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Preparing the Seigakuin English Program (SEP) for the 21st Century

Evert D. Osburn

Introduction

Officially inaugurated on April 1, 1996 after a three-year process of research and development, the Seigakuin English Program (SEP) is a campus-wide, interdepartmental English program which is required of all matriculating students at Seigakuin University in Ageo. It is the culmination of an effort undertaken in recognition of the necessity of significant revision of the English programs which had been in place at both the University and Joshi Seigakuin Junior College and in light of the changing educational climate in Japan at the close of this century as a result of demographics and economics.

The higher educational system in Japan is becoming increasingly competitive, a fact which has caused administrators at many institutions to reevaluate their programs. As part of this process, it has been particularly helpful for developers at Seigakuin to evaluate the situation in consideration of the guidelines which secondary school students use when selecting prospective universities, as summarized by this writer in Table 1.

It is critical when perusing these criteria to be cognizant of the fact that the three tiers are of particular significance, each level being ranked in order of importance. In other words, the factors listed under Tier 1 are more relevant in the minds of most high school students than those under Tier 2, which are in turn themselves of more import than the criteria found in Tier 3.

When Seigakuin University was analyzed by this writer, it was

concluded that the school was uncompetitive according to the criteria in Tier 1 and that it was only marginally competitive at best in any of the remaining five areas in Tiers 2 and 3. Furthermore, it was concluded that some factors would either take much too long to improve upon (prestige, future job prospects, and “hensachi” ratings, for example), or were simply beyond developers’ ability to change (e.g., facilities, campus life, and location).

Thus, it was determined that the best areas in which to concentrate our efforts were those of special programs and curriculum. A concerted effort to significantly improve both the English and the study abroad programs at Seigakuin University was therefore set upon, culminating in the current Seigakuin English Program and the Seigakuin English Abroad (SEA) program. It is the sincere hope of the writer that these programs will assist in making Seigakuin University competitive and effective in the 21st century, a century in which it is certain that English will play a major role in international business, diplomacy, and cultural exchanges.

Table 1: Student Criteria for University Selection

Tier 1

1. Prestige and reputation
2. Future job prospects
3. “Hensachi” (Japanese standard deviation) ratings

Tier 2

4. Specialty programs (e.g., computer science at the Keio University Fujisawa campus)
5. Facilities
6. Campus life

Tier 3

7. Curriculum (e.g., unique department, high quality curriculum design)
8. Location

Features of the SEP

Although the SEP and the SEA programs are considered to be interrelated and both vital to the success of Seigakuin University in the 21st century, it is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into the details of the latter. Focusing attention upon the SEP, then, it may be beneficial if a brief outline of the primary components is provided for those readers unfamiliar with the program as a whole.

Summary of the Structure of the SEP

Since English is the internationally preeminent language at this time and will remain so in the foreseeable future, one of the educational keystones of preparing for the 21st century is the development of conversational English fluency. It is toward this end that Seigakuin designed the current one-year program of communicative English, the SEP, whose primary goal is to increase the proficiency of all of its first-year students and prepare them for further pursuits in English.

The three major components of the SEP are *placement*, *instruction*, and *evaluation*. The first of these, *placement*, is done during New Student Orientation Week before classes begin. All freshmen are required to take the Secondary Level English Proficiency (SLEP) test, an exam developed and utilized in the United States to test non-native speakers of English in American high school programs.

Based on the results of the SLEP placement test, students are entered in one of the three levels of instruction in the freshman

SEP. The program levels, proficiency goals, and vocabulary goals of each are in Table 2.

English Program Level	Proficiency Goal	Vocabulary Goal (highest frequency words)
Program A	Intermediate High	2,500 words, SEP Master List
Program B	Intermediate Mid	2,000 words, SEP Master List
Program C	Intermediate Low	1,500 words, SEP Master List

Of course, the overall goal for the entire SEP, regardless of the particular level, is to bring every student to the level of English proficiency at which s/he will have the necessary skills to survive in an English-speaking environment. In addition to this, students at the highest level gain skills useful in pursuing further academic studies in English. It is to these ends that the syllabi for the SEP were carefully prepared.

A key component of the SEP that makes it unique among most English curricula at the college level is its incorporation of high-frequency vocabulary building into the program. Extensive research has been done at the Seigakuin University General Research Institute on the importance of vocabulary building in language learning and on the selection of high frequency English vocabulary. The result of this effort is the SEP Master Vocabulary List, which contains the 3,000 highest frequency words used in spoken English (Osburn, 1998). Students who learn the first 2,000 of these may be able to recognize up to approximately 80% of what they hear or read, while students who master all 3,000 words could reach the 90% recognition level!

Once students are placed in their respective programs (Program A, B, or C), the second component of the SEP, *instruction*, begins. Each of the native-speaking teachers in the SEP is

committed to providing Seigakuin's students with the best possible English instruction during each of the two 90-minute classes held per week. During these classes, lecturers employ the communicative, student-centered approach to language learning, with a focus on helping students to develop their English proficiency and fluency.

