Cambridge Assessment English

Research Notes

# Supporting English education reform in Japan: The role of B1 Preliminary

Issue 73

ISSN: 1756-509X

# Foreword

In this issue we present a report from the Cambridge English Funded Research Programme. This programme provides funding for projects carried out by researchers at universities or other institutions, with the goals of supporting the international language testing community and encouraging independent research on our tests and services.

The lead researcher for this project was Kingo Shiratori of Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College, which is located in Sapporo in northern Japan and runs 2-year courses for students who have graduated from high school. The project was about the Cambridge English B1 Preliminary exam and how it could be used in the Japanese education system. The researcher carried out a detailed comparison of B1 Preliminary and the Japanese national curriculum for foreign languages in high school, by looking at specifications, sample materials, and other documents. He also administered the test to year 1 students who had just started at the college, and concluded that B1 Preliminary would be very suitable to be used for university admissions purposes in Japan. The students performed better in productive skills than receptive, which surprised the researcher and his colleagues since it is commonly believed that Japanese students are stronger in receptive skills.

These findings are timely in Japan, where the education ministry has announced that from 2020 a new standardised exam and international proficiency tests will be accepted for university entrance purposes. The research provides an interesting study of how a local curriculum can be compared to international standardised tests and a discussion of issues around incorporating those tests into existing systems.

# Supporting English education reform in Japan: The role of B1 Preliminary

Kingo Shiratori
*Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College*

# CONTENTS

# Executive Summary

In July 2017, Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced the launch of a new standardised university entrance exam for 2020, to be held alongside internationally recognised proficiency tests (MEXT 2017). An earlier national survey (MEXT 2015) proposed Levels A2 and B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe 2001) as a realistic target for Japanese students and suggested that learning strategies could play a major role in differentiating English language proficiency. Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College (HGUJC) carried out a study in which students of English were taught communicatively, assessed using an external four-skills exam (B1 Preliminary), and surveyed on their language learning beliefs, strategies and confidence. The study covered the role that B1 Preliminary (then known as *Cambridge English: Preliminary*) could play in the ongoing reform of the Japanese educational system; the relationship between B1 Preliminary and the national curriculum (specifically the *Course of Study for Senior High Schools* [for students aged 15–18], MEXT 2009); whether CEFR Level B1 is an appropriate threshold for university admission; and how language learning beliefs, strategies and confidence impact on proficiency.

The main findings were as follows: firstly, the results indicate a close relationship between the objectives, content, and six other key aspects of the B1 Preliminary exam and the *Course of Study*; for example, both focus on interaction. Secondly, there is evidence to support the use of CEFR B1 level as the target for university entry: 14% of learners attained B1 level, and almost 60% of those who only achieved A2 were in the upper half of that level, suggesting that they would be ready for B1 Preliminary after further study. Interestingly, 35% and 75% of learners achieved B1 level for writing and speaking, respectively, whereas MEXT's national survey found that productive skills were weak. Thirdly, relationships were observed between learners' beliefs, confidence, learning styles and their English language proficiency: for example, B1 learners reported more out-of-class strategies such as making English-speaking friends. Confidence was lower for A2 learners, although students at both A2 and B1 lacked confidence in their productive skills, despite their relatively high exam scores.

This study concludes that B1 Preliminary embodies communicative classroom practice and shares many aspects of the Japanese national curriculum for English; B1 would be a realistic target for university admission purposes; and learning strategies, confidence and beliefs seem to play a role in differentiating learners by proficiency level. This study recommends a learner-centred approach for curricula and classroom activities in Japan to prepare students for higher education and the workplace.

## Acknowledgements

This article reports on research funded through the Cambridge English Funded Research Programme Round 8, 2017–2018. The researcher would like to thank his department of English and the staff of Cambridge English for their helpful comments to improve this paper.

## Background

In July 2017, Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) made two announcements regarding university entrance exams: a new standardised exam would be launched in 2020 (for admissions in the 2021 academic year), and internationally recognised proficiency tests would also be used from 2020 (MEXT 2017). Based on concerns regarding Japan's current university entrance exams' proficiency in assessing communicative language ability, this study investigated four topics:

1) the role that the B1 Preliminary exam could play in the ongoing reform of the Japanese educational system;
2) the relationship between B1 Preliminary and the MEXT *Course of Study for Senior High Schools* [for students aged 15–18] (hereafter *Course of Study*, MEXT 2009);
3) whether Level B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe 2001) could be an appropriate threshold for university entry purposes in Japan; and
4) how language learning beliefs, strategies and confidence are associated with proficiency, as measured by achievement on B1 Preliminary. These lines of enquiry provide an opportunity to recommend changes to the teaching methodologies and curricula used in Japan's English language education provision.

## Educational reform in Japan

After adopting the revised MEXT *Course of Study* (MEXT 2009), Japan began to implement educational reforms. These reforms aimed to balance the teaching and learning of the main language skills (i.e. reading, listening, writing, and speaking), and increase students' exposure to English by, for example, starting English education in elementary school and continuing through high school. However, implementation of educational reform was slow (Yoshida 2009), meaning that university entrance exams continue to be biased toward aspects of listening, reading, translation, and grammar (MEXT 2011b).

Considering the importance that teachers, parents, and students give to test results, junior and senior high schools continue teaching English so that students can pass university entrance exams, rather than focusing on developing overall language proficiency. Therefore, traditional exam-oriented English study, focusing on grammar and translation, will continue if no changes are made to the entrance exams themselves.

Given this situation, the National Center for University Entrance Examinations (2018) announced that TOEFL[1], TOEIC[2], IELTS[3], the Cambridge English Qualifications, and other externally certified tests would be officially recognised English tests used for university entrance purposes starting in the 2020 academic year. The use of internationally recognised exams for university entrance in Japan presents some challenges. Firstly, the relationship between an exam's content and focus and the *Course of Study* must be established. Secondly, the level of external exams is often quite high for many prospective university students in Japan, especially those applying to courses with lower academic requirements. According to a national survey of year 3 senior high school students in 2015 (see MEXT 2016b), students' English language proficiency was especially low in productive skills, with around 18% of students scoring zero on the writing and speaking tests. (This national survey was a major study including a test of approximately 80,000 students (18,000 for the speaking test) in year 3 of senior high school.)

1. www.ets.org/toefl
2. www.ets.org/toeic
3. www.IELTS.org

These results indicate that productive skills may not be adequately taught or practised in Japan's junior and senior high schools which in turn suggests that the overall approach to language education needs attention.

## Introduction of B1 Preliminary in a higher education institution

Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College (HGUJC) provides 2-year courses of study and supports students who, after they graduate, seek to continue their education at colleges and universities in Japan or abroad. Most students want to quickly enter communication-led careers such as flight attendants and hotel-keeping, and in tourism and travel companies, and thus our curriculum has a communication focus. In the first year, the HGUJC curriculum involves the extensive use of native English speakers to teach basic English courses. In the second year, students take advanced English courses including those focusing on listening, speaking, and reading skills, and then move on to a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) curriculum that includes lectures in intercultural communication, life science, and geography. The speaking and reading courses and the CLIL courses are taught by native English speakers.

The HGUJC English department encourages all its students to use English in their future workplaces. Thus, the department decided to continue their ongoing commitment to upgrading the curriculum by incorporating internationally recognised practices and standards. The CEFR is far more than an international standard for describing second language proficiency; its influence has increased in the Japanese educational system since its translation (Yoshijima et al 2004) and the publication of the *CEFR-Japan* (CEFR-J; Tono (Ed) 2013), and a collection of studies using the CEFR in Japanese contexts (O'Dwyer et al (Eds) 2017). Based on these studies, the English department concluded that mandatory four-skills and CEFR-aligned exams would increase HGUJC graduates' practical value to employers, and they would begin mandatory B1 Preliminary exams in 2017.

According to our review of the literature, this instance represents the first time that mandatory B1 Preliminary has been introduced into Japanese higher education. We speculated that B1 Preliminary, named for its CEFR level, would be the best exam to use because of the government's target of 50% of high school graduates achieving CEFR A2 or B1 level (MEXT 2018). Additionally, as part of another research study undertaken by the English department, B1 Preliminary was administered in the academic year 2015–2016 as a pilot programme to investigate candidate performance (see Shiratori 2017). In 2016, 29 students took this test and approximately 45% attained B1 level (Shiratori 2017). Since this successful pilot study, HGUJC students have been expected to take B1 Preliminary twice within their 2-year English course: year 1 and year 2 students sit it in the first (April–August) and second (September–January) semesters respectively.

## Research questions

Despite the importance of using internationally recognised proficiency tests as university entrance exams, few studies have investigated the relationship between those tests and the MEXT *Course of Study* (2009) in terms of the overall approach to language learning and the construct coverage of both curriculum and test. Additionally, there does not seem to have been research on which CEFR level should be the appropriate threshold for university entrance purposes. Therefore, this study investigated the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: To what extent do the B1 Preliminary exam and the MEXT *Course of Study* overlap in terms of eight specific aspects?

RQ2: To what extent is CEFR Level B1 an appropriate requirement for university entry purposes in Japan?

Our study addressed RQ1 by conducting a review and comparison of the MEXT *Course of Study* and the B1 Preliminary exam through analysing their specifications, sample materials, test papers and other documents. We investigated RQ2 by examining the performance of a cohort of year 1 students studying English at a higher education institution (HGUJC) on B1 Preliminary overall and by skill.

The current practice of English education in Japan continues to focus on the analytic aspects of teaching and learning, and more frequent and varied uses of communicative strategies have been recommended (MEXT 2009, 2010) to balance this traditional methodology. This study therefore investigated a third RQ:

RQ3: How do beliefs regarding second language (L2) learning, learning strategies and activities, and learners' confidence in L2, differ between CEFR Levels A2 and B1?

