

Results of the 2010-11 FEPT and TOEIC Tests

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This article reviews and explains the results of the Freshman English Placement Test (FEPT), administered at Asia University in April 2010 and January 2011, and of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) administered to students participating in the Asia University American Program (AUAP) in 2010 - 2011 (Cycle 2) and 2011 (Cycle 1).

2010/2011 FEPT Administration and Methodology

The FEPT was administered to 1259 entering freshman students in the Business Administration, Business Hospitality, Law and Economics Faculties in April 2010 and to 975 freshman students from those same faculties in January 2011. The April test was used to place students into various levels of Freshman English (FE) classes, and the January test was used to place students who enrolled in English classes in their sophomore year.

Results of FEPT

Mean test scores were tabulated for the April 2010 FEPT and January 2011 FEPT for the four AU faculties. Scores for both sections of the test, the listening section and the vocabulary, grammar, and reading section, were included to provide a more detailed picture of the results.

There were improvements in test scores for all four of the faculties, as seen by the mean scores of students who took the April 2010 and January 2011 tests (Table A). For the January test, Business Administration showed an increase of 5 points, Business Hospitality an increase of 6 points, Law an increase of 4 points, and Economics an increase of 5 points. On average, there was an increase of 5 points. These results are consistent with those reported by Messerklinger (2008, 2009) before a limited number of changes were made in the FEPT in 2009. No reports on the current version of the FEPT have appeared in the journal since then to compare with the results being reported at this time.

It is worth noting here, as has been noted by Messerklinger (2008, p. 6) and others in the past, that the FEPT is neither a test of proficiency nor a test of achievement. No scale of proficiency has been developed for test scores, nor has an attempt been made to align test scores with any other tests of proficiency. Nor has the test been connected in any way with the curriculum first year students study in their English classes and is therefore unable to reflect how much progress students have made in the material they have studied. At best, the test yields, with a reasonable degree of reliability, a range of student scores that indicates a relatively greater or lesser proficiency in English although it does not indicate what that level of proficiency is. The FEPT has therefore been used strictly for placement purposes.

For all four faculties, a different number of students took the test in April and January. This is due in part to the differences in the administration of the test at the beginning and end of the academic year and in part to inconsistencies in student attendance. In April, nearly all first year students, with the exception of the International Relations students, take the FEPT at one time in large lecture halls with sufficient time scheduled for students to complete the 54 minute test. On the other hand, in January the

test is administered by individual instructors in their 45 minute Freshman English classes, which more often than not results in the test being administered in halves, the listening section in one class and the vocabulary, grammar, and reading section in another. Consequently, a number of students who took the exam in April either missed the exam entirely in January or have scores for one or the other of the two halves of the test but not for the entire test. This issue is addressed in a forthcoming paper by Hull. The January results reported in this article reflect only those students who took both sections of the test. Therefore, an analysis of the two sets of data, for April and January, does not reflect an accurate comparison.

TABLE A: Results of the 2010-2011 FEPT

	Business Administration		Business Hospitality		Law		Economics		All Faculties	
	Apr	Jan	Apr	Jan	Apr	Jan	Apr	Jan	Apr	Jan
Number of Examinees (change)	427	348 (-79)	122	86 (-36)	407	308 (-99)	303	233 (-70)	1259	975 (-284)
Mean Listening Score (change)	25	29 (+4)	28	33 (+5)	25	28 (+3)	25	28 (+3)	25	29 (+4)
Mean Vocab/Grammar/Rdg Score (change)	24	25 (+1)	25	26 (+1)	23	24 (+1)	23	24 (+1)	23	25 (+2)
Mean Total Score (change)	49	54 (+5)	53	59 (+6)	48	52 (+4)	47	52 (+5)	49	54 (+5)

2010/2011 TOEIC Administration

The TOEIC was given to all freshman students who participated in the Asia University American Program in the second half of the 2010-2011 academic year and the first half of the 2011-2012 academic year and was used to place them in AUAP classes. The International Relations Faculty also used the first administration of the test to place their students in FE classes at Asia University. IR students participated in AUAP in the second half of their freshman year (Cycle 2, 2010) while students from the the Business Administration, Law and Economics Faculties participated in the program in the first half of their sophomore year (Cycle 1, 2011).

The IR students are divided into two groups, with the majority participating in the AUAP program at either Western, Central, or Eastern Washington University. About twenty of the IR students with the highest test scores attend ESL and related classes at Arizona State University. For all IR students, the April 2010 TOEIC took place at Asia University before they started FE classes, and the June 2010 test took place at AU three months before they left Japan. Students who participated in AUAP in Washington took the test in January in the US, and the students who studied at Arizona State University took the test again in April after they returned to Japan. All IR students were scheduled to take the

August 2011 test at Asia University after they had completed the first term of their sophomore year. For Business, Law, and Economics students, the January 2011 TOEIC took place at Asia University three months before they left Japan while the July 2011 test took place in the U.S.