The two language skills deemed most necessary to achieve conversational fluency, the productive skill of *speaking* and the receptive skill of *listening*, are emphasized in the SEP curriculum. A needs analysis of the entire Seigakuin Ageo campus in 1995 revealed that 81% of all students felt that speaking and listening were the two language skills they were most likely to use after graduation, with only 19% choosing reading or writing as vital to their future language requirements (Osburn, 1995, p. 26).

Vocabulary building is integrated into each of the three levels of the SEP and is an important part of each teacher's class. However, vocabulary is not learned in isolation in the SEP. Rather, extensive effort has been made to ensure that highly useful vocabulary is learned in the context of the lesson being taught. Students are encouraged to actually practice *using* the words they learn in meaningful contexts.

The third major component of the SEP, *evaluation*, is a process that occurs continuously throughout each semester. Traditional methods of evaluation are naturally utilized, but an integral part of the SEP evaluation process is the use of non-traditional oral prochievement tests. Evaluation in the SEP is based not only upon preparation, attendance, participation, and written examinations, but also on oral interviews designed around material covered in the class. Students must therefore actually *produce* the English which has been learned and activated in the course, something which is quite unusual for the vast majority of students coming out of their high school English

programs.

There is much more that could be said about the structure of the SEP, of course, but attention will now be turned to the accomplishments of the program as the end of its third year approaches.

Competitive Strengths of the SEP

The bottom line when evaluating the success of any language program is in the level of tangible results obtained by the students involved. In order to convince administration, faculty, and any prospective students of the utility of the program and, most importantly, to be considered successful by the language learners immersed in it, the program must be able to offer meaningful evidence that it is producing the intended results and meeting its goals.

Overall evaluation in the entire SEP is done primarily through the instruments of 1) pre-/post-SLEP tests; 2) pre/post/Vocabulary Levels Tests; 3) student questionnaires at the end of the year; and 4) mid-year teacher evaluations. By employing four program-wide instruments of evaluation, one of which is a norm-referenced test produced completely independently of Seigakuin (the SLEP test, created in 1980 by the Educational Testing Service in Princeton, New Jersey), the institution can obtain a fair assessment of the actual utility of the key components of the SEP.

SLEP Test Results

As aforementioned, a SLEP test is administered to all SEP students upon their matriculation in Seigakuin University. The dual purpose of this first test is to act as a placement instrument and as an instrument with which post-test SLEP scores from the test given at the end of the school year can be compared.

Tables 3 and 4 below depict the comparative results of the SLEP tests given to all of the SEP students at Seigakuin University and Joshi Seigakuin Jr. College at the beginning and end of the 1996 and 1997 school years. Equivalency scores are also provided for the TOEFL and TOEIC tests. (See Appendix: Chart 1 for approximate SLEP/TOEFL/TOEIC equivalency scores.)

Table 3: 1996 SLEP Test Scores—All Departments Combined

	APRIL 1996						JANUARY 1997					
	Score Averages			Highest Score			Score Averages			Highest Score		
	SLEP	TOEFL	TOEIC	SLEP	TOEFL	TOEIC	SLEP	TOEFL	TOEIC	SLEP	TOEFL	TOEIC
All Depts	32	305.3	183.4	49	460	495	36.3	344.5	254.5	54	510	620

(Japanese Literature majors excluded)

Avg. TOEFL increase \approx 39 pts.
 Highest TOEFL increase \approx 160 pts.
 Avg. TOEIC increase \approx 71 pts.
 Highest TOEIC increase \approx 285 pts.,

Table 4: 1997 SLEP Test Scores—All Departments Combined

	APRIL 1997						JANUARY 1998					
	Score Averages			Highest Score			Score Averages			Highest Score		
	SLEP	TOEFL	TOEIC	SLEP	TOEFL	TOEIC	SLEP	TOEFL	TOEIC	SLEP	TOEFL	TOEIC
All Depts	32.4	308.8	183.7	57	540	700	36.7	348.9	257.5	57	540	700

(Japanese Literature majors excluded)

Avg. TOEFL increase \approx 40 pts.
 Highest TOEFL increase \approx 160 pts.
 Avg. TOEIC increase \approx 74 pts.
 Highest TOEIC increase \approx 285 pts.,

It is of particular interest to note that in both years the average increase in TOEFL equivalency points was almost identical: 39 vs. 40 points. The consistency is most encouraging, considering that over 600 students were involved in the SEP each year. (The Junior College's Japanese Literature majors, who were required to take only one semester of the SEP, are excluded from the tables above. However, their average improvement was precisely 23 TOEFL equivalency points for both 1996 and 1997.)

Of course, the tables only reflect the average increases for the whole SEP. In fact, approximately 48 of the University and Junior College students improved 100 or more points in 1996, with 32 students doing so in 1997. In both years, the greatest improvement on the part of an individual student was 160 points.

Much more detail is available on the SLEP/TOEFL scores of students in the SEP if the reader should be inclined to pursue it further, but perhaps it is sufficient here to simply conclude that there is consistent evidence of a significant improvement in proficiency on the part of most students who have completed one year of the SEP.