We hypothesised that answering RQ1 and RQ2 would help determine whether B1 Preliminary is suitable for university entry purposes in Japan, based on how much it has in common with the MEXT *Course of Study* in terms of approach to language and construct coverage, and answering RQ2 and RQ3 would help identify which aspects of the methodology and curriculum should change to support Japan's educational reforms and targets for university entrants.

## Materials and methods

### Participants

The participants in our study were 115 year 1 students (104 female and 11 male) in the English department at HGUJC, whose average age was approximately 18 years on the exam date and age range was 18–21. There were 134 students in the year group but 19 were excluded because they were absent when the test was administered or failed to complete the test and questionnaire.

On average, participants had studied English for 6 years at their junior and senior high schools. Given that they would have studied English at HGUJC for only 10 weeks before sitting B1 Preliminary, and that the majority had either no or very limited experience of international travel, we assumed that their language ability was largely a result of their junior and senior high school education. We considered that their common academic history would enable us to make recommendations for improving aspects of junior and senior high school teaching methodologies and curricula. The participants had no previous experience of preparing for B1 Preliminary and so they were briefed on the format, marking criteria and how to prepare for the test (e.g. viewing a speaking test on YouTube) a month prior to taking it.

### Instruments and analysis

For RQ1 we compared eight aspects of B1 Preliminary and the MEXT *Course of Study*, using the *Cambridge English: Preliminary Handbook for teachers* (UCLES 2016), the MEXT *Course of Study* (2009), and the MEXT document *Course of Study for Senior High Schools: Explanation of the Guidelines for Foreign Languages; English* (2010). These aspects were goals, content, topics and language-use situations, functions, grammar, vocabulary, varieties, and tasks.

The *Course of Study* comprises seven subjects: Basic English Communication; English Communication 1, 2, and 3; English Expression 1 and 2; and English Conversation. Although the *Course of Study* stresses the balanced development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, English Communication is regarded as the core subject and greater emphasis is placed on integrating the four skills when teaching them. In this study, English Communication 1 was mainly used for the comparison with B1 Preliminary because this is the only mandatory subject and is supposed to be taught in the first year. The rest of the *Course of Study* was also referred to when necessary.[4]

For RQ2, the participants' English proficiency was measured by their scores on B1 Preliminary which are reported on the Cambridge English Scale[5]. Candidates receive five scores: one for each of the four skills, and an average of these four scores as their overall result. The participants were also provided with their CEFR level according to the scale points. Descriptive statistical methods were used to interpret the results. The B1 Preliminary exam was administered to participants in June 2017, 10 weeks after they started their first year at HGUJC.

We addressed RQ3 by administering a questionnaire to the participants in May 2017 (about two weeks before the exam) and linking their responses to their B1 Preliminary scores. The questionnaire implemented by Ogawa and Izumi (2015) was used to examine the relationship between the two proficiency groups (learners at the CEFR B1 and A2 levels) and the influence of participants' L2 learning (see Table A1 in the Appendix).

The questionnaire comprised three parts with 52 statements. The first part (items 1–20) explored participants' beliefs regarding analytic and experiential learning (e.g. 'In learning English, it is important to understand English grammar'). Participants were asked to use a Likert-type 6-point scale: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) somewhat disagree, (4) somewhat agree, (5) agree, or (6) strongly agree.

The second part (items 21 to 38) concerned participants' past learning experience prior to studying at HGUJC (e.g. 'I learned English by studying school textbooks carefully') with regard to analytic and experiential learning with a Likert-type 6-point scale: (1) never, (2) almost never, (3) not very often, (4) sometimes, (5) often, or (6) very often.

In the third part (items 39 to 52) participants were asked about their confidence in L2 learning (e.g. 'I am confident with my ability to have conversation in English'). Response choices ranged from (1) not at all true of me, (2) not true of me, (3) not so true of me, (4) somewhat true of me, (5) true of me, or (6) definitely true of me. For each statement, a statistical test (independent-samples t-test) was carried out to see whether there was any difference between the A2 group and the B1 group. To address the relationship between beliefs and learning strategies, and between learning strategies and confidence, Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated on the scores for each item in each category, for the two proficiency groups combined. Significant values at $p < .05$ and $p < .001$ were reported.

4. The original descriptions of the *Course of Study* were written in Japanese; English quotations are taken from the official translation (MEXT 2011a).
5. www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/cambridge-english-scale/

# Results

### RQ1: Comparison of B1 Preliminary and English Communication classes

Table 1 illustrates the goals of the B1 Preliminary exam and English Communication 1, 2 and 3 classes. Similar to B1 Preliminary, the *Course of Study* focuses on practical language as a means of communication, stating that the overall goal is: 'To develop students' communication abilities such as accurately understanding and appropriately conveying information, ideas, etc., deepening their understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages' (MEXT 2011a:1). The overall objectives of B1 Preliminary and the English Communication classes share the fundamental importance of communication and focus on social interaction contexts, such as understanding information and conveying ideas.

Furthermore, unlike TOEIC for the workplace and TOEFL for university, the B1 Preliminary exam and the English Communication classes give importance to language for everyday or social purposes. One notable difference is that the *Course of Study* appears to provide an explicit appeal to established language standards, stating the value of accuracy and context appropriateness.

**Table 1: Overall objectives of B1 Preliminary and the Course of Study**

| *B1 Preliminary (UCLES 2016:2)* | *Course of Study (MEXT 2011a:1)* |
|---|---|
| Users can understand factual information and show awareness of opinions, attitudes, and mood in spoken and written English. Used as proof of a candidate's ability to use English to communicate with native speakers for everyday purposes. | To develop students' communication abilities, such as accurately understanding and appropriately conveying information, ideas, etc., deepening their understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages. |

Table 2 shows the focuses of the B1 Preliminary exam and the English Communication classes. Both provide competence indicators for each of the four language skills. For listening and reading, they both state that learners are encouraged to scan and skim reading material, whereas B1 Preliminary mentions listening to identify detailed meaning (parts 2 and 4) and reading for detailed comprehension (part 4) (see *Cambridge English: Preliminary: Handbook for teachers*, UCLES 2016).

In studies on B1 Preliminary, it is stated that 'the candidate has to cope with a wider range of both expeditious and careful reading types at both the local and the global level' (Khalifa and Weir 2009:64); however, this explanation does not indicate that B1 Preliminary demands more advanced reading subskills than the Japanese standards because, as shown in Table 2, English Communication 2 and 3 also require intensive reading, or reading for detail.

For speaking and writing, both B1 Preliminary and the English Communication classes value discussion and conveying information. As Shaw and Weir (2007) emphasise, Cambridge English exams aim to approximate authentic communicative situations. The B1 Preliminary exam therefore includes specific communicative tasks in which, for example, the candidates discuss a current situation and write an informal letter to their friend. The revised *Course of Study* starting in 2022 includes *Speaking: interaction* and *Speaking: production* in addition to the three skills of reading, listening, and writing. This new classification exemplifies the CEFR approach, corresponding exactly to three parts of the B1 Preliminary speaking paper (part 2 – interaction, part 3 – describing photos, and part 4 – discussion with partner).

**Table 2: Abilities specified for B1 Preliminary and English Communication (the Course of Study)***

| *B1 Preliminary exam* | *English Communication 1, 2, and 3* |
|---|---|
| **Listening** | |
| Can listen for key information in short and long conversations and monologues.<br>Can listen for detailed meaning and identify the attitude and opinions of speakers. | Understanding information, ideas, etc., and grasping the outline and the main points by listening to introductions to specified topics, [reports]; dialogs, [discussions], etc. |
| **Reading** | |
| Can read for the main idea.<br>Can identify specific information and read for detail.<br>Can understand attitude, opinion, and the writer's purpose.<br>Can read for gist, inference, and global meaning. | Understanding information, ideas, etc., and grasping the outline and the main points by reading explanations, stories, etc. Reading passages aloud so that the meaning of the content is expressed. [Reading explanations, commentaries, stories, essays, etc., in accordance with the purpose, such as rapid reading, and intensive reading, etc. Reading aloud and reciting passages so that the meaning of the content is expressed.] |
| **Speaking** | |
| Can discuss current situation, past experiences, and future plans.<br>Can discuss a situation with a partner.<br>Can talk about a picture for an extended period of time.<br>Can talk about likes, dislikes, preferences, and habits. | Discussing and exchanging opinions on information and ideas, etc., based on what one has heard, read, learned, and experienced. [Drawing conclusions through discussion, etc., on information, ideas, etc., based on what one has heard, read, learned, and experienced.] |
| **Writing** | |
| Can write a short message which includes certain information.<br>Can write a longer piece of text (a story or informal letter). | Writing (brief) [coherent and cohesive] passages on information, and ideas, etc., based on what one has heard, read, learned, and experienced. |

* In the listening, speaking, and writing sections of English Communication, square brackets ([ ]) indicate an additional objective included in Communication 2 and 3; in the reading section, square brackets ([ ]) substitute the content of English Communication 1; the (brief) writing section is omitted in Communication 2 and 3.

Table 3 presents lists of topics and language use situations. Whilst B1 Preliminary has 27 topics, the *Course of Study* has roughly 12 topics in three categories. According to Taylor (Ed) (2011), the B1 Preliminary topics were carefully chosen with the interests of the candidates in mind. At B1 level, the topics are narrower than at higher levels and cover content mainly related to everyday needs, with a limited range of functions and lexis available to learners (Geranpayeh and Taylor (Eds) 2013).

As shown in Table 3, there is some overlap for the topics in B1 Preliminary and the *Course of Study*, most of which are based on everyday language-use situations within a social context. A clear difference is that B1 Preliminary includes topics such as language and the natural world, which are more abstract, have a complex structure, and require a higher level of cognitive ability. These topics are not observed in the MEXT list in Table 3; however, Article 4 of the *Course of Study*, 'Curriculum design and treatment of the contents for each subject' (MEXT 2011a:7), highlights the importance of covering geographical content, natural science, and increasing interest in language and culture. Hence, although B1 Preliminary encompasses a wider range of subject matter, most of its topics can be included in any one of the categories listed in the *Course of Study*.

