

## A case for English only classes in the Faculty of International Tourism: Why and how

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## A case for English only classes in the Faculty of International Tourism: Why and how

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### *Abstract*

In the face of a number of external factors, including a shrinking population and the call for globalization, many universities are making efforts to develop their curriculums. This means offering subject classes in English, or ESP (English for Specific Purposes). In 2014, Toyo University was selected by the Japanese Ministry of Education as a recipient of funds under the Super Global University Project designed to promote global activities. Although the Faculty of International Tourism Management (ITM) at Toyo University has answered a number of calls to be more globalized, as yet, it has no ESP tourism curriculum. Creating such a curriculum can be a difficult process, but the benefits will accrue. This short paper sets out why ITM should have such a curriculum, what obstacles it needs to overcome for that and in what ways it could move towards that goal.

### *Introduction*

Since the start of this century, Japan has faced a number of significant problems. These include a stagnant economy, the devastation of the triple disaster in Tohoku, a population that is shrinking and ageing, and also competition from an increasingly globalization-driven collection of Asian countries including India, Korea and China (Agawa, 2011). Globalization itself has been defined as:

the widening, deepening and speeding up of all worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life (Held, 1999).

Against this backdrop, the Japanese government began to promote its own globalization. For universities, this meant looking for alternative places to draw students from. This prompted some universities to emphasize internationalization leading to curriculum development and making programs that would be appealing to both Japanese students while at the same time attempting to promote programs to students from abroad who could study in Japan. In turn, the goal of increasing the number of international students became important for many universities ((Rivers 2010). Activities at the university level included the creation of classes in foreign languages and offering university students improved opportunities for international exchanges and experiences (Takagi, 2015).

To support these efforts, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) carried out a project called Super Global University Project (MEXT, 2015). This project offered

financial support to universities to promote educational reform under two types of initiatives. Type A recognized 13 universities that were researching and providing education at a “world-leading” level. On top of that, Type B recognized 24 universities that were pushing for the globalization of Japanese society. As part of the project, these universities were to set about following a number of different guidelines, including sending more students abroad, and increasing the enrolment of study abroad students in Japan. As for the curriculum, the goals stipulated an increase in subjects taught in foreign languages as well as the development of English syllabi.

Toyo University was chosen as one of the universities under the Type B of the Super Global University Project. Since that time it has expanded the number of study abroad opportunities, and brought an increasing number of overseas students to its campuses through the UMAP (University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific) and ISEP (International Student exchange program) systems. Further, it has set up a separate faculty called Global Innovation Studies offering undergraduate courses in English.

The Faculty of International Tourism (ITM) at Toyo has also made steps to increase overseas internships and field study tours. However, as yet, the faculty has not set up courses teaching tourism in English beyond the standard foreign language curriculum. This short paper offers an argument why it is important to offer specialist tourism courses, or ESP (English for Specific Purposes) in English only and what considerations would need to be made to bring that about.

### ***A need for ESP classes at ITM***

One of the first reasons is related to the timing of changes planned for pre-university education. Along with the tests made by individual universities themselves, the Centre Test (*sentashikenn*) has been the main test that decided which university students could enter. However, from 2020 the test will be renamed the Daigaku Nyugaku Kyotsu Test (or roughly translated to The University Entrance Common Test). These tests are a battery of different forms of tests, including spoken tests, which it is hoped will assess powers of thinking, judgment and expression, and lead to changes in high school teaching methods (McCrostie, 2017). This causal journey from test to teaching has been called the washback effect and is important because it encourages

“...a natural tendency for both teachers and students to tailor their classroom activities to the demands of the test, especially when the test is very important to the future of the students,”  
(Buck 1988, p. 17).

In other words, by improving the quality of testing, it could lead to an improvement in teaching methods, and ultimately the development of students with superior English skills.

Some of the tests that could be used for entrance exams are the TOEFL test and IELTS. Lowe (2019) states that the reforms will bring about an improvement in productive (speaking and writing) modes of English. Bailey (1999) provides examples of the washback effect of the computerized version of the TOEFL test in various settings. With the right testing in place, changes could be seen in English language pedagogy at many high schools.