Since the 2004-2005 academic year, International Relations students have participated in AUAP during the second half of their freshman year. However, from April 2011 the International Relations Faculty implemented a change which will result in IR students participating in AUAP in their sophomore year. This report, then, along with past reports published in this journal (Koelbleitner and Messerklinger, 2006), serves as a baseline of TOEIC scores that will help chart the progress of the changes in AUAP that will be implemented in 2011 and beyond.

RESULTS OF TOEIC

Mean test scores were tabulated for all administrations of the TOEIC exam and both listening and reading scores were included to provide a more detailed picture of the results for the two major sections of the examination.

There were improvements in test scores for the International Relations students (Cycle 2) participating in AUAP in Washington through January of 2011 as well as for the IR students studying at Arizona State University through April of 2011 (Tables B and C). After three months of study at Asia University, Cycle 2 students participating in AUAP in Washington marked a 32 point improvement in their mean total scores, and after participating in AUAP for about four months they showed an additional 130 point improvement. The IR students who studied at Arizona State University marked a 20 point improvement in their mean total scores after three months of study at AU, and after studying at ASU for five months they showed an additional 81 point improvement. Making progress at a higher test score level is naturally a steeper climb, and that is reflected in the ASU students' test scores. In addition, while the AUAP students in Washington have classes devoted to the TOEIC, students at ASU study the TOEFL.

Unfortunately, after Cycle 2 students returned to Japan and completed their first term of Sophomore English, their TOEIC scores declined somewhat. This can be seen especially in the case of their listening scores which declined on average 21 points. Comparing the August results with the Post-AUAP scores is limited, however, because the number of students who sat for the August test was nearly 19% smaller than the Post-AUAP test in January and includes a small number of IR students who did not participate in AUAP as well as the IR students who participated in the Arizona State University program. However, the Pre-AUAP to January Post-AUAP test score improvement was consistent with scores on record compiled by the International Center for the last five years for International Relations students, the period during which IR students participated in AUAP in the second semester of their freshman year. From 2005 to 2010, the average increase from pre to post test was around 133 points.

One difference between Cycle 2 and Cycle 1 students worth noting here is that approximately half of classroom time IR students have in Freshman English classes during their first semester at Asia University is devoted to TOEIC test taking skills whereas no time is spent on the TOEIC in FE classes for Business, Law, and Economics and students. This may partially explain why the Business, Law, and Economics students have an average TOEIC score after almost one full academic year of study that is nearly equal to the average TOEIC score IR students have after just three months of study at the

university. IR students may have benefited from three months of TOEIC skills study that Business, Law, and Economics students did not have.

However, the Business, Law, and Economics students mark about the same amount of score improvement, on average, as the International Relations students who studied in the state of Washington from Pre-AUAP to Post-AUAP (Table D). In fact, the similarity in progress in all three categories, listening, reading and total score is remarkably regular. Noteworthy, as well, is the progress made in the listening section relative to the reading section. The improvement in the listening score is nearly double that of the reading score in both cycles and in the case of the Arizona State University students quadruple.

TABLE B: Results of the 2010-2011 TOEIC, Cycle 2, Washington Universities Students

	TOEIC, Cycle 2			
	Apr '10	Jun '10	Jan '11	Aug '11
Number of Examinees (change)	236	237 (+1)	237	193 (-44)
Mean Listening Score (change)	193	209 (+16)	293 (+84)	272 (-21)
Mean Reading Score (change)	129	146 (+17)	193 (+47)	192 (-1)
Mean Total Score (change)	323	355 (+32)	485 (+130)	464 (-22)

TABLE C: Results of the 2010-2011 TOEIC, Cycle 2, Arizona State University Students

	TOEIC, ASU Students		
	Apr '10	Jun '10	Aprl '11
Number of Examinees (change)	20	20	20
Mean Listening Score (change)	331	320 (-11)	385 (+65)
Mean Reading Score (change)	241	273 (+32)	288 (+15)
Mean Total Score (change)	572	592 (+20)	673 (+81)

TABLE D: Results of the 2011 TOEIC, Cycle 1

	TOEIC, Cycle 1							
	Bus		Law		Econ		Three Faculties	
	Jan '11	Jly '11	Jan '11	Jly '11	Jan '11	Jly '11	Jan'11	Jly '11
Number of Examinees (change)	46	46	24	24	21	21	91	91
Mean Listening Score (change)	204	287 (+83)	191	287 (+96)	197	288 (+91)	199	287 (+88)
Mean Reading Score (change)	126	174 (+48)	128	163 (+35)	118	169 (+51)	125	170 (+45)
Mean Total Score (change)	330	461 (+131)	319	450 (+131)	315	457 (+142)	324	457 (+133)

Works Cited

Koelbleitner, Chris, and Messerklinger, Josef. (2006). *Results of the 2005-6 FEPT and 2003-4 TOEIC Tests*. CELE Journal No. 14, pp. 111-113.

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