Vocabulary Test Results

An in-house Vocabulary Levels Test, based upon the 3,000-word SEP Master Vocabulary List of highest frequency words in spoken English, is administered as a pre-/post-test to all SEP students on the first and last day of classes. Space precludes detailed analysis of those results, but it should at least be pointed out that the only complete data available, that for 1996, indicates an overall increase in vocabulary knowledge of 16% across the board, with Program A posting an impressive 22% improvement rate.

SEP Student Questionnaire Results

A 25-item questionnaire was jointly developed by the administration and staff of the SEP in 1996, as it was recognized early on that student satisfaction is critical to the success of the program. The three main headings on the questionnaire are "SEP as a Whole," "Evaluation of Your Learning in the SEP," and "Time and Emphasis Given to Various Activities."

Representative of the results of the questionnaires in 1996 and 1997 are the students' responses to the important items "SEP as a Whole" (Question A12) and "Motivation" (Question B18) in

the 1997 SEP. Of 449 respondents, 268 (59.7%) rated the whole SEP as “good” or “very good, ” with another 143 students (31.8%) considering it to be “average.” Only 14 students (3.1%) responded negatively, with another 22 (4.9%) expressing “no opinion” and two students simply not responding.

Student motivation, the key to making real progress, is an important gauge of any language program’s success. Approximately 75% of the respondents to the 1997 SEP Questionnaire claimed that their motivation levels had “improved” or “improved a lot” in just one year, with the other quarter expressing that their motivation levels had not improved. Considering that many students were already disaffected with English when they arrived on campus, however, the fact that 3/4 of the entire freshman class were more motivated to study English at the end of only one year of the SEP was a significant indicator of the program’s success in the minds of the students.

SEP Teacher Evaluations

Each year the director of the SEP formally requests that all teachers in the SEP turn in their evaluations of the program in the middle of Spring Semester. The director, William Kroehler, tabulated the results for the 1998 SEP on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highest, and then distributed them, along with teacher/director comments, at the weekly SEP teachers’ meeting (Table 5).

Table 5: Mid-Semester Evaluation of the [1998] SEP

<u>Category</u>	<u>Teacher Rating</u>
Classes in General	4.4
Student Placement	4.4
Vocab Component	4.0
Textbook	3.8
Overall Evaluation	3.8

Attendance	Student	3.7
Motivation		3.7
SEP Meetings		3.7

(Kroehler, 1998, p. 1)

Quite substantially, teachers rated the 1998 program, then in its third year, at approximately the level of 4 on the average, which may be interpreted as “good,” but not “excellent.” This is encouraging in the sense that the program is regarded as good by those most closely involved in its implementation, but there is awareness that curriculum development is an ongoing process and, as such, requires constant reevaluation and improvement.

Conclusion of Evaluative Devices

The SLEP test, Vocabulary Levels Test, student questionnaire, and teacher evaluation results taken in combination provide solid evidence that the SEP is producing desirable results and is certainly moving in a positive direction. Given the relative briefness of the program, the facts that it has already established itself as a positive aspect of the curriculum at Seigakuin University (with which the Junior College has merged) and has been acclaimed by educators from other institutions (Nihon University, for example), coupled with the acceptance and support of the administration and the substantial gains posted in TOEFL equivalency scores, the SEP may be considered to be competitive when compared with English language programs on many other university campuses in Japan.

The Next Phase: Coordination of the SEP with Other Classes

Positive results have been obtained by the three-year-old SEP, as has been discussed above. Nevertheless, there is a significant hurdle which must be overcome if Seigakuin is going to realize

its full potential as an innovator in the area of English language education at the university level in the early 21st century, viz., the program must necessarily be coordinated with other sequences of English classes on campus. This is not an option but is in fact essential to the establishment of a competitive edge for Seigakuin in the area of English language curricula in the years ahead.

The current condition of the SEP is that it is essentially a first-year oral English program, and that is where it stops. It stands to reason that students, though they are improving upon their oral proficiency through the SEP, would be able to show substantially more gains if all of the English classes on campus were working in tandem towards the same goals and objectives, from the first year through the third or possibly into the fourth year.

As it now stands, the SEP is required of all freshmen, as are English Reading and Language Lab (LL), both the latter of which undoubtedly contributed to the improvements recorded in the testing done in the SEP. In their sophomore year, only students in the Euro-American Studies and Japanese Culture Studies Departments are required to take any courses among the Academic English I and II, Business English I and II, or Culture English I and II offerings. These classes are entirely optional for students in the Economics and Political Science, Child Studies, and Human Welfare Departments, and the third-year courses of Academic, Business, and Culture English III are elective for all students.

