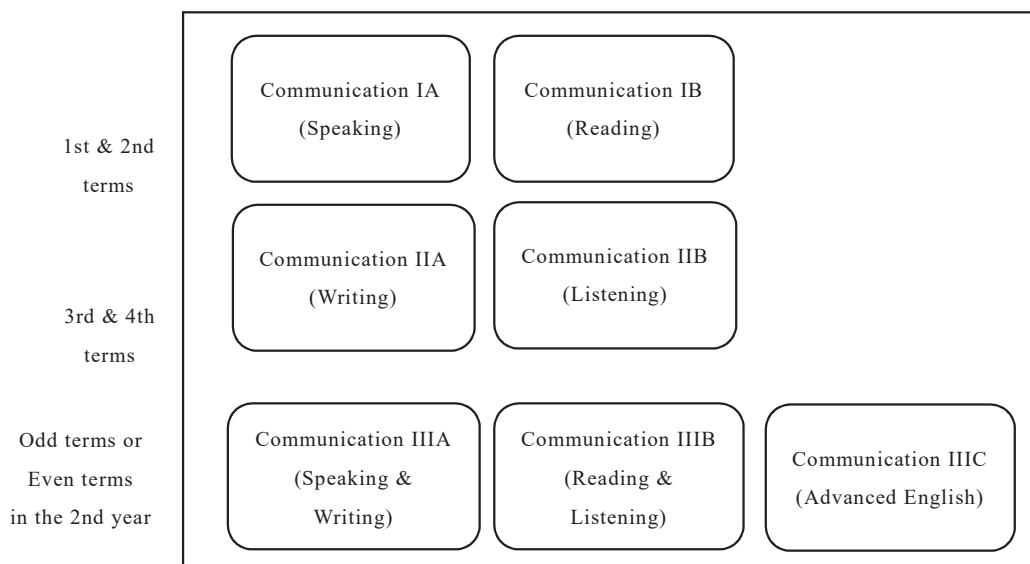
- 1). 90-minute classes twice a week for eight weeks with the same instructor.
- 2). 180-minute classes once a week for eight weeks.
- 3). 90-minute classes twice a week for eight weeks with two different instructors.

The first pattern is for most of the first-year students with six credits required. The classes are offered on Tuesday and Friday. The same instructor teaches both days for 90 minutes for eight weeks. Because the maximum number of productive skills classes and receptive skills classes are different, it is difficult to have all the students in the same skills classes in the same term. Consequently, the students are divided into two groups: productive-skills-first group and receptive-skills-first group. As for the first semester, half of the students take Communication IA in the first term and IB in the second term. The other half take IB in the first term and IA in the second term. In the second semester, half of them take Communication IIA in the third term and IIB in the fourth. The other half take Communication IIB in the third term and IIA in the fourth term.

The second pattern is for the first-year students with six credits required, who are in the Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, and Pharmaceutical Sciences. The classes are offered on Thursday afternoon. The same instructor teaches two 90-minute classes in a row with a 15-minute break between classes for eight weeks. As for the first semester, half of the students take Communication IA in the first term and IB in the second term. The other half take IB in the first and IA in the second term. In the second semester, half of

them take Communication IIA in the third term and IIB in the fourth. The other half take Communication IIB in the third and IIA in the fourth term.

Communication III for second-year students also is offered with the second pattern on Monday, Wednesday or Thursday depending on the school. Because the second-year students are required to take two courses out of Communication IIIA, IIIB, or IIIC among the four terms, the students are assigned to classes offered in the odd-number terms or the even-number terms. For example, students in the Engineering School are assigned to take Communication III on Thursday morning in the odd number (first and third) terms. In principle, the 16th class is to be used for the final exam. As for the 180-minute class, the eighth class is divided into two halves: the first 90 minutes for a regular class, and the second for the final exam.



