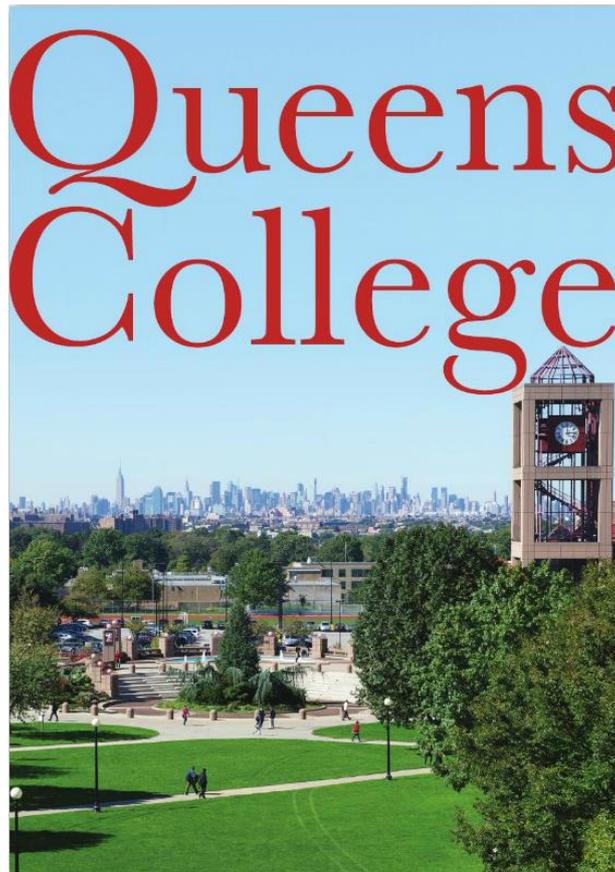


**Toyohashi University of Technology,  
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**News from QC**

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## ■ Reports

### Activity Report vol. 3

–Intensive English Course in Summer Semester–

Junji Sasano, Toyohashi University of Technology

ELI (English Language Institute) Intensive English Course in summer semester had been conducted from Monday to Thursday every week for 6 weeks from July 7<sup>th</sup>. According to the remarks in the placement exam held in July 3<sup>rd</sup>, all students were classified into 7 levels, and I was assigned to Level 7. Each class consists of about 15 students (8 students only for Level 7). There were 2 classes of 3 hours each day, and 4 teachers taught 4 classes, i.e., writing, reading, and two speaking and listening classes, respectively. So each class was conducted twice a week.

First of all, my impression of the first week was that I had listened to a lot of English words which I had never experienced. Since two teachers among them spoke very fast, I got worried if I could manage to keep up with the classes. Moreover, other students apart from me and another teacher from KOSEN were young and all from Asian countries; however, their proficiency in English was very high, so I was completely overwhelmed. I felt that one important advantage of communication in English was that I was able to establish a good friendship with my classmates without caring about the difference in our ages; this was very pleasant experience for me.

The main purpose of the writing class was essays. Articles concerning the topics to be discussed in the essays were handed out every week, and we discussed about the topics in groups, then we wrote essays as assignments based on the ideas talked in the group discussion. I felt that it was very different from Japan that there were topics such as same-sex marriages, which are not usually treated in Japanese schools.

The teacher of the reading class was very unique man, because his explanation was based on his unique grammatical theory which I had never heard. For example, “Past tense expresses not only the events happened in the past but also the separation from reality,” “Native English speakers are always obsessed with numbers (singular/plural),” or, “Tenses and Time Flashes are different concepts,” he said. Though they were very difficult to understand, a lot of ideas which I could really appreciate and admire were included in his words. The amounts of the assignments of his class were huge. They were not only the preview of the articles used in the class but also summarizing articles of New York Times and writing my opinions about them, vocabulary learning, etc.



A picture of myself giving a presentation about my watch.

As for the speaking and listening classes, there were two classes taught by two

different teachers. In one class, we trained practical communication skills through the studies of idioms, listening comprehensions, and asking questions and answering to them in pairs with other classmates. Especially, I think, this questioning-and-answering practice helped us to know well each other and to strengthen our friendship. The biggest event in this class was a presentation about our cherished items. I talked about my watch which my aunt gave to me. Other students also presented their cherished items and relevant episodes. So, this was a very fun activity such that we could know the other students' personalities.