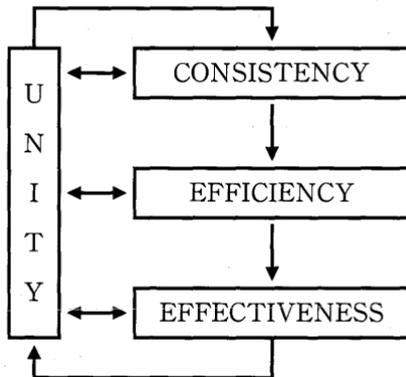
Thus, of the approximately 110 English classes available at Seigakuin University (Terada, 1998, pg. 1), only 34 (including repeater and honors courses), or 31%, are part of the SEP, and, up to this point, there has been virtually no coordination between classes in the SEP and those outside of it. Of particular concern are the statistics concerning the Academic, Business, and Cul-

ture (ABC) English sequences. While 487 students enrolled in those courses during 1997, the year of their inauguration, that number has declined to 193 in 1998, which amounts to a 60% reduction in one year.

In view of the current situation, it is proposed that administrators, faculty, and staff at Seigakuin University and the Seigakuin University General Research Institute consider implementing phase two of the English curriculum revision, which entails coordinating the SEP with other classes. This is a major undertaking, of course, and would require *cooperation* and *organization* in order to succeed, but the effort would undoubtedly prove to be of benefit to the school and its students in the long term.

The key to producing the most effective English curriculum possible at Seigakuin University, one that will put the institution on the cutting edge in the beginning of the 21st century, is *unity*, which means that people within the organization cooperate with one another and share common goals and purposes. In the "Curriculum Outcomes Model" in Figure 1, the component of unity is shown to be what ties together the other desirable characteristics of *consistency*, *efficiency*, and *effectiveness* in the curriculum development process.

Figure 1: Curriculum Outcome Model



(Pennington and Brown, 1991, p. 67)

The degree to which these four characteristics are embodied in the Seigakuin English curriculum will determine its ultimate success or failure in the next century. As is evident in the Model, unity is the essential ingredient, as it “provides a foundation within a language program for achieving the other desirable outcomes of consistency, efficiency, and effectiveness” (Pennington and Brown, p. 66). Each of the four items in the Model may be considered as indicators of excellence or criteria for evaluation of a curriculum, but it is unity which binds everything together.

This being established and its importance emphasized, the remainder of this paper will focus on specific proposals designed to facilitate the coordination and efficacy of the Seigakuin University English curriculum.

15-Step Plan for Program Integration

The following fifteen steps, should they be adopted partially or in their entirety, would enable the school to work towards the establishment of a highly effective English language program. The first ten of the fifteen steps in the plan are categorized as educational in orientation, whereas the remaining five steps are primarily administrative in nature.

Educational Steps

Step One: Set clear goals for all of the English courses and coordinate them with each other.

Brown makes the assertion that “the process of defining goals makes the curriculum developers and participants consider, or reconsider, the program’s purposes with specific reference to what the students should be able to do when they leave the program” (Brown, 1995, p. 72). While individual courses may have specific goals set by teachers, in order to have a successful

program campus-wide it is imperative that each of the major sequences have achievable goals and that these goals are coordinated with those of related English classes.

For example, if the current SEP (oral English), reading, and language lab sequences were all working towards the same proficiency goals, the overall effectiveness of each individual course would naturally increase, since what was being focused upon in oral classes would be reinforced in the reading and listening classes, and vice versa, thereby increasing the consistency, efficiency, and effectiveness of the first-year English program at Seigakuin.

Although the Academic, Business, and Culture (ABC) track of courses are for second-year students and are more English for Specific Purpose (ESP) oriented, broad proficiency goals could still be laid out for each of those, goals which are built upon what students had accomplished in their freshman year.

Of course, one of the difficulties in delineating goals for any program, and something which the developers of the SEP struggled with, is simply in defining what proficiency is and what a language student at a particular level should be expected to accomplish. It is suggested that the proficiency guidelines established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in 1986 be adopted as the starting point for creating goals for the various sequences of English courses at Seigakuin. While not perfect, these guidelines have proved to be most useful in the setting of goals for the SEP.

A note of caution is in order, though. It must be pointed out that the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are not goal statements in and of themselves. Medley, in describing the goal development process within a curriculum, states, "The task of the curriculum developer is to somehow translate these broad level descriptions [i.e., the ACTFL Guidelines] first into general goal statements, and then into much more specific performance outcome state-

ments for each year or semester of instruction” (Medley in Hadley, 1993, p. 482).

The three components of proficiency, content (the topics of communication), function (a task), and accuracy (correctness in appropriateness in pronunciation, vocabulary choice, grammar, writing, and culture), must be taken into consideration whenever goals are established, and the ACTFL Guidelines provide descriptions of what each of these components entails at each level of language ability. Although the Guidelines cannot be taken as goal statements, as cautioned, they can fairly easily be translated into such.

The advantage of adopting a set of guidelines for goal establishment for the entire English program is simply that each part of the program will be working towards the same end. Whether the ACTFL Guidelines or some other such resource is used for this purpose, the critical factor is that each part of the English program at Seigakuin should be connected in the sense that their goals are all related to and coordinated with each other, for the overall benefit of the students.

Step Two: Outline specific objectives for meeting goals.

Objectives serve as the building blocks which lead to the accomplishment of broader curriculum goals. Objectives are defined as “specific statements that describe the particular knowledge, behaviors, and/or skills that the learner will be expected to know or perform at the end of a course or program” (Brown, 1995, p. 73). The primary difference between goals and objectives is in the level of specificity of the latter as opposed to the more general nature of the former.