**Table 3: Topics and Language-use Situations**

| *B1 Preliminary* | *Course of Study* |
|---|---|
| **Examples of topics**<br>Clothes, daily life, education, entertainment and media, environment, food and drink, free time, health, hobbies and leisure, house and home, medicine and exercise, language, opinions and experiences, people, personal feelings, personal identification, places and buildings, relations with other people, services, shopping, social interaction, sport, the natural world, transport, travel and holidays, weather, and work and jobs. | **Examples of language-use situations**<br>(a) Situations where fixed expressions are often used, such as shopping, traveling, having meals, talking on the phone, and exchange of letters and e-mails, etc.<br>(b) Situations which are likely to occur in students' everyday lives and in social lives, such as home life, learning and activities at school, community activities, and activities in the workplace, etc. and work and jobs.<br>(c) Obtaining information, etc., through a variety of media, such as reading books, newspapers, articles, etc. as well as watching television programs, movies, etc.; and accessing information using communication networks, etc. |

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Table 4 displays the language functions listed in the *Course of Study*. In the B1 Preliminary *Handbook for teachers* (UCLES 2016), a detailed overview of the functions that candidates are expected to manage is presented (this full list is excluded from this report due to space limitations). According to the *Handbook*, B1 Preliminary includes 65 functions, notions, and communicative tasks in three categories: informational (e.g. providing personal information), interactional (e.g. persuading), and managing interaction (e.g. changing the topic). As presented in Table 4, the *Course of Study* includes approximately 30 functions of language in five categories. Although B1 Preliminary has a greater number of functions, some of them are similar and so can be grouped together. For example, certain functions in the B1 Preliminary inventory such as 'asking the way and giving directions', 'asking for and giving travel information' and 'asking for and giving simple information about places', all relate to 'transmitting information', as categorised in the *Course of Study*.

**Table 4: Language functions listed in the Course of Study**

| *Language functions* |
|---|
| (a) Facilitating communication: nodding, asking for repetition, repeating, paraphrasing, developing a topic, changing topics, etc. |
| (b) Expressing emotions: praising, apologising, expressing gratitude, expressing desire, expressing surprise, expressing concern, etc. |
| (c) Transmitting information: explaining, reporting, describing, reasoning, summarising, correcting, etc. |
| (d) Expressing opinions and intentions: offering, agreeing, disagreeing, asserting, inferring, assuming, etc. |
| (e) Instigating action: requesting, inviting, permitting, advising, giving orders, calling attention, etc. |

Table 5 illustrates grammatical items and considerations in the *Course of Study*. English Communication 1 is the only required subject for all students, and all the grammatical items listed in Table 5 are taught in English Communication 1. According to the B1 Preliminary *Handbook for teachers* (UCLES 2016:66), the inventory of grammatical areas for B1 Preliminary ranges from verbs to connectives. For example, in the sample writing test (UCLES 2016:15), part 1 includes an item where the first sentence is 'The kitchen needs painting' (verb + -ing), the second sentence is 'They must get someone to … the kitchen' (get sb to + infinitive), and candidates have to fill in the blank so that the two sentences have the same meaning. The grammatical demands are almost completely in accord with English Communication 1. Additionally, because English Communication 2 and 3 entail a greater number of confusable grammatical items, the syntactic complexity of the B1 Preliminary exam seems to sit within the knowledge and ability of the average Japanese student towards the end of high school.

In terms of lexical knowledge, a comparison of words common to the MEXT and B1 Preliminary exam wordlists was not conducted in this study because the *Course of Study* provides an approximate total number of words to be studied in senior high schools instead of a wordlist. One obvious similarity is that both B1 Preliminary and the *Course of Study* emphasise the 'awareness of grammar and lexis within the situational context of coping with functional demands' (Galaczi and ffrench 2011:163); that is, both suggest that teachers should engage in grammar and lexis 'in a way applicable to real-life situations' (MEXT 2011a:7). Finally, both B1 Preliminary and the *Course of Study* accommodate a wide range of varieties and accents of English, in consideration of the fact that numerous different varieties of English are used in the world.

**Table 5: Grammatical items and considerations of the Course of Study**

| *Grammatical items and considerations* |
|---|
| A. Grammatical items are (a) use of infinitives; (b) use of relative pronouns; (c) use of relative adverbs; (d) use of auxiliary verbs; (e) the pronoun it in reference to noun phrases or noun clauses that follow; (f) verbal tenses, etc.; (g) subjunctive mood; (h) participial construction. |
| B. Grammar instruction should be given as a means to support communication through effective linkage with language activities. |
| C. Phrases, sentence structures, grammatical items, etc., required for communication should be taught in a way applicable to real-life situations, without focusing instruction on distinctions of terms and usage, etc. |

The final part of this analysis examined task familiarity in order to understand the influence of B1 Preliminary on classroom practices. In terms of the level of task complexity, at B1 level, the tasks are relatively simple such as multiple choice, gap fill and true/false. The listening paper, for example, includes two types of response formats: selected and constructed formats. Part 1 is a selection task in which candidates must identify key information and choose the correct visual. This requires test takers to use an information transfer technique that 'reflect[s] greater authenticity by using charts, maps, grids, timetables, and other artefacts of daily life' (Brown and Abeywickrama 2010:170); similar tasks were observed in the reading section. By contrast, in part 3, the test takers must listen to a dialogue and fill in the blanks; the focus here is on pronunciation-related skills, such as spelling names, numbers, and places. Regarding the overlap between B1 Preliminary and the MEXT *Course of Study*, paired spoken interaction frequently occurs in most Japanese junior and senior high schools, as in B1 Preliminary, and sentence transformation (part 1), writing short communicative messages (part 2), and writing an informal letter or story (part 3) can also be found in both Japanese English classes and the B1 Preliminary exam.

## RQ2: CEFR levels awarded on B1 Preliminary

*Descriptive statistics*

For RQ2, the CEFR B1 level was examined to determine if it would be an appropriate threshold for university entrance. The B1 Preliminary exam targets CEFR Level B1, although candidates can also be awarded a B2 or A2 level, according to their score on the Cambridge English Scale. The following scores were used to report the results for B1 Preliminary: 120–139 (A2); 140–152 (B1 Pass); 153–159 (Pass with Merit); 160–170 (Pass with Distinction).

As presented in Table 6 and Figure 1, the overall mean score on the Cambridge English Scale was 132.0 (A2 level), and the median and mode were both 132.0. The scores ranged from 117 to 155, with a standard deviation of 7.060 and a slight positive skewness of 0.504.

**Table 6: Descriptive statistics for B1 Preliminary overall scores on the Cambridge English Scale**

| *Central tendency* | | | | *Dispersion* | | | | *Distribution* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *n* | *Mean* | *Median* | *Mode* | *Min* | *Max* | *Range* | *SD* | *Skewness* | *Kurtosis* |
| 115 | 132.0 | 132.0 | 132.0 | 117 | 155 | 38 | 7.060 | 0.504 | 0.506 |

