**Going global:**

How a Japanese University is revolutionising English-language learning

The English language is the closest thing to a global language experienced so far in human history. Whilst it was arguably Britain’s imperial and industrial colonisation that spread and institutionalised English across the world between the 17th and 20th centuries, it has been the dominance of American culture and economics in the last century that has consolidated this trend (Mastin, 2011). There are an estimated 360 million native English speakers in the world and 1.5 billion speakers in total. It is the most commonly studied foreign language globally (Lyons, 2017). In the fields of science, business, medicine, education, research, politics and entertainment, many would argue that English has become the undisputed lingua franca. What does this mean for countries where English is not the first language? It means that English-language acquisition is critical for those wanting to travel, work, and live internationally.

**ENGLISH IN JAPAN**

In Japan, the teaching and assessment of people's English-language competency has become as important as anywhere else where English is not the first language. At the forefront of the drive for the education, testing, and evidencing of English-language skills is Professor Hajime Nishitani, Professor of Law at Hiroshima University, where he also serves as Vice Executive for the Top Global University Project. Professor Nishitani has been working with internationally renowned experts on the assessment of international education and is currently exploring mediators and moderators of English language acquisition and the relative impact of study abroad programmes on students' language proficiency. By carrying out quantitative and qualitative research into English-language competency across the university faculties, Professor Nishitani hopes to be able to identify where the global education structure is failing students, which learning programmes are most successful, and why some students score better than others overall in testing, all with the aim of improving students' chances of success. Since 2008, Hiroshima University has used the TOEIC Institutional Program (IP) Test to assess the English proficiency (both listening and reading) of all students. Entrance examination scores are used by the university to create target score graphs in order to allow a comparison of each student's abilities at enrolment and throughout their studies. It has been noted in the last few years, however, that students' language skills are not improving as hoped, with some students actually receiving lower scores a year after their studies have begun. A wide variation of scores between faculties and departments has also been recorded, with some score patterns repeating over more than one year, indicating potential worrying downward trends. Professor Nishitani’s research specifically aims to understand why and how these scores are occurring, whether the IP Score is too broad a framework and what might be done to improve the TOEIC IP scores of Hiroshima University students.

**A NEW APPROACH**

In order to clarify which kind of students were improving while others were not and why, Professor Nishitani uses a grounded theory and mixed methods assessment measure called the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI) (Shawly, 2016). The BEVI is a powerful analytical tool that can show the capacity of an individual student's interest toward "sociocultural openness" and "global resonance" among other aspects of how individuals experience self, others, and the larger world. Using BEVI scales, Professor Nishitani was able to survey nearly 2,400 individual students, drawing lines and reading relationships between various factors including a student's psychological characteristics, department, faculty, gender, type of educational programme and English proficiency. Analysis of the survey data showed that a "one size fits all" method of educating and testing students with regards to their English-language skills is not universally effective and may in fact be counterproductive. For Professor Nishitani’s study, “openness to experiences” is defined by scales and scores such as being high in global resonance and sociocultural openness, and low in gender traditionalism and basic determinism (for more information about

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**English-language acquisition is critical for those wanting to travel, work, and live internationally.**

Number of students with TOEIC 730 and above
Professor Nishitani’s research focuses on the mediators and moderators of global engagement in general and English language proficiency in particular.

**Research Objectives**

Professor Hajime Nishitani believes that the key is in treating all students as individuals and tailoring their English-language education according to their differences.

**GLOBAL EDUCATION**

In a world in which international travel, business, and education seem set to continue to increase in significance and in which the English language is the most common medium of communication, it is vital that non-English speaking countries find the best ways to educate and test young people in English. Educators and institutions represent a particular opportunity and hold a particular responsibility to act as mediators and moderators of English language acquisition in countries like Japan, and in the case of Hiroshima University, they have certainly stepped up to the plate. In fact, Professor Nishitani’s research, results, and the following educational measures have already caused a stir, and together with the creator of the BEVI, Professor Craig Shealy, he has been invited to give a workshop on the topic by the American Council on Education and in other venues. Whilst the world grows smaller and globalisation continues to shape our lives, it seems safe to assume that it is those who are most globally competent and open to new experiences who will be the ones who survive and prosper.

**Distribution of BEVI scores by faculties and departments at Hiroshima University.**

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**References**


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**Personal Response**

What will your workshop on this topic focus on and what do you hope to teach others about global education and English-language learning?

BEVI is adopted as a tool to measure collaborative online international learning (COIL). And I/we are going to give seminars this weekend and also next weekend.

This weekend: Assessing Student Learning through COIL. And I/we are going to give seminars this weekend and also next weekend.

Next weekend: Understanding Students’ Transformational Learning.

COIL is explained at the following url: https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/US-Japan- COIL_Initiative.aspx

For further information, visit: http://www.kansai-u.jp/KyushuACIE/