Goals and objectives are closely interrelated, but they are listed separately in this 15-step plan for program integration because of the tendency in curriculum developing to set the broad goals without considering the specific objectives which,

when delineated, will help planners immensely in syllabus development and in program assessment.

Step Three: Establish common placement and evaluation methods for all classes.

Both teacher and student frustration can run high when classes consist of learners at very different levels of language ability. When advanced students are mixed in with novices, teachers are forced to “teach towards the middle,” resulting in dissatisfaction among students at the top and the bottom levels. In fact, placement problems are so prevalent in many language classes that, in a poll of 131 teachers in Australia on their perceived importance of the functions of assessment, “placement of learners in classes” was considered to be the most important one among six different functions (Brindley in Alderson, 1995, p. 159). It is imperative, therefore, to attempt to place students in language classes roughly according to their levels, whether they be beginner, intermediate, or advanced students.

Evaluation is also quite important in any curriculum. In fact, it is considered to be the key element in the curriculum development process, because it “connects the [various] components and unifies the curriculum in a continuing process of review and improvement” (Pennington and Brown, p. 72). Evaluation helps to achieve and maintain unity in the curriculum process and coordinates the components of the program.

The most efficient way to place and evaluate students is through a test that will do both. The SEP has adopted the SLEP test for this purpose, and it has proven to be remarkably successful, particularly in the area of placement at the beginning of the year. Less than 3% of the students move up or down within the sub-programs of the SEP due to placement problems.

SEP administrators could work with the heads of the reading and language lab programs to provide them with rosters based

on SLEP scores. Since the two sections of the SLEP consist of listening and reading comprehension, rosters based upon one section or the other may be most useful to the reading and LL sequences. Scheduling may be a problem if this is done, but perhaps at least partial implementation should be considered.

SLEP score information could also be given to teachers involved in the ABC track for second- and third-year students. While placement is problematic due to the fact that these are primarily elective courses, at least teachers would have an idea of what the actual proficiency levels of the various students in the class were.

An alternative to this, which the writer would like to propose, is to consider administering the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) as a pre-/post-test for all second-year students, or at least to those who elect to take ABC courses. TOEIC, like the SLEP and TOEFL, tests receptive (listening and reading) skills in a business context, something which is of particular import considering that the largest department on campus is the Political Science and Economics Department and that TOEIC scores are being used by 1,700 companies in Japan for training, placement, advancement, and other purposes ("TOEIC: Key gauge," 1997). Furthermore, "many researchers and students of testing believe that the TOEIC shows the differences between low-beginner to high-intermediate levels very well" (Gilfert, 1997, pg. 2). While the TOEFL is considered to be a more accurate discriminator for higher level students, the TOEIC is a more accurate lower-level discriminator.

The benefits of using the TOEIC on the Seigakuin campus in the manner above are thought to be as follows:

- It would give students experience with a test that is becoming increasingly popular in Japanese business circles for purposes of hiring and promoting.
- It would provide data on the business English ability of

students, which is especially important to our Political Science Department and Economics.

- It would serve as a checking device on the effectiveness of other English programs at Seigakuin, providing information valuable for program development and improvement.
- It would be useful as a promotional device for Seigakuin at recruitment time.
- It would add depth to the testing process of the first-year SEP, which only uses the SLEP test for placement and measuring gains in proficiency.
- It would provide data on second-year students which may be useful for placement and/or evaluation in some courses.
- It would provide data which could prove valuable to the Seigakuin English Abroad programs for second- and third-year students.

As can be surmised, TOEIC data could be very helpful for a variety of reasons. For example, knowing that 450 is a score that is important to some companies when hiring may be useful when setting program goals and developing syllabi. Also, knowing that there were 17 students whose scores were 470-620 (Level C) at the end of the first year of the SEP enables educators to recommend special courses for those students and/or make special study abroad opportunities available to them.

The salient point is, of course, that there are a variety of important uses for the TOEIC in an educational setting in Japan (which some universities and colleges have already recognized), and that it would probably be most beneficial if it could be adopted by Seigakuin University, particularly since a large number of practice TOEIC tests which will be available at the school for use and reuse in 1999 and beyond at no cost to the

student.

To summarize, evaluation, which is defined as “the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of the curriculum and analyze its effectiveness within the context of the particular institution” (Brown, 1996, p. 277), can at least be initiated through the expanded use of the SLEP and/or adoption of the TOEIC for this purpose, and both tests could also prove to be most useful for placement purposes in some non-SEP English classes.

Step Four: Coordinate syllabi among all English classes.

Hadley rightly emphasizes that “a well-designed course syllabus is a necessary component of a successful language program, from both the teacher’s and the students’ points of view” (Hadley, p. 485). The course syllabus “provides a focus for what should be studied, along with a rationale for how that content should be selected and sequenced” (Sabet, 1997, pg. 78).