In the academic year 2019 ITM brought in 47 students out of 366 through the Center Test, amounting to 12% of the student body. This might not be as large as other entrance methods. However, this still represents a fertile pool of students who could benefit from ESP classes at ITM because of changes in high school English teaching methods.

Students coming into the university may have higher levels of English proficiency, but the ITM curriculum may have an effect on students' English ability. The second reason for wanting to institute tourism classes in English at ITM is that the current curriculum appears to be raising the scores of students on rankings and proficiency tests. The ITM *Hensachi* (university ratings) has increased from 47.5 over ten years ago to its current level of 57.5. Further, after two years of compulsory faculty English classes, and access to other English classes provided by Toyo University, the average increase on the TOEIC Test of students is around 80 points. Among the ITM student body are 24 or so students from the first and second year who have TOEIC scores over 785, which corresponds to level B2 of the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR). At this level students...

“...can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization,” (Erasmus University, 2019).

This number of 24 or so students is sufficient to make a course that offers specialized classes in English as a cohort. The current curriculum may not be able to meet the needs of such students. Scholars have found that course contents can be one demotivating factor for Japanese learners (Falout & Falout, 2005). This means that there may always be a group of higher proficiency students that need and can benefit from the challenge that a specialized tourism course in English could bring.

The third reason is related to the overseas affiliate schools that ITM is currently contracted with for short-term study of either one or two semesters. As present, ITM has agreements with three schools located in China, South Korea and Taiwan, but enlarging this number is planned over the coming year. These partner schools were chosen because they have tourism departments or faculties, and as such are not strictly focused on Japanese language study. Naturally, there will be students in those institutions that wish to further their Japanese language studies, but at present without Japanese language proficiency these students are unable to come to our university in large numbers. If ITM offers courses in English, students sent from these foreign universities can receive credits for their own university courses, as well as learn subjects in English.

In general, the number of students coming to Japan has increased from most countries in Asia. For example, JASSO (2019) reported South Korea and China saw increases from 2016 to 2017 in the number of students enrolled in short-term university programs at 23.01% and 17.1% respectively. Indeed, the author has found that many other universities in western countries would be very interested in studying at ITM but for the fact that no subjects in English are available.

Lastly, ITM needs ESP classes in order to survive. As previously mentioned, the shrinking pool of Japanese students and, on top of that, the pressure from international rankings make the job of filling quotas increasingly difficult (Sauzier-Uchida 2017). Many of the top-tier universities like Waseda University have been increasing the number of courses taught in English. Waseda's plan is to have 50%

of courses taught in English at undergraduate by 2032 (Waseda University, 2012). Further, over fifty Japanese graduate schools offer courses in English (MEXT, 2012). However, it is not only top-tier universities or graduate schools, but undergraduate universities that actually figure below Toyo University on the national ranking (Toyo is ranked 47) also creating English subject courses. International Christian University (ranked 69), and Musashino University at 157, have both established subject courses in English. Toyo and ITM may be left behind in the race to create more of such courses.

### ***Issues surrounding formation of ESL classes at ITM***

Some of outcomes of the Japanese education system are in conflict with those institutions wishing to create or companies hoping to employ global human resources, “*gurobaru jinzai*.” According to Hosoki (2011), these include a deference to authority which leads to developing only passive skills and an inability for learners to develop their own learning strategies. Hosoki also claims there is an atmosphere which limits students’ showing superior skills or abilities in front of their peers, as well as the notion that there only one correct answer exists, which can be a barrier to developing communication skills.

Although exam reform is planned for high schools, there are still obstacles mentioned above with regard to English education taught at high schools. Browne and Kikuchi (2009) researched to what degree classroom practice supports the English for communicative purposes as stipulated by the Course of Study Guidelines set by MEXT. It was found that the majority of students in that study were not taught basic communication skills or given opportunities for discussion, and, in fact, the teaching of passive skills for the university entrance test were still prevalent. Critics of the education system have claimed that attempts at globalization have been half-hearted and these keep learners and teaching at university in a comfortable mother-tongue zone (Sauzier-Uchida, 2017, p. 11). It is clear that the condition at which students arrive into ITM from high school could play a role in the success of an ESP-based curriculum.