**FIGURE 2. Liberal Arts English Education in the Quarter System for 6 Credit Students**

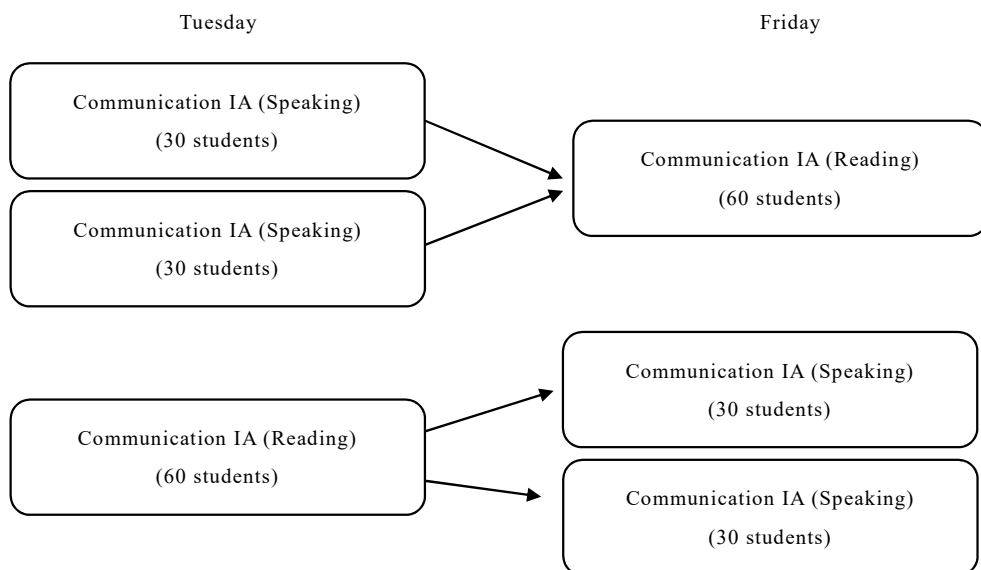
The third pattern is for all the first-year students with eight credits required. The students are required to take English Basic I in the first semester and English Basic II in the second semester. These courses are Web-Based Training (WBT) courses, so that the students study online materials outside of the classroom. However, it is difficult for students to make their own study routine without guidance for 16 weeks. Before the quarter system, quizzes taken from the online materials used to be administered in Communication IB and IIB classes. In order to keep administering the quizzes in the classroom for 16 weeks, Communication IA and Communication IB are integrated as shown in Figure 3. In the first term, Communication IA is taught on Tuesday and Friday, and on either day, speaking or reading skills are taught. For example, a student taking Communication IA is taught speaking skills by an instructor on Tuesday and reading skills by another instructor on Friday for eight weeks. In the second term, the student taking Communication IB is taught the same skills on the same days with the same instructors as the first term. In short, Communication IA is divided into Communication IA (Speaking) and Communication IA (Reading), and Communication IB is divided into Communication IB (Speaking) and Communication IB (Reading). In the reading classes, the

student takes the quizzes in both the first and second term. This procedure is followed in the second semester for writing and listening classes. The quizzes are administrated in the listening classes.

Semester	Term	Course		
1	1	Communication IA (Speaking & Reading)	Basic English Usage I (Vocabulary & Grammar)	
	2	Communication IB (Speaking & Reading)		
2	3	Communication IIA (Writing & Listening)	Basic English Usage II (Vocabulary & Grammar)	
	4	Communication IIB (Writing & Listening)		
Odd terms or Even terms in the 2nd year		Communication IIIA (Speaking & Writing)	Communication IIIB (Reading & Listening)	Communication IIIC (Advanced English)

**FIGURE 3. Liberal Arts English Education in the Quarter System for 8 Credit Students<sup>2)</sup>**

In order to implement this pattern, it is necessary that one receptive skill class consists of two productive skill classes (See Figure 4). For example, if there are 120 students as a group, we split them into half. The first half, 60 students, is again split into half to make two speaking classes, 30 students per class, on Tuesday. These two 30-student speaking classes are combined into one 60-student class to take a reading class as one class on Friday. The other half takes reading on Tuesday and speaking on Friday.



