

History of The Center for English Language Education

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The seed of current-day Asia University was planted in 1941 with the creation of a vocational school called Koa Senmon Gakko. At the conclusion of World War II in 1945, the school became Nihon Keizai Senmon Gakko. The institution was renamed Nihon Junior College of Economics with the reform of Japan's educational system in 1950. These early days are the roots of today's Asia University, founded in 1954. Mr. Kozo Ota, the first president and chairperson of AU, defined AU's guiding principles as *self-help* and *cooperation*. He envisioned a place of learning that would prepare people to contribute to the development of Japan and Asia. Mr. Ota's successors have continued to carry out his mission. One of the most notable, Professor Shinkichi Eto, considered the international dimension of AU's mission paramount. Professor Eto believed students' communicative ability in foreign languages was one important means to internationalization.

Professor Eto's dream of internationalizing students became a reality with his implementation of the Asia University America Program (AUAP), The English Language Research Institute (now The Center for English Language Education), and the Freshman English program.

Although AUAP had begun one year earlier, in 1989 AU did not yet have strong connections with the AUAP consortium schools. Therefore, Professor Eto recommended the American Cultural Exchange (ACE) for recruiting and hiring FE teachers. The first program coordinator, Bonnie Cothren, came from ACE. She and Larry Cothren, a representative from ACE, spent 6 months writing the first FE textbook, *The Active Language Learner*, before FE classes began. Not only did they encourage a communicative method of English teaching, but they also contributed to the administrative structure of ELERI. At this time ELERI did not have formal teacher contracts, written goals, or a handbook.

With input from the Cothrens, the first ELERI Director, Professor Kuroda, oversaw the development of the rules and regulations of ELERI. Following Professor Kuroda's term, Professor Kuga, the second ELERI director, continued to build this innovative program. After two years of working with Professor Kuroda and Professor Kuga, the Cothrens returned to the US, and Professor Kawaguchi began his four-year term as ELERI director. From this time forward, AU began to choose the FE coordinator from the pool of visiting faculty members.

Joseph Kelly succeeded Bonnie Cothren as the FE coordinator. He remained at ELERI for 1 1/2 years during which time the first formal set of goals was written by Sarah Rilling, a teacher hired from an AUAP consortium school, Oregon State University.

The following year, Western Washington University professor Dr. Jesse Hiraoka accepted the role of cross-cultural advisor to Professor Kawaguchi. When Dr. Hiraoka was hired he was the director for all of the AUAP consortium schools. During his 1 1/2 years at ELERI he contributed greatly to the growth of the FE program, particularly in the area of cross-cultural communication between AU and the FE teachers.

The third ELERI Freshman English Coordinator, Douglas E. Forster, worked for 3 1/2 years with both Professor Kawaguchi and Professor Miyama to further improve ELERI by revising the *ELERI VFM handbook*; recruiting VFMs from the AUAP consortium schools and from TESOL; revising the ELERI VFM evaluation process; producing a first draft of the ELERI curriculum; revising the FE student questionnaire; creating the ELERI questionnaire,

which provides VFMs with the opportunity to evaluate all aspects of ELERI, including the curriculum and management; introducing the use of commercially produced textbooks in the advanced and beginning levels of FE; and proposing a new Freshman English placement test as well as revising the Freshman English placement system to be implemented in April 1997.

The fourth ELERI Freshman English Coordinator, Rebecca Pulst Tanaka, along with then ELERI Director, Professor Tasuku Miyama, continued to revise and update the FE program by implementing the FE placement test written by former ELERI Freshman English Coordinator Douglas E. Forster and Visiting Faculty Member Michael Kearney; by continuing to revise the system of student placement; adding FE repeater courses; by abridging *Worlds Within Reach*; deciding to use a commercial textbook along with *Worlds Within Reach* for FE classes; by forming an ad-hoc student learning objectives committee to recommend appropriate goals and objectives for the FE program; by restructuring the class-assignment schedule; by asking for volunteer advisors from among FE lecturers to direct curriculum, placement test, and computer issues; and by reorganizing the hiring process.

The 1997 academic year saw more changes for ELERI: a new name and a new director. Due to university organizational restructuring, The English Language Education Research Institute became the Center for English Language Education. In addition, Professor Masatsugu Kuga took the helm as CELE Director. He and Rebecca Tanaka joined forces in the following CELE accomplishments: implementation of FE student learning goals and objectives, modification of the FEPT to achieve more effective placement of FE students, expansion of tutoring services for students, assistance in the planning and hosting of the AUAP Consortium meeting in Tokyo, and the hosting of a professional theater production of “Pygmalion.”

CELE continues to evolve under the leadership of Professor Kuga and the current FE coordinator, Elizabeth Byrd, who began her two-year term in 1998. Several goals have been proposed for 1999:

1. Refine application and achievement of FE student learning goals and objectives.
2. Further improve quality of FEPT for placement and achievement testing purposes.
3. Fully develop and implement the CELE homepage on the Internet.
4. Streamline student placement in CELE courses to reduce classroom confusion and instruction time lost during the first weeks of class.
5. Further refine the Freshman English Repeater’s program to reduce attendance and attrition problems.
6. Participate in Open Campus and offer stimulating sample FE classes to prospective students.
7. Produce a 10th Anniversary Publication celebrating the 10th year of the FE Program
8. Further refine the pre- and post-AUAP curricula.

Providing these goals are achieved, CELE and the FE Program will continue to pioneer innovative and effective EFL education into the 21st century.