Seigakuin has recognized the essential role of the syllabus in any program and has already made the commitment to publish course syllabi each year for all students and teachers. While this is certainly a step in the right direction, the effectiveness of the language programs could be enhanced further if *all* of the syllabi were coordinated. For example, if teachers in the LL had been aware that all of the students in the SEP had been covering “locations and directions” in weeks one and two of the 1998 fall semester, then perhaps the same topic could have been covered in the language lab, thereby providing reinforcement and increasing the the effectiveness of both classes.

While having fully integrated syllabi for all English classes may not be realistic, at least some effort could be made to better coordinate the various sequences of courses so that more overlap naturally occurs. Second- and third-year students would also benefit if there was some logical sequencing between what was

done in the first-year syllabi and what is proposed in the ABC track, if not in content, at least in function.

Step Five: Set vocabulary goals for each course and coordinate them with other courses.

Vocabulary building is a vital component of the SEP. This was designed into the SEP due to research on language acquisition that indicated the extreme importance of English language learners mastering the highest frequency vocabulary. In fact, experts in the field of vocabulary learning have concluded, "Clearly the learner needs to know the 3,000 or so high frequency words of the language. These are an immediate priority and there is little sense in focusing on other vocabulary until these are well learned" (Nation and Waring, 199x, p. 4).

Unfortunately, it has been the experience of teachers in the SEP that most students, even after one year, have not even mastered the highest frequency 2,000 or 2,500 words. Clearly, more effort needs to be put in to facilitate vocabulary learning on the part of the students, but time constraints make that virtually impossible to do solely within the SEP.

However, if vocabulary goals could be established in other English courses (as they have in the Academic English sequence), then it would be much more realistic to expect strong gains to be made in this area. Minimally, all teachers outside of the SEP should be made aware of the SEP Master Vocabulary List (MVL) and should be given lists of the words that students are learning and have yet to learn in order to make it possible for coordination to take place between the various English courses on campus, again with a view towards providing reinforcement for the learners.

Step Six: Incorporate program-specific vocabulary into the Business and Culture tracks.

Students in the Business and Culture courses should be expected to learn high frequency words from the MVL that are specifically chosen for their field. Chart 2 in the appendix is an example of 150 business-related words that this writer selected from Level 3 of the MVL for Business English I. This vocabulary could be incorporated in that particular course with the goal of having students learn some of the English words that they are most likely to encounter in a business setting. Of course, something similar to this could be done for any of the other classes in the Business and Culture English tracks, and Paul Nation's Academic Word List (AWL) provides the 600 highest frequency academic vocabulary for those students on the Academic English track who are seriously entertaining studying abroad and have already mastered the vocabulary in the MVL.

Step Seven: Make the language lab more readily available.

This may require new facilities and/or commitment to the hiring of someone who could monitor the LL on a full-time basis, but having a modern language lab that students can self access is important to the improvement of students' proficiency levels. Some teachers in the SEP have assigned lab work to their classes in the past, but it is simply impractical at the present time due to limited staff and facilities.

Step Eight: Utilize SRA materials in a systematic manner.

While step seven is obviously targeted at listening, this step focuses on reading development. The Scientific Research Associates Reading Laboratories have proven themselves to be a very effective means of developing reading skills, but they are not readily available for student use. Although kits 2B and 3B are on hand and a few students have benefited from their use, it would be quite helpful if many more students had easy access to them, whether that be in the library or in the language lab. In the short

term, it may at least be possible on an experimental basis to incorporate these materials into the smaller classes of better students, such as the honors course in the SEP and the Academic English III course, in order to gauge their utility and practicality for use on a large scale.

Step Nine: Utilize the Internet and e-mail in communicative programs such as the SEP.

The Internet has opened up a new horizon for language teaching and learning, but many educational institutions have been slow to recognize this. One that has is the University of Utah, where Internet resources are a primary instructional tool in its Italian language classes, with all the students linked to the virtual Italian community.

Two of the primary tools used at the University of Utah are e-mail and Internet Relay Chat (IRC), a chat service which allows students to communicate worldwide via written conversation over the Internet. The conclusion was that written skills were most affected by Internet-Mediated Instruction (IMI), and that Internet resources, because they do not require physical presence in the same place at the same time for communication to occur, make it possible for language students to communicate with native speakers around the world, and therefore "constitute tools conducive to fostering second language acquisition" (Oliva and Pollastrini, 1995, p. 557).

Besides the time-space advantages of IMI, there is the distinct advantage of language acquisition based on personal interest in the subject matter. Motivation being a key factor in successful learning, the Internet as a teaching tool has great potential which should not go untapped by program developers at Seigakuin. This is especially true in view of the fact that most students have very little in the way of written English course work in their freshman year, and writing skills would naturally be

enhanced through the IMI.

Since the first-year students at Seigakuin University all have access to computers, the time may be rapidly approaching when it will be feasible to establish IMI as part of the English language program at the school. Perhaps it will be possible in the near future to establish links between Seigakuin and its three sister schools, Bethany College, Lynchburg College, and Oglethorpe University, so that students can communicate with their native-speaker peers overseas.

Step Ten: Carefully select a limited number of textbooks for each course.