**FIGURE 4. Example of Class Allocation for The Third Pattern**

This course pattern is different from the other first-year students' English courses with respect to the syllabus and grading. In the other pattern, as well as first-year students' English courses before the quarter system, each course is for a different main skill; however, with this third pattern, as Figure 4 shows, two main skills are taught in a course. For example, in Communication IA, both speaking and reading are taught in a course by different instructors on different days. In a sense, Communication IA is a course taught in the first term. Then, Communication IB is taught in the second term. Because two different instructors teach one course, grading is determined by combining each instructor's grades. This course pattern is only taught by the instructors at the Institute for Foreign Language Research and Education because of its complexity.

The abovementioned changes for adopting the quarter system have huge impacts on instructors on the management of classes. This paper reports how the instructors felt about the quarter system after they had taught their classes in the system for the first time.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey was sent to all the instructors teaching liberal art English courses in 2018. It was conducted by using an online form from July 30th to August 26th, 2018. There were three questionnaire items.

- 1) Advantages of the quarter system.
- 2) Disadvantages of the quarter system.
- 3) Ideas to improve your class in the third and fourth terms.

All three items required free narrative responses. Additionally, background information was gathered, including the course taught, and the patterns of these courses.

The responses sometimes contain more than one sentence, so a response with multiple sentences was analysed sentence by sentence. The sentences were categorized and coded by similarities. If applicable,

subcategories were added under the categories. There were often sentences including more than one opinion. These sentences were coded for two or three categories.

## RESULTS

Thirty-three instructors responded. The courses taught, and patterns of courses taught are shown in Table 1 and 2 respectively. As these tables show, some of the instructors had multiple patterns of multiple courses.

**Table 1. Courses Taught**

Courses taught	N
Communication IA	15
Communication IB	12
Communication IIIA	10
Communication IIIB	6
Communication IIIC	2

**Table 2. Pattern of Courses Taught**

Patterns of courses	N
90 minutes twice a week	17
180 minutes once a week	8
90 minutes once a week	23

### Advantages of the Quarter System at Hiroshima University

Table 3 shows the results of perceived advantages of the quarter system. These can be divided into three main categories. The first category is related to instruction, which has three subcategories. One of the subcategories is content, where some teachers took advantages of 180 minutes' instruction time by providing more detailed instruction and assigning students longer and richer texts to read. Another subcategory is memory, which is particularly indicated by instructors who taught 90-minute classes twice a week. The time between classes is shorter in the quarter system than the semester system, so the students are more likely to retain what they learn until the next class. The last subcategory is high concentration. This comment came from instructors of both 180-minute once-a-week classes and 90-minute twice-a-week classes. It seems that both mentioned that eight weeks as one term requires students' high concentration, which means that classes are easier to manage because students are more attentive, and less effort has to be made to keep them from getting bored.

Another category is higher attendance rates. Hiroshima University has a rule that students need to attend more than two thirds of classes (i.e., 10 classes out of 15) in order to be eligible to take the final exam. If students have 180-minute once-a-week or 90-minute twice-a-week classes, the count is relatively easy because the number of classes is equal to the number of days they attend. In this sense, it might be the case that the students feel a little more pressure to come to class if they have a 90-minute twice-a-week class



rather than a 180-minute once-a-week class because they see their instructors more often and may feel more guilty if they skip a class. As for 180-minute classes, however, the number of classes is not equal to the number of days they attend. If they miss three days out of eight class days, it means they miss six classes out of 15 classes, which means that they cannot take the final exam. This situation puts more pressure on students not to skip a class.

The last category is rapport. Because instructors meet with students more often in a 90-minute twice-a-week classes or for a longer time in 180-minute once-a-week classes, they feel that they are closer to the students, and the students may feel the same. This feeling is important for instructors to build up their confidence in the classroom, which leads to more effective teaching.