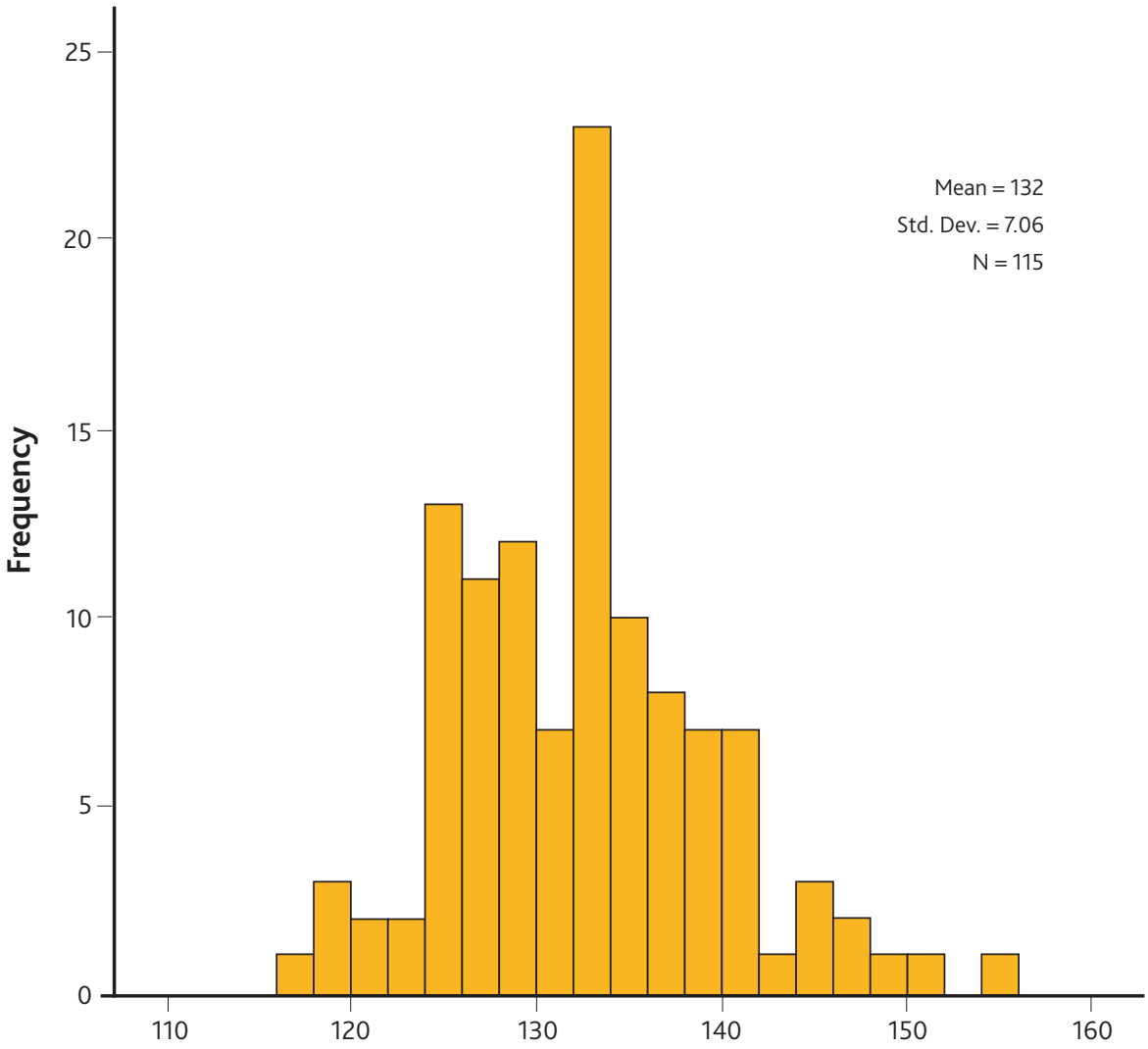


**Figure 1. Histogram of overall scores on the Cambridge English Scale**

Table 7[6] shows the proportion of participants and overall mean score on the Cambridge English Scale by CEFR level. Approximately 14% of the HGUJC participants attained B1 level, whereas nearly 83% achieved A2 level. One aim of this study was to investigate to what extent the B1 CEFR level is a suitable threshold for university entry purposes; thus, to learn additional details regarding the participants' levels, A2 was subdivided into A2.1 and A2.2 (total score range: 120–129 and 130–139 points, respectively; A2.2 is also called A2+). The result of this subdivision reveals that, among the A2 group, approximately 58% of the population attained the A2.2 level, indicating a high possibility that they could achieve B1 level in the near future (see Table 8).

6. In Tables 7–10, all numbers mentioned in the text are marked in bold in the relevant table.

**Table 7: Distribution of learners by CEFR level**

| | *n* | *Mean* | *%* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A1** | 4 | 118.3 | 3.5 |
| **A2** | 95 | 130.5 | **82.6** |
| **B1** | 16 | 144.3 | **13.9** |
| **Total** | 115 | 132.0 | 100 |

**Table 8: Distribution of learners by A2.1 and A2.2 sub-levels**

| | *n* | *Mean* | *%* |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A2.1** | 40 | 125.9 | 42.1 |
| **A2.2** | 55 | 133.6 | **57.9** |
| **Total** | 95 | 130.5 | 100 |

Although the majority of the population did not attain B1 level overall, the B1 Preliminary test results provided useful information regarding the participants' level by skill. The breakdown of level by skill is presented in Table 9, which also shows the performance on each paper of the 115 participants who sat all components. The CEFR level with the highest percentage of participants was A2 for listening, reading and writing, and B1 for speaking. Specifically, 34.8% and 74.8% of participants achieved the B1 level for writing and speaking, respectively, whereas less than 2% and 0% of participants attained B1 for listening and reading, respectively. The department staff members found this result surprising because the national survey (MEXT 2016b) suggested that Japanese learners of English were better at receptive skills than productive skills.

**Table 9: Distribution of learners by CEFR level and skill**

| | *Listening* | | *Reading* | | *Writing* | | *Speaking* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* |
| **A1** | 33 | 28.7 | 49 | 42.6 | 14 | 12.2 | 5 | 4.3 |
| **A2** | 80 | 69.6 | 66 | 57.4 | 61 | 53.0 | 24 | 20.9 |
| **B1** | 2 | **1.7** | 0 | **0** | 40 | **34.8** | 86 | **74.8** |
| **Total** | 115 | 100 | 115 | 100 | 115 | 100 | 115 | 100 |

Table 10 shows that the majority of participants' scores were below the mean; the writing and speaking scores had a skewness of -0.377 and -0.330, respectively, which mean left-skewed; and listening and reading were right-skewed with 0.934 and 0.412, respectively.

**Table 10: Descriptive statistics by skill**

| | *Averages* | | | *Dispersion* | | | | *Distribution* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Mean* | *Median* | *Mode* | *Min* | *Max* | *Range* | *SD* | *Skewness* | *Kurtosis* |
| **Listening** | 125.1 | 124.0 | 122 | 108 | 164 | 56 | 8.74 | **0.934** | 2.871 |
| **Reading** | 122.8 | 122.0 | 127 | 109 | 138 | 29 | 6.59 | **0.412** | -0.137 |
| **Writing** | 135.0 | 136.0 | 132 | 106 | 159 | 53 | 11.66 | **-0.377** | -0.336 |
| **Speaking** | 144.4 | 144.0 | 142 | 111 | 170 | 59 | 10.99 | **-0.330** | 0.960 |

## RQ3: Participants' beliefs in analytic and experiential learning

*Language learning beliefs*

The participants' beliefs in analytic and experiential learning based on their English language proficiency are shown in Table A2 in the Appendix. Overall, the two groups generally acknowledged the importance of analytic and experiential language learning beliefs; notably, the A2 group showed stronger beliefs in analytic learning whilst the B1 group appeared to prefer experiential learning. The two groups particularly believed in ideas of analytic learning such as the importance of understanding grammar (item 1, A2: $M = 5.38$, B1: $M = 5.06$), memorising vocabulary (item 2, A2: $M = 5.73$, B1: $M = 5.38$), and doing many exercises (item 8, A2: $M = 5.57$, B1: $M = 5.31$).

As for differences between the A2 and B1 students, statistical significance was obtained for only two items, item 5 (the belief in the desire of explanation of grammar rules in Japanese) ($t = 3.31$, $p = .001$) and item 9 (the importance of correct grammar) ($t = 3.40$, $p = .001$), both of which are employed more by the A2 learners.

The average score for each area of experiential beliefs was relatively high (A2: $M = 4.47$, B1: $M = 4.72$), and none exhibited statistical significance. Similar to Ogawa and Izumi's (2015) study, the participants in the A2 and the B1 groups found it helpful to speak in English (item 11, A2: $M = 5.76$, B1: $M = 5.69$) and listen to English (item 12, A2: $M = 5.85$, B1: $M = 5.69$). These results were supported by previous research: HGUJC students who joined a short overseas programme in the United Kingdom in 2015 felt they 'would like to take all English classes after [they] return to Japan' and that 'language activities, such as expressing or discussing ideas should be employed in Japanese class'; they also found exposure to English useful in L2 learning and 'wanted to be active in class' (Shiratori 2016:21).

*Language learning strategies*

Full survey results on learning strategies are shown in Table A3 in the Appendix. Overall, as Ogawa and Izumi (2015) found, there were several significant differences between the groups in their experiential learning strategies, not only overall ($t = 4.52$, $p = .000$), but also in four out of eight items (items 32, 35, 36, 38); all of which were employed more frequently by the B1 group. These strategies, such as watching television and movies in English (item 32), making English-speaking friends (item 35), and trying to think in English (item 36) generally occur outside the classroom, suggesting that A2 learners spent less time studying English by themselves.

For analytic learning strategies, only one significant difference was observed in the comparison of the two groups: Japanese translation for comprehension check (item 27) ($t = 4.07$, $p = .000$), which is the least favoured strategy for the B1 learners. Both groups appeared to rely on ideas based on analytic strategies, such as learning English through extensive and repeated practice (item 29, A2: $M = 4.57$, B1: $M = 4.81$) and reading English aloud (item 30, A2: $M = 4.56$, B1: $M = 5.06$).

*Confidence in L2 abilities*

The survey results related to the participants' confidence in their L2 abilities are shown in Table A4. Overall, the confidence level of the A2 learners is much lower: their mean score was 2.70, less than the B1 respondents ($t = 5.55$, $p = .000$). Approximately 75% of the HGUJC learners achieved B1 level for speaking, which was their strongest skill, so even A2 students might have been expected to be confident in speaking. However, the A2 participants regarded speaking as their least competent skill (item 44, $M = 2.12$). The B1 students were more confident in this skill than the A2 students. Regarding writing, both groups were not confident in their abilities to write in English (item 48, A2: $M = 2.77$, B1: $M = 3.56$), even though the average writing score ranked second only to speaking. The HGUJC students surveyed had different views about their ability to use productive skills, stating they are more confident

when listening and reading. It was surprising that both groups were more confident in listening and reading even though their scores were higher in writing and speaking. One reason for their negative feelings about productive skills in English might have its roots in the English instruction they received in junior and senior high school.

This finding seems to match the A2 learners' answer to item 41, regarding their progress in English. The average score for item 41 was one of the lowest: 2.15 among the A2 population. This result suggests that the A2 participants might not have experienced improvements in their English skills in the classroom, and their limited opportunities to communicate in English might have had a negative effect on their confidence.

Finally, both groups of participants were eager to speak English (item 42, A2: $M = 5.13$, B1: $M = 4.88$), corresponding with their stronger beliefs in the importance of speaking with others in English (see item 11).

*Relationships between survey responses*

We grouped the survey questions into groups and looked at relations between these groups. This was an exploratory analysis, and the statistical tests did not take account of multiple testing issues, so the findings in this subsection should be regarded as tentative.