By choosing which textbooks to use in a given course and limiting the number of different books that can be used by teachers, developers can ensure continuity from one class to the next and be reasonably certain that the correct material is covered at a level that is appropriate for that course. Having a limited number of textbooks would also make it feasible to develop a Seigakuin Textbook Corpus, as the director of the SEP has suggested, of the key vocabulary that is contained in the books being used, which in turn would enable analysts to do coverage studies with the MVL and the AWL.

Administrative Steps

Step Eleven: Select a program coordinator and assign a development team to the whole program.

A project involving over 700 students, such as the SEP, requires a director/manager with multiple talents. Implementing even two or three of the ten steps discussed above is a daunting task, and it will not be possible to do so effectively unless a coordinator and a design team are assigned to the job.

Six general areas of skills have been identified as critical to educational administration and ESL program development.

These are 1) communicating; 2) planning; 3) educating; 4) organizing; 5) evaluating; and 6) negotiating (Matthies, 1991, p. 244). The project leader must be able to perform each of these adequately, and perhaps a seventh, setting priorities, as well, in order to give the daunting assignment a reasonable chance of success.

Perhaps the best place to begin the project of coordinating the SEP with other English courses at Seigakuin is for an Exploratory Committee to be set up under a Committee for Program Revision (CPR) and the project leader selected from within that group. After establishing strict yet reasonable deadlines, a Preliminary Development Task Force could be assigned the job of making the proposals necessary to start the process in motion. Once the exploratory and preliminary development phases are completed, the implementation phase may begin.

Step Twelve: Hire full-time contract teachers for the key sequences within the program.

The most important part of any language program is the teacher. Good teachers can make even a marginal program somewhat successful, but even a good program cannot long survive marginal teachers. For the long-term benefit of the English program at Seigakuin, it would probably be best to have full-time teachers whose primary responsibility is to the school.

The full-time contract teacher model has been successful for the SEP and could be applied to other English sequences as well. The advantages of having such teachers are 1) stability is enhanced; 2) coordination is made much easier; 3) teacher satisfaction tends to be higher than with part-time teachers only; and 4) contract teachers will automatically have a vested interest in promoting the program and working towards common goals.

Step Thirteen: Link the entire program closely with study abroad

programs.

Seigakuin has been moving towards this goal already, but the process should be facilitated if possible. A student questionnaire conducted by the Seigakuin International Center in July 1997 revealed that 56% of the first- and second-year students have a desire to study a foreign language abroad. There is great potential here for improving the effectiveness of the English programs on campus through increased motivation, as well as for the University as a whole in the area of recruitment. This should be considered to be vital to the success of the school in the 21st century.

Step Fourteen: Make a five-year plan with sub-goals set at yearly intervals.

Perhaps the reader is familiar with the aphorism, "If you do not know where you are going, you are sure to get there." A long-term strategic plan with broad goals should be established *in writing*, with deadlines clearly delineated. The deadlines may not be met, of course, but the odds that the goals will eventually be fulfilled will rise dramatically just by having deadlines in place. By having longer range goals set down and in print, consistency and continuity are much more likely to be maintained within the program than would otherwise be the case.

Step Fifteen: Link and coordinate the program with all of the Seigakuin Schools.

This is a grand vision, of course. Nevertheless, it is the sincere desire of this writer that some day in the near future a well-planned and coordinated English program could be in place which would run all the way from Seigakuin Kindergarten and Elementary School to Seigakuin University or even Graduate School. As delineated earlier, a key weakness of the SEP in its

current form is that it is basically an oral English program that runs for only one year. Measurable results can be and are obtained, but if the school wishes to produce substantial numbers of students whose TOEFL ability approaches the 550 level upon graduation from the University, then effort must be concentrated on linkage and coordination with the University program and the various programs at the K-12 levels.

Were this vision to be realized, not only would it be a major selling point for Seigakuin for recruiting at all levels, but it would also ensure that those who most often get left out of the curriculum development equation, the students, would receive the best possible English language education.

Conclusion

“Innovation” has been defined as “an idea, object or practice perceived as new by an individual or individuals, which is intended to bring about improvement in relation to desired objectives, which is fundamental in nature and which is planned and deliberate” (Nicholls in White, 1988, p. 114). The primary difficulties with innovation are that 1) it involves changes in teachers’ attitudes and practices; 2) it usually leads to an increase in workloads; 3) it has an economic cost in terms of both time and money; and 4) it leads to evaluation, which in turn often raises uncomfortable issues (White, pp. 114-15).

There is no question that the 15-step plan presented in this paper would require innovation on a large scale at Seigakuin. Obstacles and pitfalls are intrinsic to such a challenge. However, when the long-term benefits are weighed against the short-term difficulties, it is in the best interests of the school to undertake the effort. If the most important “power,” willpower, can be resolutely applied by the many capable administrators, faculty,

and staff members at Seigakuin University to make the vision herein a reality, then there is every reason to have confidence that the Seigakuin English Program will be well-prepared for the 21st century.

