Japan’s English education reform and the role of language tests

Shuken Shiozaki & Keita Nakamura
Eiken Foundation of Japan
Content

1. About the Eiken Foundation of Japan

2. Overview of Japan’s educational issues and reform plans

3. The role of the Eiken Foundation of Japan in meeting the needs of the reform.
1961
Japan’s Social Education Council issues a report to the Ministry of Education recommending that a system of certificated proficiency tests be introduced for various disciplines as a way to further motivate the nation’s learners.

1963
The Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) is established for the purpose of “popularizing and improving practical English” in Japan. With the ministry’s backing, the Jitsuyō Eigo Ginō Kentei (Test in Practical English Proficiency) is administered in July in all 47 Japanese prefectures. Nearly 38,000 examinees sign up for this first edition of the EIKEN test, which is offered in three bands: Grade 1 (advanced), Grade 2 (intermediate), and Grade 3 (beginner). Each band includes a direct speaking test for candidates who pass the paper-and-pencil stage. Over the next eight years, the tests will be given twice annually—summer and fall—to a growing number of examinees.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EIKEN Grade</th>
<th>CEFR Comparison</th>
<th>Example of recognition/use</th>
<th>Examinees in 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>International admissions to graduate and undergraduate programs; MEXT* benchmark for English instructors (Pre-1)</td>
<td>25,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-1</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>MEXT benchmarks for high school graduates</td>
<td>71,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td></td>
<td>302,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-2</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td></td>
<td>495,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>MEXT benchmark for junior high school graduates</td>
<td>653,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>441,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>308,625</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total Number of Examinees

90,000,000
Annual Number of Examinees

2.3 million

EIKEN > TOEIC > G-TEC > TOEFL > IELTS
Other lineup
“the thing that parents and children are interested in is advancing to a good university which is considered to provide a good education and a good job in the future. “

“For this reason a focus is placed on exam-oriented English centered on grammar and translation in order to pass university entrance exams.”

Japan Association of Corporate Executives (2013)
グローバル人材
Global Human Resources
Action plans to cultivate global human resources

- Introducing English in elementary schools

- Introducing new curriculum guidelines in Junior/Senior High School

- Sending teachers to US for training

- Promoting study abroad among high school students by funding prefectural boards of education to hold fairs and provide scholarships

- University entrance exam reform

MEXT (2013)
Promoting study abroad among high school students by funding prefectural boards of education to hold fairs and provide scholarships

Institutions recognizing EIKEN

EIKEN results are accepted as evidence of English proficiency at more than 350 colleges and universities in the United States, Australia, and Canada.
Benchmark EIKEN levels for each type of stakeholder

- English teachers: EIKEN Grade Pre-1
- 3rd year Jr. High school students: EIKEN Grade 3
- 3rd year High school students: EIKEN Grade Pre-2 or Grade 2

MEXT (2013)
Percentage of EIKEN certificate holders among the population of each stakeholder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>In 5 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jr. High school English teachers</td>
<td>27.70%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school English teachers</td>
<td>52.30%</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd year Jr. High school students</td>
<td>31.20%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd year High school students</td>
<td>31.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEXT (2013)
The *Test of English for Academic Purposes* (TEAP) is intended to evaluate the preparedness of high school students to understand and use English when taking part in typical learning activities at English-medium Japanese universities.

TEAP liaison council (2013)
University entrance exam reform

1) TEAP was developed as a test to link the study of English at high school and university.

2) TEAP measures four skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing)

3) TEAP will be administered several times a year.

4) TEAP feedback is based on standardized scores and CEFR bands.

5) TEAP was jointly developed with CRELLA of UK.
In response to recent requests from both educational and industrial stakeholders for the cultivation of global human resources, the Eiken Foundation of Japan has provided (and will provide) services and new products to meet those localized needs.
Thank you
谢谢大家