Firstly, Table A5 shows the Pearson correlation matrix for beliefs about language learning and strategy use. Most of the correlations in the upper left and lower right quadrants of the table are positive, which suggests that there seems to be a tendency for analytic believers to support analytic strategies, whereas experiential believers tend to use experiential strategies. The correlations between analytic beliefs and analytic learning strategies were, in most cases, greater than those obtained between experiential beliefs and analytic learning strategies: 48 out of 100 items between analytic beliefs and analytic strategies showed significant positive correlations, compared with 11 out of 100 between experiential beliefs and analytic learning strategies. This may suggest that analytic believers tend to have a 'restricted view of language learning' (Horwitz 1987:123) and are likely to limit their learning strategies to analytic ones. The average HGUJC student might feel comfortable with analytic strategies, because the general belief regarding English education in Japan is that it relies on practising and rote memorisation. Experiential believers tended to create situations for using English outside the classroom. Since experiential believers generally belonged to the B1 group, it might be reasonable to assert that more advanced HGUJC learners might know a greater number of effective strategies and choose and apply suitable strategies.

Table A6 in the Appendix shows the Pearson correlation matrix for strategy use and confidence. Surprisingly, many of the experiential strategies are related to confidence items, especially in the oral use of English. Specifically, items 39 (nervousness of speaking English), 40 (fear of making mistakes), and 43, 44, 45 and 46 (confidence related to speaking English) were significantly associated with experiential items at the 0.01 level.

Analytic learners tended to show the opposite pattern; many analytic items were negatively correlated with confidence items, in particular ones related to speaking. Analytic learners underestimated their speaking abilities, even though they were not necessarily poor speakers of English. Similar patterns were observed for items 49 and 51 (explaining English grammar and translating into Japanese). We had thought that analytic learners might have more confidence in these two areas because they presumably received more instruction in grammar and translation in junior and senior high school, but these items were not significantly related to analytic items such as items 23 (reading grammar explanations) and 25 (translating English into Japanese).

# Discussion

### RQ1: Comparison of B1 Preliminary and English Communication classes

To summarise, for RQ1 we found that B1 Preliminary embodies the essential characteristics of the MEXT *Course of Study* regarding the objectives, content and specific elements. Firstly, because Bachman and Palmer (2010) suggested that topic familiarity is almost always a vital influence on test takers' task performance, determining whether B1 Preliminary fulfils the requirements of the *Course of Study* was critical. As mentioned in the Results section, both require learners to draw on similar levels of content knowledge and cognitive abilities in relation to topic familiarity. Task familiarity affected test takers' performance on B1 Preliminary due to the ways they had learned and their topic familiarity. Most of the B1 Preliminary tasks would have been familiar to the participants and relevant to average Japanese learners of English.

Secondly, in relation to English teaching, the topics and task familiarity observed on B1 Preliminary would enable average Japanese learners of English to produce the whole range of their language skills; thus, B1 Preliminary is considered suitable for Japanese high school students. The CEFR presents an action-oriented model for language use and learning, so the CEFR-aligned Cambridge English Qualifications primarily focus on functions in language learning (Taylor (Ed) 2011), as does the *Course of Study*. Above all, both B1 Preliminary and the *Course of Study* expect learners to use their ability to engage in informational and interactional functions, such as agreeing or disagreeing, requesting and changing topics.

Thirdly, in relation to exposure to varieties of English, like B1 Preliminary, the *Course of Study* emphasises the awareness of varieties of English. This enables learners 'to function in the wider contexts rather than a single, more restricted local context' (Taylor 2006:57). In reality, however, American English is the primary variety favoured by learners, teachers, and materials writers at all levels of English language education in Japan. This preference could have resulted in HGUJC participants feeling unaccustomed to other varieties of English which they may have encountered in B1 Preliminary.

Regarding differences between the objectives of B1 Preliminary and the *Course of Study*, the latter showed an explicit appeal to accuracy and context appropriateness. Underlying this is the assumption that communicative ability should focus on standard varieties which display correctness and appropriateness. Nevertheless, Taylor (2006:52) asserted that many international tests such as Cambridge English Qualifications 'no longer make reference to NS [native speaker] competence in their assessment criteria or rating scales'. To address this point, although the *Course of Study* already emphasises function and communication, correctness and appropriateness should be de-emphasised to ensure that language abilities can be judged more in relation to varieties of English as an international language (see Jenkins 2006a, 2006b). Another difference in the objectives is that B1 Preliminary avoids ambiguity by using explicit expressions, such as 'factual information', 'opinions, attitudes and mood', and 'spoken and written English', whereas the frequent use of 'etc.' can be observed across the Japanese national curriculum. For learners and teachers, the specific information and exemplary materials provided for B1 Preliminary (UCLES 2018) make it easy to understand the expected outcomes of the learning.

Finally, in accordance with the CEFR criterion-referenced approach, the B1 Preliminary description is more explicit in its 'can do' statements, for example, 'Can discuss your future plans' and 'Can write a longer piece of an informal letter.' The *Course of Study* provides broad standards for all schools, so applying the 'can do' statements to the national curriculum might not be a simple process. But most Japanese teachers of English may already feel familiar with this format, because they have been encouraged to develop 'can do' statements as a form of goal-setting (MEXT 2011b).

In summary, these differences do not mean that B1 Preliminary does not match the *Course of Study*. Instead, B1 Preliminary is recognised as a fair test by the HGUJC students and, by extension, by average Japanese learners of English. Education stakeholders (e.g. learners, teachers, policy makers) generally agree that B1 Preliminary almost exactly reflects their classroom practice; this suggests that B1 Preliminary would be suitable as a university entrance exam in the Japanese context.

This study also clarified the challenges of current teaching practices in Japan. For example, most HGUJC students might have felt that certain tasks on B1 Preliminary were difficult because they had not been exposed to the variety of authentic monologues, dialogues and texts found in the exam in their English classes. The CEFR aims to develop a learner's language ability 'through engagement with communicative tasks that arise in social interaction' (Jones and Saville 2016:57). This idea is similar to the MEXT national curriculum's aim of transforming classes into authentic communication scenarios, in other words for English classes to become more learner-centred with interactive and communicative learning activities. Additionally, MEXT (2014) pointed out that Japanese textbooks and teaching materials are inconsistent with the goals and content of the *Course of Study* and are not used efficiently to expand opportunities to use English during classes. Importantly, textbooks in line with the CEFR are not yet widely used in Japanese English classes.

If the Japanese government is to use the CEFR scale for university entry purposes, it must consider that many Japanese teachers of English are unfamiliar with the CEFR and have not yet learned to integrate a CEFR-informed approach and materials into their teaching. Without up-skilling teachers to understand the CEFR, there will not be positive washback on English education in Japan.

### RQ2: CEFR levels awarded on B1 Preliminary

Turning to RQ2, the majority of the HGUJC participants did not attain the overall level of CEFR B1, so it seems that they found B1 Preliminary difficult. However, almost 60% had scores in the upper half of the A2 level, and this result indicates a high possibility that they could achieve the B1 level after further study. The HGUJC students had similar backgrounds to average Japanese learners of English (that is, 6 years of English instruction and limited overseas experience). Therefore, B1 could be an appropriate threshold for university entry purposes. Notably, this finding supports Shiratori's (2017) finding that in 2016 45% of students achieved the CEFR B1 level. In that study the participants were year 2 students, so their language ability was considered to be a result of their English language education at HGUJC.

More importantly, relatively high proportions of the HGUJC students were at B1 level on the writing and speaking papers respectively, whereas the government's 2015 nationwide survey of year 3 senior high school students' English abilities showed that productive skills were particularly low, with the average score below A1 (MEXT 2016b). This result questions the generally accepted belief that Japanese learners of English are poorer at productive skills than receptive skills. Although candidates sitting for two different tests might achieve very different scores because of style, content, scoring, and other factors, it would be worthwhile to examine why year 3 Japanese students in senior high schools scored so low in productive skills, unlike the year 1 HGUJC students according to their B1 Preliminary scores. Investigation of this discrepancy would provide valuable suggestions for teaching practices in Japan.

The HGUJC students majoring in English must realise that authentic communicative skills are indispensable for their future careers; such motivational characteristics are likely to have influenced the test results. In addition, as shown in RQ3, their past learning experiences and beliefs about L2 learning might contribute to helping them develop greater proficiency in productive skills. The average score of the HGUJC students' listening and reading skills was at or below A2 level, demonstrating a similar pattern to that observed for the national survey (MEXT

2016b). This makes it difficult to explain the substantial difference in speaking and listening levels between the national survey and the present study.

Many factors influenced what occurred during the testing process. In the course of this study, however, many differences were observed in the construction of the two tests (i.e. the B1 Preliminary exam and the government's national survey), in particular the writing and speaking papers' test items, which might have been directly relevant to participants' results. We will now describe the writing and speaking test items in the national survey, and then compare B1 Preliminary with the national survey.

In the national survey, there are two parts in the writing paper. Part 1 requires students to write an opinion essay; the topics are listed in Table A7. The topic related to young people's unbalanced diets suited the test takers' interests and experience but might have been too difficult for them to develop their ideas because of their limited range of language. The questionnaires in the 2015 survey also provided useful information. For example, nearly 52% of the test takers felt they had insufficient experience in writing and summarising what they heard and read in English and expressing their thoughts in writing. This task-unfamiliarity presumably resulted in their underperformance.

Part 2 of the national survey consists of an integrated task requiring test takers to combine listening and writing in order to complete the task; success depends on note-taking, writing what was heard, and efficient short-term memory while listening to the text. With nearly 72% of the test takers at an A1 level in listening, this task was beyond their abilities.

For the speaking test, a similar potential shortcoming was observed; approximately 18% of the students scored 0. According to the questionnaires, approximately 53% of the test takers did not spend enough time addressing the target skills of discussion and exchanging opinions with other students in their English classes. Regarding topic familiarity and content knowledge, for example, in Part 3, the point of view that 'Teachers should speak only English in English class' is rather abstract, and discussion might have been beyond their lexical knowledge. The average test takers, therefore, were less likely to produce opinions and reasons of an appropriate cognitive level.