In the other class, we mainly trained debating and listening skills. In the debating practices, we were separated into two groups of the pros and cons of the given topics, and then we debated. It was very tough for me to find out reasonable ideas when I was assigned to the group opposite to my own opinions. In the listening practice, we answered to some questions after watching short movies. The movies used in this activity were picked mainly from "One in 8 million" in the web site of New York Times. The main purpose of this practice was to listen to what general citizens were talking with their various accents and speaking paces; however, I could only understand less than half of the contents. We also gave presentations in this class. We were allowed to choose any topics we wanted. So, I was talking about Yoko Ono, who is one of the most famous Japanese. Though I was upset because a student didn't even know The Beatles, she seemed to get interested in them a bit after my presentation.

In addition to these regular classes, some special classes were held. One of which was watching a movie, *The Family Man*, with English subtitles. Since the movie was such as to remind us the importance of family, I felt like wanting my own family. The other activity was going to a jazz club in Greenwich Village. At that day, Sylvia Cuenca Quartet was performing, which was attractive so much. Other classes went see *Rocky the Musical* on Broadway. Every teacher in ELI often said that experiencing the culture of New York is the shortest way for us to improve our English ability.

I felt that the 6 weeks had passed quickly though I worried if I could go through this intensive course at first. In the last day, we obtained diplomas, and a party was held in the courtyard where the students and teachers of all classes gathered with some foods and drinks. All of my life in the 6 weeks brought me back to my old school days.

## Student? Researcher? Mixed Emotion

Jun Sakamoto, National Institute of Technology, Gifu College

We, TUT and National Institute of Technology members, finished taking the summer English training course in mid-August, and our lifestyle has changed drastically as a result of taking new college courses and starting research works.

Presently, each member is taking two college courses: one course for credit and one course for observation. For example, I am taking General Introduction to Sociology for credit and Methods of Social Research for observation. As I expected, my first impression of each course was negative because it was hard to follow what the teachers were saying. This course is absolutely different from the summer English training courses that I took in the ELI. In particular, teachers in the English courses spoke clearly, in addition, sometimes, they asked us questions about whether we understood the English or not because the purpose of the class was to improve our English. However, in the specialized courses, professors are not concerned about our understanding the material. Since I don't have much vocabulary, when I encounter an unknown word, I cannot keep up with the class. Therefore, if I misunderstand what they are saying, I'm having trouble keeping up with the material covered in the class, but if the discussion already finished, it is too late.

Each members are also doing research works with a professor in Queens College. Fortunately, my professor gave me my own laboratory, I could be studying in a good environment. However, I have only four months to do, I hope to achieve a good relationship with the NY researchers.

The most important task is to improve English skills. Every day, I am watching drama with no subtitle, doing free conversation, writing diary, reading newspaper in English. This year is special and precious for me, then, I would like to spend every minute of every day.



Fig. 1 class in session



Fig.2 My laboratory

## Salad bowl

Shinichiro Mito, National Institute of Technology, Tokyo College

The fall semester has been started from the end of August. I am taking Linear Algebra and Principle of Physics. Despite same Topics, I am interested about differences of teaching method. Because I take fundamental subjects, the classes are not student centered. Teachers are making circle of review, problem presentation, solution, and exercise. Students should do a bunch of homework as a part of exercise. A text book is fill with many good exercises and very expensive (around \$150), perhaps because a quality of exercises and textbook is significantly influential to achievement of the learning. Of course, the price of textbook is problem. Students often use the leased textbook or used textbook. In a review, teachers explain the solution of problems that have been given as homework. Because a only fundamental knowledge was described in previous class, review is important. However, a teacher explains the only problems that are asked by students. In addition, I often hear “Good so far?” than Japan. Subjects are move on to next part if there are no questions. It seems that students are required active attitude toward learning, and a class is designed for encouraging the student’s participation.

I decided to take an ELI (English Language Institute) evening class twice a week. A day class that I took in July and August was mostly occupied by college student. In contrast, majority of evening class is salaried person. The students of evening class have various backgrounds; for instance, Korean Ukrainian barber, Colombian physical therapist, Chinese nail salon owner, novel writer, and Business manager. In this class, I strongly realize a cultural and ethnic diversity of New York. Queens College is placed in Queens which is most ethnically diverse urban area in the world. Therefore, I can see many cultural things and immigrants by just working around. The photo on the lower right shows a nearby street lined with Mexican, Japanese, and Halal restaurants. Such situation was called as Melting pot. But in recent years, it is called as Salad bowl, in which different cultures mix, but remains distinct in some aspects. I want learn the merit and demerit of multicultural society.



Restaurants near the University

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