Thus, attention should be given to the way that students classes are taught. That means keeping students stimulated and active through discussions and presentations. It also means making sure that the students become more autonomous learners. Such learners take responsibility for their learning (Holec, 1981). Having students become more autonomous is essential if they are to study abroad on their own in the future, and will need to develop their own strategies for coping in that environment. However, previous research in ITM has shown that just simply asking students to do more work or become more active out of class is not enough (Robson & Hardy, 2018). Compromises in the way the assessment is made should take into consideration out of class efforts.

Care must also be taken with the learning environment for students who would potentially take a tourism major in English. That means smaller class sizes. At present English classes are around 25-30 students on average per class. This is certainly not as high as other faculties, but nowhere near the optimum size for teaching ESL of eight students (Moroi, 2014).

The English language curriculum should also support majors in English. That means that potentially

the number of compulsory English language classes should be increased from its present value of two per week. By doing so, it offers students the opportunity to join an English major in the second year should their proficiency rise sufficiently.

The next source of conflict could be the teachers in ITM. After Toyo was chosen for the Type B Project, one of the conditions for hiring new teachers was that they should teach in English. In that vein, teachers must conduct a 15-minute mock lesson as part of their interview. Problems may arise when asking for teachers who would be willing to teach in English, and it is unknown to what extent such teachers would try to avoid traditional teaching methods employed at Japanese high schools. Sauzier-Uchida (2017) reported that English ability of teachers assigned to teach their courses in English at Waseda University were insufficient to teach to international students. Sauzier-Uchida reports that there is a prevalent image that espouses:

“English has been regarded as a subject to study, not the vehicle through which to study content specific subjects, as in the EMI program,” (p. 11).

Finally, the workload should be taken into consideration. Planning a curriculum and finding appropriate materials to use on an ESP course takes time. Asking part-time teachers, who may already have busy schedules to create English courses from scratch, would be a tall order. Further, asking full-time teachers to teach English classes on top of classes they teach also leads to overwork. Concessions in the existing curriculum need to be made in order to accommodate these classes.

### ***Bringing about ESP classes***

To begin thinking about what a curriculum with ESP classes would look like, a needs analysis is necessary. Needs analysis can be described as activities that are involved in collecting information to act as the basis for curriculum development to meet the needs of particular group of students (Iwai, Kondo, Limm, Ray, Shimizu, & Brown (1999). Naturally, it is not easy to just build a curriculum from the ground up as curriculum design and production of learning objectives are greatly affected by external forces (Yonezawa, Akiba, & Horiuchi, 2009). At the very minimum, Breen and Candlin (2001) recommend addressing three questions: What is to be learned? How is the learning to be undertaken and achieved? To what extent is the former appropriate and the latter effective?

As regards the “what” , which should take into account needs analysis, objectives setting and evaluation (Berger, 2012), it is incumbent on the teachers involved, with help of the administration, and input from language teachers, on matters of pedagogy to create such a program. Indeed, in the Waseda program Sauzier-Uchida (2017), reported that four language specialist and four subject teachers collaborated to create a textbook for the program. Unless teachers work together to create the curriculum, it will have the feeling of top-down and those involved will be less invested in the idea.

The answer also lies with the students themselves who will have desires and expectations about what they can learn in order to work towards future goals. It also lies in what the competition in the form of other tourism faculties with ESP classes are teaching. Simply copying outright what other institutions

teach will not answer the needs. Subject teachers, however, will have the greatest insights on what should be taught both through their professional experience and knowledge of the field. It is clear that all groups would need to work together with a spirit of co-operation in order to bring about ESP classes. This also means collaborating on Faculty Development (FD) to continually bring all teachers involved up to a recognized level of professionalism as well as workshops for professional development in the area.