In summary, based on teaching practices observed in Japan by the researcher and in terms of validity, questions remain as to whether the writing and speaking papers in the national survey are based on what students have learned and teachers have taught. Essentially it seems that if the test takers of the national survey had sat for the B1 Preliminary exam, they might have had similar results to the HGUJC students. If this was the case, the observations regarding their English abilities would be completely different. That is, the findings of the national survey regarding weak productive skills might be less important than the more substantive problem that most Japanese high school graduates have low levels of listening and reading – at the lower level of A2 or below – even after 6 years of English instruction.

Furthermore, the government's nationwide survey on year 3 junior high school students' English abilities showed that almost 100% of the participants attained on average Level A1 for the writing and speaking sections, while more than 80–90% of year 3 senior high school students' English abilities were at or below the A1 level for the writing and speaking sections (MEXT 2016a, 2016b). This leads to the following two questions for those involved in English language education and testing in Japan: why are the senior high school students' speaking and writing skills similar to those of the junior high school students? Do the surveys accurately measure what they intend to measure?

### RQ3: Participants' beliefs in analytic and experiential learning

The final research question asked how beliefs regarding L2 learning, learning strategies and activities, and learner confidence in L2 differ between learners at the B1 and A2 levels on the CEFR. For learning beliefs, the two groups agreed on the proper balance for analytic and experiential learning: the importance of grammar, vocabulary, and exercises for analytic learning, and the importance of speaking and listening to English for experiential learning,

were appreciated. In terms of grammar and vocabulary, the literature (Horwitz 1987, Wenden 1987) has identified a similar set of learner beliefs: learners believe studying grammar is a necessity.

Notably, analytic beliefs differentiated the two groups, regarding their desire to receive explanations of grammar rules in Japanese and the importance of learning correct grammar, which were supported by the analytic believers. As Izumi, Shiwaku and Okuda (2011:175) asserted, the analytic believers might consider that 'communicative use of English should be postponed until after they get the fundamentals of the English grammar explicitly in their heads'. Another reason could be that implicit grammar instruction in English at college was observed to have caused a degree of confusion and anxiety among the participants, because they generally learned grammar explicitly in Japanese in high schools.

Regarding learning strategies, both A2 and B1 learners concurred on the importance of using English (e.g. speaking and listening) but differed greatly in their expressed use of experiential strategies. Specifically, the A2 candidates favoured analytic strategies, despite their reported beliefs in the importance of experiential strategies. A particular learner's belief does not guarantee they will act on it, however; many factors such as situational constraints may prevent them (Ellis 2008). Because more than 80% of the HGUJC students attained A2 level, they are more likely to fall into the analytic category and favour analytic strategies, preferring the exam-oriented English study that focuses on grammar and translation. The B1 learners stated they preferred to learn through adequate exposure to English outside class. It is difficult to investigate the correlation between the level achieved and reported learning strategies, but learning strategies might be a critical factor in students becoming successful English learners and differentiate candidates with lower and higher proficiencies.

Japanese high school graduates have studied English for a minimum of 6 years, starting at age 12 in junior high school. In general, the expectation might be that confidence would increase with the amount of time spent learning English. Despite the duration of their exposure to English, the average HGUJC student had some anxiety and fear about using English. The B1 participants, however, a majority of whom are experiential learners, were less nervous about using English and more confident with their English abilities, in particular, oral communication. Yang (1999) indicated that learners' self-efficacy beliefs are strongly related to their reported use of L2 learning strategies. Ogawa and Izumi (2015) also revealed that experiential strategies played a major role in shaping learners' confidence in their language abilities.

In summary, learning experience seems to be a more critical factor than beliefs; that is, teachers might be more influential in building learners' confidence in their L2 learning. Transforming classes into environments where students have increased exposure to authentic communication scenarios might be an effective way to improve their English skills and confidence levels.

## Conclusion

The three main findings can be summarised as follows. Firstly, the B1 Preliminary exam satisfactorily corresponds with English teaching at the high school level in Japan in terms of aims, content, topics, functions, grammar, and test format. Secondly, B1 Preliminary is determined to be an appropriate test for measuring the English proficiency of average Japanese high school graduates based on the HGUJC cohort; thus, CEFR Level B1 can be viewed as a suitable level for university entry purposes. Thirdly, among the beliefs about L2 learning, learning strategies, and learners' confidence in L2, learning strategies might play a major role in differentiating learners with lower and higher proficiencies.

This study suggests that CEFR-matched four-skills exams would provide useful information for university entry and that preparing for such tests would improve current teaching practices in Japan. Significantly, the effective use of CEFR-matched four-skills exams such as B1 Preliminary would help 'create an environment in which the responsibility for learning is shared between students and teachers' (Jones and Saville 2016:12); note that this does not only refer to language instruction. Jones and Saville (2016) also emphasised the necessity of involving students in their own learning through sharing assessments and encouraging reflection and goal-setting.

The researcher's department has already acted on these ideas and attempted to implement a learning-oriented assessment approach. After conducting the B1 Preliminary exam in 2017, a faculty development meeting was held to discuss the results. This meeting enabled a shared understanding of the learners' levels, strengths and weaknesses and helped change the general attitude of the staff members toward English – in particular to realise that the learners' productive skills might be stronger than their receptive skills.

The department also introduced a new study skills class. This has provided an opportunity for students to obtain general tips and strategies for preparing for B1 Preliminary. Also, since the feedback from the teachers is based on the result of B1 Preliminary, the introduction of B1 Preliminary is expected to function as a more effective means of feedback in a way that contributes to students becoming more autonomous learners. Other positive effects of the B1 Preliminary exam have been the use of textbooks and goal-setting. One teacher implemented a textbook aligned with CEFR standards in her listening class. Furthermore, the department has started discussions aimed at setting realistic learning goals for the time of graduation from HGUJC.

The limitations of this study should now be noted. Firstly, no comparison study was conducted with other Cambridge English tests, such as A2 Key or B2 First, and the extent to which B1 Preliminary is suitable for learners in terms of lexical knowledge and their sentence-level understanding of the texts remains unclear. Replication studies with exams at different proficiency levels will therefore be necessary. Secondly, since the participants were English majors, largely female, and considered highly motivated to learn English, the results may not be generalisable to the larger population of English learners at high schools and universities in Japan. In future studies it would be worthwhile to include both male and female students who may have different levels of English proficiency and different levels of motivation. In addition, due to the scale of this study, many factors affecting learners' proficiency were not discussed, for example anxiety. Other approaches to the study of face validity, learners' proficiency, and their confidence need to be employed; for instance, interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations, and questionnaires with open-ended questions.

Despite these limitations, insights from this study will enhance the current language teaching situation in Japan. We recommend that a learner-centred approach should be employed in curricula and become an integral part of daily classroom routines.

In December 2018, the second mandatory B1 Preliminary exam was administered to the participants who took part in the present study, who were in their second year of study. It would be of great interest to examine and report the changes that occurred in participants as they experienced different types of English instruction over 18 months. Further replication will be part of future investigations to increase the accuracy of the interpretations and generalisations of this study.