**Table 3. Advantages of the Quarter System**

Categories	Subcategories	Examples	Main class pattern
Instruction	Content	We can provide more detailed explanation without rush.	180
		Students read comparatively longer English reading materials with richer contents in a class.	180
	Memory	Students can learn and remember the contents more.	90 twice
		Students take the next class before they forget what they have learned.	90 twice
	High concentration	Students and teachers need to have high concentration in classes for eight weeks because the pace of classes is fast. This is good for students who are good at concentrating in the short term.	180
		Students need to have high concentration.	180
Higher attendance	Attendance seems better. Perhaps the students are aware that they will miss two classes with one absence and make more of an effort.	180	
	The term ends quickly. Student attendance is better. Get to meet more students.	90 twice	
Rapport	Regular meeting with students. Develops rapport sooner. Might benefit short term learning.	90 twice	
	I feel a bit closer to the students because I see and observe them for 190 minutes at a time, and I guess they feel more confidence and trust in me and each other. (Usually, it takes some time when the classes are shorter.)	180	

Note. 180 = 180-minute once-a-week class, 90 twice = 90-minute twice-a-week class

### Disadvantages of the Quarter System at Hiroshima University

Table 4 shows perceived disadvantages of the quarter system. They are divided into three main categories: Short term period, 180-minute once-a-week classes, and the quarter system itself. Under the category of short term period, there are three subcategories. The first one is rapport. As for 180-minute once-a-week classes, instructors see students only eight times, so it is difficult to establish a good relationship with the students. It is interesting that one instructor who had 90-minute twice-a-week classes felt the same even though the class meeting days are 16. For both 180-minute once-a-week and 90-minute twice-a-week classes, eight weeks is not enough to build a rapport with students.

The second and third subcategories, namely shallow teaching and learning, and amount of homework, are partially related to each other in different ways according to class patterns. As for 180-minute once-a-

week classes, because there is no way to give an assignment or even preparation for the next class in a 15-minute break, it is natural that the contents taught in a class and the amount of homework will be less than in the semester system. One of the instructors stated that “more students did not prepare for a class because the content taught in a 180-minute once-a-week class is too much for them, so they just gave up preparing, which leads them to not doing homework assignments either”. As an estimation of student learning amount, another instructor stated that “students learn 40-50% less content than in the semester system”.

As for 90-minute twice-a-week classes, some instructors feel that they cannot teach the same amount of materials for eight weeks as they did for 16 weeks. Some reduce the amount of materials and explanation and others reduce the number of small quizzes in class to reduce the burden on the students. Concerning homework, there are slightly different situations between classes held once a week and those held twice a week. For 90-minute classes held twice a week, there are 15 opportunities to assign homework, but the time between classes is only two or three days including weekends. For either way, the total amount of homework is much less than it used to be in the semester system. Some instructors stated that students learn 70% less content than they did in the semester system.

The second main category pertains only to 180-minute once-a-week classes. There are two subcategories. One is low concentration due to longer class time. Most instructors tried various ways to maintain students' concentration for 180 minutes; however, these did not always work well, particularly for the last 40 minutes of the class. Moreover, such attempts require more class preparation time. The other subcategory concerns the final exam schedule. For 180-minute once-a-week classes, the final test is administered in the last 90 minutes of the final class, which means that the first 90 minutes is normal class time. This system does not allow students to prepare for the final class, especially regarding what they learn right before the final exam. It is obviously difficult for instructors to decide on how much of the material taught in the last class they should include in the final exam.

The last main category relates to the quarter system which has been adopted by Hiroshima University. The first subcategory concerns teaching materials. This subcategory contains quite different issues. Because most universities in Japan still adopt a semester system, or a quarter system which is more similar to the semester system, the majority of textbooks are adjusted to the semester system. Most instructors initially thought that they could use the textbooks designed for the semester system, but came to realize that the quarter system at Hiroshima University necessitates more modifications being made to teaching materials. Some instructors added handouts and other teaching materials besides textbooks for adjusting to the quarter system. The other issue is that the students in the first term may pass their textbooks to their friends who take the same lesson in the second term. It is often the case that first-year students obtain the textbook from their seniors in their schools, but the quarter system enables the first-year students to exchange their textbooks, including answer keys, with each other. In the same vein, it is easy to imagine that the students exchange information about in-class small quizzes, mid-term exams and final exams. Some instructors feel that different textbooks, quizzes and exams should be used between the first and second terms.