The “how” question can be answered in different ways, but the primary focus should be away from creating passive learners, and instead address the meaning of the content through discussion and more learner-focused teaching. In ESP a number of methodologies are espoused. One of which has gained traction is Task-based Instruction (TBI). TBI uses authentic language and content and requires students to undertake meaning-focused tasks in the classroom. Ellis (2003) states certain criteria that distinguish tasks, which include:

1. a primary focus on (pragmatic) meaning.
2. some kind of ‘gap’
3. learners choosing the language they need to complete the task
4. a clearly defined, non-linguistic outcome.

Examples of tasks include listing, ordering, problem solving, sharing personal experience, comparing and contrasting and creative tasks (Willis, 1996). These put primacy on meaning, and can be used for teaching content in ESP classes. Studies have shown that TBI is effective in delivering content courses. It was found that university students in China felt that TBI had improved all of their four skills in English (Wu, Liao & DeBacker, 2016) and was superior to traditional methods in learning vocabulary with Iranian university students (Sarani & Sahebi, 2012).

Creating autonomous learners is also necessary for a new ESP curriculum in ITM. In fact, some believe that developing autonomous learning could be one of the most important goals in the educational field (Sakai & Takagi, 2009). That includes making resources available in English for students to use, but also having students actually use the materials available is important. Robson and Hardy (2018) advocate for using the application of Littlewood’s (1999) concept of reactive autonomy in which the students are not given complete autonomy of their learning, but are “pushed” with teachers setting guidelines for out-of-class learning before students take action. This includes recognizing out of class work as part of the grade. In an attempt to encourage autonomy, ITM has instituted students taking part in lunchtime sessions and writing reports on their out of class activities as part of class grades. Both have shown to have engendered a high interest and expose students to situations that they may not have encountered had they been left to their own devices.

A further pedagogical issue connected to how to teach is the use of questions employed by the teacher. Hughes (2007) outlines the connection between questions that a teacher asks and levels of information processing required by students. He states that referential questions, those where the information is unknown, as compared to comprehension or display questions where the answer is known, should be used. Through questioning, teachers can create situations where students address higher-order thinking

skills such as analyzing and evaluating, both of which appear in Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of educational objectives.

Finally, is the questions of "who", as in who will teach the courses. This should be full-time teachers, unless there are part-time teachers that currently teach classes in English at ITM or other faculties / universities. Different from part-time teachers, full-time teachers can work to develop the curriculum, which would take time. It is also necessary that those teachers that do take part have their teaching load in Japanese-based courses lightened to compensate for the ESP classes. In this situation, part-time teachers can be employed to cover the classes that would have been given in Japanese.

## **Conclusion**

To address the competition from other universities, alleviate the impact of changing Japanese demographics, and answer the call of globalization, it is necessary for ITM to implement subject classes in English, or ESP. However, this is a major undertaking, and care should be taken with the way that the courses are taught, and who should teach them. Teachers on such a course need to move from a teacher-focused pedagogy to one that is more student-centered and encourages student discussion of the content meaning. Having content courses taught in English can open the door to international students and build the prestige of the faculty (Brown & Iyobe, 2014). It is clear that all stakeholders should work together to achieve the ultimate goal of having an ESP-based curriculum.

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## 国際学部における英語による講義の一事例

ロブソン・グライアム

人口減少や、グローバル化などさまざまな外的要因により、多くの大学ではカリキュラム改革に着手しつつある。これらの改革の一つとして、英語により教授される講義や特定の目的のための英語の講義である ESP (English for Specific Purposes) などが行われている。2014 年に東洋大学は文部科学省により、グローバル化を推進させるためのスーパーグローバル大学プロジェクトの下で、補助金の受給大学に選定された。東洋大学国際観光学部では、よりグローバル化を推進させる要請があるが、いまだ ESP の観光カリキュラムは存在していない。そのようなカリキュラムを策定することは困難な過程を伴うが、利点も多い。本研究では、なぜ国際観光学部がそのようなカリキュラムを持つべきなのか、カリキュラムの策定において何が障壁であるか、いかなる方法でそのゴールを達成できるのかについて明らかにする。