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# Appendix

**Table A1: Questionnaire items used in the study**

**Belief in analytic learning**

1 In learning English, it is important to understand English grammar.

2 In learning English, it is important to memorize vocabulary.

3 It is important to be able to understand everything the teacher says in the English class.

4 It is important to check any words I don't understand when I'm reading or listening to English.

5 I want my English teacher to explain grammar rules in Japanese.

6 I want my English teacher to correct all my mistakes.

7 It is important to know grammatical terms to learn English.

8 It is important to do many exercises to learn English.

9 We should learn correct grammar first before we speak English.

10 It is important to speak English with a native-like accent as much as possible.

**Belief in experiential learning**

11 To learn English, it is important to speak with others in English.

12 To learn English, it is important to listen to a lot of English.

13 I don't get bothered if I don't understand everything the teacher says in the English class.

14 It is unreasonable to expect to understand everything I read in English.

15 It doesn't matter if I make mistakes when speaking in English.

16 I would like my English teacher to use as much English as possible in the English class.

17 You can learn English naturally in an English-speaking country.

18 It is okay to guess if you encounter unknown words or phrases in English.

19 I can communicate in English without knowing the grammar rules.

20 It is okay to speak English with some Japanese accent.

**Analytic learning strategies**

21 I learned English by studying school textbooks carefully.

22 I learned English by doing many exercises.

23 I learned English from reading grammar explanations.

24 I learned English by memorizing rules and words/idioms.

25 I learned English by translating it into Japanese.

26 I learned English by translating Japanese into English.

27 I learned English by using Japanese translation to check my comprehension.

28 I learned English by reviewing what I was taught in the English class.

29 I learned English by repeating and practicing a lot.

30 I learned English by reading English aloud.

**Experiential learning strategies**

31 I learned English by speaking with others in English.

32 I learned English by listening to the radio or watching TV/movies in English.

33 I learned English by reading a lot of English magazines, books, and/or newspapers.

34 I learned English by writing e-mails, letters, or diaries in English.

35 I learned English by making friends who spoke English.

36 I learned English by trying to think in English.

37 I learned English by imitating what English speakers said.

38 I learned English by immersing myself in English-speaking environments.

**Confidence**

39 I don't get nervous when speaking in English.

40 I am not afraid of making mistakes when using English.

41 I am satisfied with my progress in English so far.

42 I will ultimately learn to speak English very well.

43 I am confident with my ability to have conversation in English.

44 I am confident with my ability to speak English.

45 I am confident with my ability to pronounce English.

46 I am confident with my ability to understand spoken English.

47 I am confident with my ability to understand written English.

48 I am confident with my ability to write in English.

49 I am confident with my ability to explain English grammar.

50 I am confident with my ability to use grammar in communication.

51 I am confident with my ability to translate English to Japanese.

52 I am confident with my ability to translate Japanese to English.

**Table A2: Belief in language learning held by A2 and B1 level learners***

| *No.* | *Statement* | *A2 (n = 95)* | | *B1 (n = 16)* | | *t test* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t* | *p* |
| | **Belief in analytic learning** | | | | | | |
| 1 | In learning English, understanding English grammar is important. | 5.38 | .84 | 5.06 | .85 | 1.39 | .167 |
| 2 | In learning English, memorising vocabulary is important. | 5.73 | .61 | 5.38 | 1.09 | 1.26 | .225 |
| 3 | The ability to understand everything the teacher says in the English class is important. | 4.80 | 1.01 | 4.63 | .96 | .65 | .519 |
| 4 | Checking words I don't understand when I'm reading or listening to English is important. | 5.57 | .66 | 4.94 | 1.24 | 1.99 | .063 |
| 5 | I want my English teacher to explain grammar rules in Japanese. | 3.85 | 1.28 | 2.69 | 1.45 | 3.31 | .001** |
| 6 | I want my English teacher to correct all my mistakes. | 4.24 | 1.16 | 4.13 | 1.26 | 0.37 | .714 |
| 7 | Knowing grammatical terms is important to learn English. | 4.41 | 1.28 | 4.56 | 0.81 | .46 | .648 |
| 8 | Completing many exercises is important to learn English. | 5.57 | .69 | 5.31 | 1.08 | .92 | .371 |
| 9 | We should learn correct grammar before we speak English. | 4.16 | 1.24 | 3.00 | 1.37 | 3.40 | .001** |
| 10 | Speaking English with native-like accent as much as possible is important. | 5.07 | .98 | 4.94 | 1.18 | .50 | .619 |
| | Overall orientation regarding the belief in analytic learning | 4.88 | .55 | 4.46 | .54 | 2.81 | .006 |
| | **Belief in experiential learning** | | | | | | |
| 11 | To learn English, speaking with others in English is important. | 5.76 | .46 | 5.69 | .70 | .52 | .601 |
| 12 | To learn English, listening to a lot of English is important. | 5.85 | .36 | 5.69 | .60 | 1.07 | .301 |
| 13 | I don't get bothered if I don't understand everything the teacher says in the English class. | 3.36 | 1.42 | 4.31 | 1.74 | 2.40 | .018 |
| 14 | It is unreasonable to expect to understand everything I read in English. | 3.96 | .98 | 3.31 | 1.70 | 1.48 | .158 |
| 15 | It doesn't matter if I make mistakes when speaking in English. | 4.83 | 1.17 | 5.31 | .95 | 1.56 | .123 |
| 16 | I would like my English teacher to use as much English as possible in the English class. | 4.91 | 1.02 | 5.25 | .93 | 1.26 | .209 |
| 17 | You can learn English naturally in an English-speaking country. | 4.18 | 1.27 | 4.63 | 1.09 | 1.32 | .189 |
| 18 | It is okay to guess if you encounter unknown words or phrases in English. | 5.12 | 1.07 | 5.06 | 1.29 | .18 | .858 |
| 19 | I can communicate in English without knowing the grammar rules. | 3.85 | 1.44 | 4.44 | 1.75 | 1.45 | .149 |
| 20 | It is okay to speak English with some Japanese accent. | 2.86 | 1.33 | 3.50 | 1.71 | 1.69 | .093 |
| | *Overall orientation regarding the belief in experiential learning* | 4.47 | .51 | 4.72 | .56 | 1.79 | .076 |

* Response choices: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = a little disagree, 4 = a little agree 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree

** indicates statistical significance at the .003 level

**Table A3: Learning strategies of A2 and B1 level learners***

| *No.* | *Statement* | *A2 (n = 95)* | | *B1 (n = 16)* | | *t test* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t* | *p* |
| | **Analytic learning strategies** | | | | | | |
| 21 | I learned English by studying school textbooks carefully. | 3.87 | 1.43 | 2.88 | 1.67 | 2.52 | .013 |
| 22 | I learned English by doing many exercises. | 4.32 | 1.26 | 4.50 | 1.16 | .55 | .585 |
| 23 | I learned English from reading grammar explanations. | 4.03 | 1.30 | 3.44 | 1.59 | 1.64 | .105 |
| 24 | I learned English by memorizing rules and words/idioms. | 4.47 | 1.26 | 3.69 | 1.74 | 2.17 | .032 |
| 25 | I learned English by translating it into Japanese. | 4.18 | 1.23 | 3.50 | 1.79 | 1.46 | .162 |
| 26 | I learned English by translating Japanese into English. | 3.74 | 1.25 | 3.50 | 1.75 | .52 | .610 |
| 27 | I learned English by using Japanese translation to check my comprehension. | 4.29 | 1.26 | 2.88 | 1.46 | 4.07 | .000** |
| 28 | I learned English by reviewing what I was taught in the English class. | 3.97 | 1.29 | 3.56 | 1.55 | 1.13 | .261 |
| 29 | I learned English by repeating and practicing a lot. | 4.57 | 1.29 | 4.81 | 1.17 | .71 | .481 |
| 30 | I learned English by reading English aloud. | 4.56 | 1.29 | 5.06 | 1.34 | 1.44 | .152 |
| | *Overall orientation of analytic learning strategies* | 4.20 | .85 | 3.78 | .80 | 1.83 | .069 |
| | **Experiential learning strategies** | | | | | | |
| 31 | I learned English by speaking with others in English. | 3.49 | 1.56 | 4.75 | 1.84 | 2.90 | .004 |
| 32 | I learned English by listening to the radio or watching TV/movies in English. | 3.63 | 1.64 | 5.06 | 1.24 | 4.06 | .000** |
| 33 | I learned English by reading a lot of English magazines, books, and/or newspapers. | 2.66 | 1.25 | 3.88 | 2.00 | 2.35 | .031 |
| 34 | I learned English by writing e-mails, letters, or diaries in English. | 2.74 | 1.56 | 4.06 | 1.98 | 3.02 | .003 |
| 35 | I learned English by making friends who spoke English. | 2.52 | 1.56 | 4.44 | 1.97 | 4.39 | .000** |
| 36 | I learned English by trying to think in English. | 3.00 | 1.64 | 4.56 | 1.86 | 3.45 | .001** |
| 37 | I learned English by imitating what English speakers said. | 3.72 | 1.36 | 4.81 | 1.38 | 2.98 | .004 |
| 38 | I learned English by immersing myself in English-speaking environments. | 2.56 | 1.60 | 4.38 | 1.78 | 4.14 | .000** |
| | *Overall orientation of experiential learning strategies* | 3.04 | 1.16 | 4.49 | 1.37 | 4.52 | .000** |

* Response choices: 1 = never, 2 = almost never, 3 = not very often, 4 = sometimes, 5 = often, 6 = very often

** indicates statistical significance at the .003 level

**Table A4: Confidence in L2 abilities of A2 and B1 level learners***

| *No.* | *Statement* | *A2 (n = 95)* | | *B1 (n = 16)* | | *t test* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t* | *p* |
| 39 | I don't get nervous when speaking in English. | 2.59 | 1.41 | 4.56 | 1.71 | 5.02 | .000** |
| 40 | I am not afraid of making mistakes when using English. | 3.14 | 1.37 | 4.88 | 1.15 | 4.81 | .000** |
| 41 | I am satisfied with my progress in English so far. | 2.15 | 1.22 | 3.31 | 1.30 | 3.50 | .001** |
| 42 | I will ultimately learn to speak English very well. | 5.13 | 1.25 | 4.88 | 1.15 | .75 | .453 |
| 43 | I am confident with my ability to have conversation in English. | 2.20 | 1.10 | 3.63 | 1.26 | 4.70 | .000** |
| 44 | I am confident with my ability to speak English. | 2.12 | 1.04 | 3.75 | 1.53 | 5.40 | .000** |
| 45 | I am confident with my ability to pronounce English. | 2.38 | 1.25 | 4.06 | 1.44 | 4.88 | .000** |
| 46 | I am confident with my ability to understand spoken English. | 2.51 | 1.21 | 4.31 | 1.20 | 5.53 | .000** |
| 47 | I am confident with my ability to understand written English. | 2.99 | 1.27 | 3.75 | 1.57 | 2.14 | .034 |
| 48 | I am confident with my ability to write in English. | 2.77 | 1.30 | 3.56 | 1.50 | 2.21 | .029 |
| 49 | I am confident with my ability to explain English grammar. | 2.29 | 1.14 | 3.19 | 1.56 | 2.74 | .007 |
| 50 | I am confident with my ability to use grammar in communication. | 2.21 | 1.01 | 3.50 | 1.27 | 4.55 | .000** |
| 51 | I am confident with my ability to translate English to Japanese. | 2.98 | 1.22 | 3.63 | 1.36 | 1.93 | .057 |
| 52 | I am confident with my ability to translate Japanese to English. | 2.39 | 1.09 | 3.31 | 1.14 | 3.13 | .002** |
| | *Overall orientation of analytic learning strategies* | 2.70 | .78 | 3.88 | .80 | 5.55 | .000** |

*Response choices: 1 = not at all true of me, 2 = not true of me, 3 = not so true of me, 4 = somewhat true of me, 5 = true of me, 6 = definitely true of me