The second subcategory mainly concerns part-time instructors who also teach at universities other than Hiroshima University. The quarter system at Hiroshima University is quite unique and different from other universities. The part time instructors who teach twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays are occupied with these two days to teach at Hiroshima University, so it is difficult for them to have classes elsewhere on these

days. This is particularly true for part-time instructors teaching at Higashi-Hiroshima Campus, where most of the English classes are offered. Higashi-Hiroshima Campus is remote from Hiroshima city where many other schools are located, and it can take an hour or more for instructors to get to their next class after

**Table 4. Disadvantages of the Quarter System**

Category	Subcategories	Examples	Main class pattern
Short period of term	Rapport	It's difficult to build a steady rapport with some students because of the limited number of weeks.	180 90 twice
		The term finishes when both teachers and students are just getting to know each other.	180 90 twice
	Shallow teaching and learning	superficial/shallow presentation due to hasty/shortened schedule.	180
		I had small quizzes in every class, but now it is only Friday when I have a small quiz. It is because it seems too hard for the students to have small quizzes twice a week. Also, due to the rushed schedule, I reduced the amount and explanation of materials dealt with in a class. I thought that I could teach the same amount as in the semester system because the number of classes is the same. However, it turns out that the students learn 30% less content than in the semester system.	90 twice
	Homework	Time is too short for us to instill a learning habit in students by giving them homework.	90 twice
		Homework assignments have to be curtailed as there simply is not enough time to ask students to undertake a longer assignment in an eight-week period. This means that homework can only be limited to short activities, which constricts what educational aspirations can be undertaken.	180
180 minutes Class	Low concentration	Sometimes it can become monotonous or tiring for the students in a long session (180 minutes) with the same teacher and subject.	180
		In the summer, the classroom was too hot which made it extremely hard for students to concentrate and work effectively for 180 minutes.	180
	Final exam schedule	It's not advantageous to have the exam immediately following the last class. Students don't have sufficient time to prepare.	180
		It is hard for students to have the final exam right after the 15th class.	180
Quarter system	Teaching Material	There is no suitable textbooks for the term system.	90 twice
		The students in the 1st term may give their textbooks with answers to the students in the 2nd term.	90 twice
		For 180 minute class, many of students do not have textbooks on the first day, which means they take first two classes without the textbook.	180
	Different system than other universities	Forcing teachers to come twice a week in a non-flexible schedule severely impacts part-timers who have commitments at other universities.	90 twice
	Grading	Eight weeks is just not long enough to assign a grade to students – especially in the first quarter.	90 twice
		It is difficult to grade the first-term students while preparing for the second term.	180
	No time for make-up classes	Weather issues causing class cancellations are a problem. Whereas I might only have missed a single class per group, now it's two.	180
		Due to the tight schedule, it is almost impossible to have make-up classes.	90 twice

Note. 180 = 180-minute once-a-week class, 90 twice = 90-minute twice-a-week class

teaching at Higashi-Hiroshima Campus.

The third category has to do with grading. There are two main issues. One is that eight weeks is too short a time to evaluate students, and is related to the first main category, the short term period. Without building a rapport with the students, and feeling that students learn less than before, it seems difficult for instructors to evaluate students. The other issue is the timing of submitting the grading report. The first-term grading reports are supposed to be submitted by the end of the second term together with the second-term reports. However, most instructors prefer making first-term grading reports right after the first term finishes to doing it at the end of the second term. It is understandable that the grading should be done while the memory of the students is fresh. However, due to the lack of a break between terms, instructors need to grade the first-term students while teaching in the second term, which rushes the instructors regarding both grading and teaching.

