

Teruo Asakawa / Professor / Center for the Advancement of Higher Education

Profile



Professor Teruo Asakawa, Doctor of Informatics, was born in 1950. His major fields of study are English Linguistics and Teaching of English. He has been involved in studying English grammar and teaching college-level English for more than 30 years. After earning a master's degree at Tokyo University of Education, he began to teach English at Kitami Institute of Technology (1976-1980), followed by Kanazawa University (1980-1984). In 1984, he began work at Tohoku University. He studied Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst as a Fulbright Fellow (1987-88). After ten years work in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, which was reorganized in 1993, he was transferred to the Graduate School of Information Sciences (1993-2004). He worked at the Graduate School of International Cultural Studies from 2004-2007. In 2005-2007, he served as dean of GSICS and was a councilor of the Education and Research Council of Tohoku University. At the Center of Advancement of Higher Education, he is now analyzing the status quo and problems of English education at Tohoku University.

Research Activities

It is an unavoidable task in college-English teaching to address the issue of how to make substantial progress in the development of a new curriculum and / or improvement of English coursework. Teaching of English in Japan is supposed to have two purposes, i.e., teaching the English language and teaching other knowledge through English. The former means that students have sufficient language skills ability to understand and create English expressions, while the latter means that they acquire general knowledge which helps promote mutual understanding of different cultures and develop a skill of critical thinking. Ample grammatical knowledge and extensive vocabulary constitute an indispensable portion of basic research capabilities. One of the timeless missions for Japanese universities is to produce students who have a fertile international-mindedness, as well as the communication skills required in an academic environment. Therefore, the best practice in designing a curriculum is to maintain a proper balance between language teaching and language-based education. Universities today have to periodically review their current curriculum in order to develop a new program that implements innovative ideas of English teaching. A curriculum depends on a university's philosophy of education. A basic concept in curriculum design for a research-oriented university should be 'Teaching English for Academic Purposes.' With this concept, we would never lose sight of the essentials of any curricular reformation of English teaching.

English Curriculum in Tohoku University

1 semester	2 semester	3 semester	4 semester
English A1 Reading (required, 1 unit)	English A2 Reading (required, 1 unit)	English C1 Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, & Others (required, 1 unit)	English C2 Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, & Others (required, 1 unit)
English B1 Writing, Listening, Speaking (required, 1 unit)	English B2 Writing, Listening, Speaking (required, 1 unit)	Academic English 1	Academic English 2
Undergraduate & Graduate Courses			



CALL Room

Message

In Japanese universities, most teachers of foreign languages perform a double duty as a teacher of a foreign language and a scholar of an academic discipline. Regrettably, it was a Japanese tradition that teaching activity ranked lower than research activity among evaluation standards. I felt concerned about the possibility that the tendency for research-based evaluation would be reinforced through university reforms such as prioritization of graduate education. However, the situation seems to have changed. The importance of foreign language teaching has been increasingly recognized within the university and outside. I realize that now we have a greater role and responsibility in university education. But remember that curricula only set the foundation from which you could step into a higher stage. Thus, I always feel perplexed when I hear people say that English taught at school does not serve any useful purpose. Nobody could be proficient in English if they did not spend a lot of time and effort practicing English outside the class. No matter how well-designed it might be, a curriculum would not be a good one if it did not foster learners' positive attitudes toward a continuously self-directed learning. It is also imperative that instructors rethink what and how they teach, considering what students ask for in language learning.