** indicates statistical significance at the .003 level

**Table A5: Pearson correlation matrix for beliefs about language learning and strategy use (both groups combined)**

| *Beliefs about language learning* | | *Strategy use* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Analytic learning strategies* | | | | | | | | | | *Experiential learning strategies* | | | | | | | |
| | | *21* | *22* | *23* | *24* | *25* | *26* | *27* | *28* | *29* | *30* | *31* | *32* | *33* | *34* | *35* | *36* | *37* | *38* |
| **Belief in experiential learning** | **1** | .083 | .076 | .220* | .139 | .054 | -.119 | .119 | .343** | .117 | -.065 | -.098 | .017 | -.042 | -.062 | .001 | -.213* | -.186* | -.049 |
| | **2** | .163 | .040 | .116 | .204* | .130 | -.166 | .190* | .163 | .169 | .0206 | -.020 | .028 | .039 | .062 | .047 | -.208 | -.133 | -.060 |
| | **3** | .215* | .167 | .266** | .278** | .194* | .091 | .207* | .317** | .284** | .141 | -.011 | .009 | .023 | .007 | .034 | -.022 | -.032 | .086 |
| | **4** | .054 | -.003 | .127 | .225* | .300** | .011 | .225* | .213* | .122 | .093 | -.135 | -.168 | -.148 | -.154 | -.142 | -.076 | -.091 | -.210* |
| | **5** | .155 | -.132 | .041 | .090 | .298** | .058 | .284** | .191* | .110 | -.001 | .063 | -.144 | -.194* | -.089 | -.106 | -.136 | -.163 | -.068 |
| | **6** | .041 | -.096 | .140 | .059 | .052 | .129 | .118 | .076 | -.013 | -.023 | .124 | -.104 | .132 | .068 | .008 | -.019 | .005 | .020 |
| | **7** | .271** | .103 | .139 | .280** | .206* | .086 | .215* | .173 | .183* | .091 | .097 | .083 | .040 | -.114 | .013 | -.008 | -.016 | .077 |
| | **8** | .189* | .189* | .127 | .262** | .248** | .078 | .265** | .182 | .273** | .139 | .143 | .138 | -.033 | -.046 | -.007 | -.027 | -.088 | .050 |
| | **9** | .133 | .099 | .360** | .289** | .247* | .087 | .370** | .327** | .200* | .140 | -.092 | -.047 | -.032 | -.004 | -.030 | -.123 | -.055 | -.128 |
| | **10** | .021 | -.029 | -.089 | .035 | .028 | .127 | -.024 | -.036 | .060 | .111 | .110 | -.004 | .070 | -.049 | .033 | .124 | -.005 | .109 |
| **Belief in analytic learning** | **11** | .029 | .166 | .103 | .010 | .066 | .094 | .051 | .186* | .295** | .066 | .011 | .088 | .014 | .022 | .022 | .096 | .068 | -.058 |
| | **12** | .081 | .210* | .085 | .235* | .082 | .081 | .096 | .108 | .211* | .115 | .176 | .169 | .016 | .027 | .013 | -.022 | .060 | .015 |
| | **13** | -.111 | .168 | -.011 | -.144 | -.112 | -.009 | -.138 | -.060 | .168 | .227* | .186* | .170 | .213* | .247** | .167 | .238* | .255** | .162 |
| | **14** | -.004 | -.034 | .015 | -.084 | .095 | -.003 | .103 | .002 | -.083 | -.115 | -.193* | -.156 | -.371** | -.280** | -.265** | -.140 | -.167 | .256** |
| | **15** | -.081 | .084 | -.143 | -.048 | .062 | .018 | -.072 | .007 | .101 | .065 | .015 | -.012 | -.153 | .023 | -.039 | .013 | .196* | -.158 |
| | **16** | .104 | .274** | .044 | .165 | -.147 | .102 | -.073 | .089 | .224* | .313** | .197* | .268** | .176 | .086 | .147 | .184* | .272** | .117 |
| | **17** | .044 | -.147 | .049 | .108 | .013 | .026 | .087 | -.033 | .079 | .135 | .136 | .120 | .063 | -.014 | .093 | .089 | .115 | .080 |
| | **18** | .135 | .136 | .027 | .150 | .165 | .106 | .108 | .041 | .159 | .159 | -.054 | .034 | -.135 | -.070 | -.048 | .047 | .106 | -.072 |
| | **19** | -.025 | -.187* | -.285** | -.109 | .064 | .103 | .066 | -.230* | -.026 | .026 | .150 | .205* | .039 | .057 | .029 | .092 | .127 | .036 |
| | **20** | .027 | -.006 | -.061 | -.147 | .063 | .070 | -.038 | -.012 | -.055 | -.024 | -.019 | .071 | .051 | .020 | .100 | .091 | .189* | .079 |

*significant at the .05 level **indicates statistical significance at the .01 level

**Table A6: Pearson correlation matrix for strategy use and confidence (both groups combined)**

| | | *Strategy use* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Analytic learning strategies* | | | | | | | | | | *Experiential learning strategies* | | | | | | | |
| | | *21* | *22* | *23* | *24* | *25* | *26* | *27* | *28* | *29* | *30* | *31* | *32* | *33* | *34* | *35* | *36* | *37* | *38* |
| **Confidence** | **39** | -.095 | .186* | -.035 | -.028 | -.054 | .064 | -.180 | .112 | .269** | .228* | .354** | .499** | -.399** | .494** | .463** | .336** | .286** | .330** |
| | **40** | -.202* | .095 | -.236* | -.098 | -.139 | .035 | -.250** | -.074 | .232* | .229* | .370** | .318** | .287** | .359** | .355** | .361** | .350** | .242** |
| | **41** | .077 | .172 | .007 | .011 | .009 | .177 | -.031 | -.089 | .071 | .022 | .254** | .144 | .172 | .179 | .233* | .179 | .201* | .287** |
| | **42** | .128 | .243** | .141 | .112 | .143 | .130 | .112 | .205* | .345** | .290** | -.026 | .131 | -.006 | .083 | .040 | .062 | .107 | -.106 |
| | **43** | -.110 | .141 | -.212* | -.046 | -.241** | .070 | -.300** | -.063 | .096 | .234* | .519** | -.279** | -.339** | .475** | .357** | .384** | .401** | .467** |
| | **44** | -.073 | .159 | -.167 | -.054 | -.300** | .007 | -.270** | -.090 | .087 | .132 | .439** | -.310** | .321** | .474** | .336** | .401** | .289** | .452** |
| | **45** | -.0.82 | .115 | -.194* | -.088 | -.232* | -.068 | -.211* | -.053 | .192* | .320** | .330** | .376** | .254** | .374** | .324** | .312** | .257** | .362** |
| | **46** | -.003 | .212* | -.106 | -.040 | -.103 | .112 | -.202* | .002 | .162 | .203* | .412** | .405** | -.352** | .454** | .430** | .377** | .314** | .484** |
| | **47** | .031 | .065 | .068 | .145 | .007 | -.016 | -.096 | .031 | .164 | .214* | .043 | .183 | .294** | .349** | .219* | .190* | .297** | .166 |
| | **48** | .018 | .171 | -.033 | -.011 | -.115 | .132 | -.134 | .065 | .161 | .146 | .259** | -.183* | .316** | .461** | .274** | .349** | .306** | .264** |
| | **49** | .053 | .174 | .183 | .127 | -.019 | -.015 | -.105 | .061 | .168 | .096 | -.025 | .071 | .124 | .184* | .070 | .033 | .151 | .040 |
| | **50** | -.070 | .054 | -.023 | -.074 | -.195* | .053 | -.256** | -.003 | .068 | .159 | .216* | .199* | .233* | .356** | .284** | .299** | .248** | .215* |
| | **51** | .086 | .107 | .088 | .046 | .014 | .057 | -.107 | .179 | .155 | .129 | -.043 | .165 | .143 | .164 | .059 | .105 | .115 | .055 |
| | **52** | .042 | .053 | -.020 | .001 | -.062 | .155 | -.154 | .054 | .083 | .158 | .222* | .242** | .317** | -.315** | .224* | .307** | .308** | .267** |

*significant at the .05 level **indicates statistical significance at the .01 level

**Table A7: Tasks in the test from the national survey***

| *Paper* | *CEFR level* | *Actual paper* |
|---|---|---|
| **Writing Part 1** | **A2~B1** | Recently, it is said that more and more young people are developing an unbalanced diet or don't have meals three times a day. Give your opinions and reasons for your answer.<br>(From GTEC for Students, 2016 © Benesse Corporation) |
| **Writing Part 2** | **B1~B2** | Listen to the following recording twice and summarize in approximately 30 words.<br>*Many farms just sell one thing. But have you ever heard of a pizza farm? A pizza farm is a farm that grows everything required to make pizzas, such as tomatoes and onions. Pizza farms also make cheese. It is easy and useful to be able to quickly buy everything that you need to make a pizza in one place. But do you know an interesting thing about pizza farms? Pizza farms are in the shape of a pizza! If you look down on a pizza farm from a plane, you will see that the farm does not have four straight sides like a box but is round like a pizza. And each field on the farm has only three sides, almost like a triangle. Each field is like a piece of the pizza. Something different grows in each field. Yes, it's amazing! Pizza farms are in the form of a pizza!*<br>(From GTEC for Students, 2016 © Benesse Corporation) |

| *Paper* | *CEFR level* | *Questions* |
|---|---|---|
| **Speaking Part 1** | **A1** | Read the passage aloud.<br>*Some air pollution has natural causes, like wind storms and volcanoes, but most is the result of human activity. A blanket of dirty air covers most cities of the world. It mainly comes from cars and trucks and from factories that burn coal. The polluted air makes people sick, and it's especially bad for young children and aged people. Is this why countries are making rules to reduce air pollution?*<br>(From GTEC for Students, 2016 © Benesse Corporation) |
| **Speaking Part 2** | **A1~B1** | Question No.1: According to the passage in Part A, what causes most of the air pollution?<br>Question No.2: What do you like to do in places with clean air, [pause] in the countryside, for example?<br>Question No.3: What is the most interesting city you have ever visited or heard of? Tell me about the city.<br>Question No.4: Which city do you want to visit in the future, and why?<br>(From GTEC for Students, 2016 © Benesse Corporation) |
| **Speaking Part 3** | **A2~B2** | Here is a statement: *Teachers should speak only English in English class*.<br>Do you agree or disagree with this statement? You will have one minute to prepare. Then, you will have two minutes to speak.<br>(From GTEC for Students, 2016 © Benesse Corporation) |

*All exam questions are translated by the researcher

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