The last subcategory is the lack of time for make-up classes. Make-up classes are usually taught on Saturdays. If instructors miss one class, there are opportunities to have a make-up class in one out of eight weeks (in practice, less than eight), which used to be one out of 16 weeks. If instructors miss one 180-minute once-a-week class, Saturday (all morning or all afternoon) is used for make-up classes. These issues make it difficult for instructors to have make-up classes. This was especially so in academic year 2018 when Hiroshima suffered from the 2018 floods.

There are other issues not listed in Table 4. One of these is the complexity for instructors of 90-minute classes held once a week. Those classes are taught by two different instructors, and grading is a combination of the instructors' evaluations. This system is confusing not only for the students but also the instructors. Moreover, some instructors teach classes with three different patterns in a term, which is extremely confusing. However, this type of issue may be solved in a couple of years after the instructors familiarize themselves with the system. With clear explanations from the instructors, the students will not be confused. On the other hand, the disadvantages listed in Table 4 may be difficult to solve immediately. To obtain suggestions as to possible solutions, we asked instructors for their ideas to improve their classes in the third and fourth terms.

### **Improving the Quarter System at Hiroshima University**

The third questionnaire item aims to ask for suggestions to improve the quarter system at Hiroshima University. We thought that after teaching the first and second terms, the instructors would come up with some good ideas; however, the majority of them felt tired of the new system, with comments like "there is no way to improve it" or "the best way is to return the former system".

Two instructors mentioned that they planned to change their lesson plans or classroom activities. Instructors with 180-minute once-a-week classes planned to include more activities to make the classroom more interesting and maintain students' concentration. It was also mentioned that the timing and amount of homework should be adjusted to the quarter system, though there are no specific examples of how this could be done. At least, this questionnaire item revealed that some of the instructors had tried to change their teaching methods and do something to address the challenges of the new system.

## DISCUSSION

The quarter system adopted at Hiroshima University has had an impact on how English instructors teach English classes depending on what patterns of classes they have. It is obvious from the responses to the questionnaire that the instructors came up with more disadvantages than advantages of the quarter system. This is because they are used to the semester system and do not feel very confident about teaching in the new system. As Chikada (2018) suggests, instructors may be at the stage where they are showing psychological resistance to accepting the new system and do not feel any benefits of it.

However, the comments on the new system include some essential issues. The biggest issue is that instructors taught less content and assigned less homework than before. Simply put, the same number of classes does not guarantee the same amount of learning. It is natural that if students have six days between classes, instructors will give a homework assignment which the students can do during the next six days. But if the students have only two or three days, the instructors will give less homework. This is also true for class preparation. Moreover, it influences the selection of textbooks. Instructors will choose a textbook with contents which the students can prepare for in two or three days rather than one which requires six days of preparation. This is more so for 180-minute classes where there are only eight class days and there is only a 15-minute break between two consecutive classes. This is a rational way for the instructors to deal with the new system, but such a decision will result in students learning less than in the semester system.

It is hoped that each instructor will continue to improve students' English skills in the quarter system as they did in the semester system, but more institutional efforts are needed if this is to be possible. As many instructors commented, one way is to return to the semester system. Alternatively, other types of quarter system could be adopted. For example, 100-minute once-a-week classes for 14 weeks may be one option.

Other than changing the academic system, reducing the number of students in each class may work. Productive skill classes, Communication IA and IIA, have a maximum of 35 students and receptive skills classes, Communication IB and IIB, have a maximum of 60 students. If the number is simply halved, 18 for productive skills and 30 for receptive skills, each class will be more intensive. Of course, the instructors need to adjust their teaching methods to make them more appropriate for the smaller number of students.