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Appendix

Chart 1: SLEP/TOEFL/TOEIC Score Equivalents

	<u>SLEP</u>	<u>TOEFL</u>	<u>TOEIC</u>	<u>TOEIC Level</u>
	58	550	730	B
	57	540	700	C
	56	530	670	C
	55	520	645	C
	54	510	620	C
	53	500	595	C
	52	490	570	C
	51	480	545	C
	50	470	520	C
	49	460	495	C
	48	455	485	C
	47	450	470	C
	46	440	445	D
	45	430	420	D
	44	420	400	D
	43	410	380	D
	42	400	360	D
	41	390	340	D
	40	380	320	D
	39	370	300	D
	38	360	280	D
	37	350	260	D
	36	340	240	D
	35	330	220	D
	34	320	200	E
	33	310	185	E
	32	305	180	E
	31	300	170	E
	30	290	155	E
	29	280	140	E
	28	270	125	E
	27	260	110	E
	26	250	95	E
	25	240	70	E
	24	230	55	E
	23	220	40	E
<u>Maximum Scores</u>				
SLEP-67				
TOEFL-677				
TOEIC-990				
	22	210	25	E
	21	205	20	E
	20	200	10	E

Chart 2: Business-Related Words from the Master List (Level 3)

	Vocab Item	Pt/Speech	Related Lev		Vocab Item	Pt/Speech	Related Lev
1	accountant	n	2.2	51	establish	v	
2	accurate	adj		52	estimate	n	
3	addition	n	2.1,2.2	53	exchange	n	
4	advertise	v		54	expand	v	
5	agent	n	2.1	55	expense	n	2.1
6	allocate	v		56	explanation	n	1
7	alternative	adj		57	exploit	v	
8	announcement	n	2.1	58	extreme	adj	2.2
9	annual	adj		59	failure	n	2.2
10	approximately	adj		60	favorable	adj	1
11	assessment	n	2.2	61	financial	adj	
12	assistant	n		62	flight	n	
13	associate	v		63	foreign	adj	
14	automatic	adj		64	full-time	adj	1,2.2
15	benefit	n		65	fund	n	
16	booking	n		66	fundamental	adj	
17	businessman	n	2.1	67	improvement	n	2.2
18	calculator	n	2.2	68	including	prep	2.2
19	cancel	v		69	income	n	
20	chairman	n		70	increased	adj	
21	cheat	v		71	index	n	
22	commerce	n	3.1	72	industry	n	
23	commercial	adj, n	3.2	73	informal	adj	
24	commission	n		74	initial	adj	
25	committee	n		75	insurance	n	
26	communicate	v		76	international	adj	2.2
27	communication	n		77	interview	n,v	
28	compare	v		78	introduction	n	
29	compete	v	2.2	79	invitation	n	2.2
30	conference	n		80	irregular	adj	
31	contact	n		81	labor	n	
32	contract	n		82	lawyer	n	2.2
33	contribute	v		83	leadership	n	1,2.2
34	convenient	adj		84	legal	adj	
35	credit	n		85	limit	n,v	
36	department	n		86	loan	n	
37	design	n		87	location	n	
38	develop	v		88	major	adj	
39	director	n	2.1,2.2,3.2	89	management	n	2.1,2.2
40	discussion	n	3.2	90	manufacture	v	
41	division	n	2.2	91	margin	n	
42	domestic	adj		92	marketing	n	1
43	economic	adj		93	maximum	adj, n	
44	economy	n		94	measurement	n	2.2
45	efficiency	n	2.2	95	merchant	n	
46	electronic	adj	2.1,2.2	96	minimum	adj	
47	engineer	n		97	minor	adj	
48	envelope	n		98	monthly	adj	1
49	environment	n		99	multiply	v	
50	essential	adj, n		100	negotiate	v	

Chart 2: Business-Related Words from the Master List (Level 3)

Vocab Item	Pt/Speech	Related Lev				
101 objective	n,v					
102 occasionally	adv	2.2				
103 official	n,adj					
104 operate	v	2.2				
105 organized	adj	2.2				
106 overall	adj					
107 overnight	adj					
108 package	n	2.1,2.2				
109 permanent	adj					
110 personnel	n	1,2,2.3.1				
111 postpone	v					
112 practical	adj					
113 proportion	n					
114 proposal	n	2.2				
115 punctual	adj					
116 purchase	v,n					
117 qualified	adj	2.2				
118 quantity	n					
119 receipt	n	1				
120 recommendation	n					
121 reduction	n	2.2				
122 reference	n	2.2				
123 regional	adj	2.2				
124 registration	n	3.1				
125 regulation	n					
126 represent	v					
127 reservation	n					
128 resource	n					
129 salary	n					
130 secretary	n					
131 signature	n					
132 solution	n	2.2				
133 specialize	v	1				
134 statistic	n					
135 subtract	v					
136 succeed	v	2.1,2.2				
137 sufficient	adj					
138 sum	n					
139 supply	n,v					
140 technical	adj	2.2				
141 timetable	n					
142 title	n					
143 trade	n,v	2.2				
144 transportation	n					
145 unit	n					
146 urgent	adj					
147 value	n	2.2				
148 wage/s	n					
149 wealth	n					
150 weekly	adj	1				