Reducing the class size may address some of the disadvantages raised by English instructors. For instance, low concentration may be improved by the smaller classes allowing instructors to oversee students more. As for grading, even for eight weeks, the smaller number of students would enable instructors to interact more with them. It may be easier for instructors to have make-up classes with a smaller number of students because there would be fewer students needing to agree on coming on the suggested make-up days. By reducing class size, it may be possible to keep the advantages of the present quarter system while overcoming many of its disadvantages.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has reported how English instructors feel about the quarter system which was newly adopted by Hiroshima University. Free narrative questionnaires showed that there were some positive comments regarding the new system. Of course, the advantages of the quarter system depend heavily on what patterns of classes the instructors have. 180-minute once-a-week classes enable the instructors to teach more intensive classes with rich texts; 90-minute twice-a-week classes enable the instructor to teach a class before the

students have forgotten what they learned in the last class. On the other hand, there are many more perceived disadvantages than advantages. The significant issue is that the instructors feel that the students learned less than they used to in the semester system. Some instructors said that the amount learned is 40-50% less. Some other issues are also related to students' learning, such as low concentration or the schedule of final exams. However, the instructors do not know how to tackle these issues because they are not of their own making, but are a consequence of adopting the new system. It is suggested that not only should the instructors themselves be encouraged to think of ways of solving the problems, but also that Hiroshima University can make efforts such as adopting different types of quarter system or reducing the size of classes.

## NOTE

- 1) This paper reports the class patterns in academic year 2018. From academic year 2020, liberal arts English classes for the second-year students, Communication IIIA, IIIB, and IIIC, are not offered except for a newly established school and course. Most of the students are required to take either 4 credits or 6 credits.
- 2) From academic year 2018, Communication Seminar I and II have been offered to some schools instead of Basic Communication I and II. Communication Seminar I and II are offered in 180-minute classes once a week for eight weeks.

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## ABSTRACT

### **The Impact on English Education of Adopting the Quarter System at Hiroshima University**

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This article reports the impact on English education of adopting a quarter system at Hiroshima University. First, the changes between the semester and quarter systems on course patterns are described in detail. Second, the English instructors' responses from the survey on the quarter system gathered in the spring semester are summarized. The advantages and disadvantages of the quarter system as well as ideas for improving the class for the fall semester are reported. The survey showed that the responses are closely related with the course patterns the instructors had. With one 180-minute class a week, the advantage was that they could teach more intensively and use a richer text in a class; however, the disadvantage was that the students could not concentrate for 180 minutes. As for the 90-minute class twice a week pattern, the advantage was that the next class came before the students had forgotten the content of the class; on the other hand, the disadvantage was that eight weeks was not long enough to build rapport with the students. Importantly, multiple instructors, regardless of the course patterns, said that the total amount of the students' learning was less in the quarter system than in the semester system. Some said that it was 40-50% less. It is also essential to point out that most instructors were struggling with adapting to this new system. Based on these results, ways of adopting different patterns of the quarter system as well as reducing class size are discussed.

## 要 約

### クォーター制導入の教養教育英語科目への影響

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本稿では、2018年度よりクォーター制が導入されたことによる広島大学教養教育英語科目への影響を報告する。まず、従来のセミスター制からクォーター制への移行により開講形態が3種類となったため、それぞれの開講形態について詳述する。その上で、2018年度前期に英語科目担当者から得たアンケートに基づき、クォーター制の良い点、悪い点、後期に向けての改善アイデア、その他の意見をまとめて報告する。アンケートから得られた意見は、開講形態と密接にかかわりがある。180分を週に1回開講する場合には、より濃い内容を一度のクラスで扱えることがクォーター制の良い点として挙げられる一方で、受講生の集中力が持続しにくいことなどが悪い点として挙げられている。また、90分を週2回で開講する場合には、授業間隔が短いので、授業内容を忘れる前に、次の授業を行えることが良い点であるが、8週と言う短い期間では受講生とのラポール形成がしにくいという点が悪い点として挙げられている。最も重要な点は、全体傾向として、セミスター制と比較して、クォーター制では、学習する量が減り、複数の教員が40～50%の低下と考えていることが分かった。この新しいシステムにおいては、導入がされたばかりで、教員が試行錯誤をしていることも明らかになった。これらの点を踏まえて、異なるクォーター制の導入やクラスサイズの縮小などを議論する。