Although the TOEIC program was started in Japan, it was not developed with a specific country or region in mind. Developed in 1979, the TOEIC Program is considered an industry leader and sets the standard for assessing workplace English proficiency around the world. As globalization increased so did the need for a common way to communicate. Now, English is the most popular language in the world and has become the language of global business. With this rise in English-language usage, organizations and individuals in more than 150 countries trust TOEIC scores.

TOEIC is highly reliable and can measure the English-language proficiency of anyone in the world in a fair and appropriate manner. TOEIC test questions mimic real-life scenarios and TOEIC test scores provide accurate, reliable measurement of English proficiency. Test scores can be compared regardless of where or when the test is administered.

ETS and the TOEIC program are committed to quality and fairness. The TOEIC tests are subject to formal fairness reviews. These reviews ensure that the subject matter contained within TOEIC products and services is not offensive or controversial and is free from stereotypes or bias. Additionally, we have statisticians compare responses from people with different cultural backgrounds, and if there are differences in results, we identify the cause and reflect that knowledge in future item development. As just described, we set a number of check processes in our test development for quality control. These processes give consistency to our questions and enable us to maintain high quality.
Differentiation in score quality through design, development and operation

— What makes the TOEIC Program more accepted than other tests?

The TOEIC Program’s central tenet is how to maintain the reliability and effectiveness of each test. The ability to comfortably use TOEIC scores to help make decisions is a major reason why a large number of corporations and institutions trust the TOEIC tests.

The quality of TOEIC test scores can be summarized into three points. The first point is high-quality test design. TOEIC tests are designed to measure authentic, real-world communication. The tests are also designed so that test scores can be compared around the world. For example, a test taker in Japan can compare his or her scores to a test taker in another country at any time. Additionally, ongoing research efforts ensure that the TOEIC tests are accurate and relevant to today’s changing global workplace.

Second, we have an expert development process. It is not easy to keep creating test questions even if you are an English teacher, and it is extremely difficult to create high-level questions for every test continuously for many years. However, we have a structure that enables us to develop new, high-quality test questions while maintaining consistency across test forms.

Last but not least, our operations are a critical piece of maintaining a high-quality program. We conduct the test by prioritizing how we can maintain meaningful scores for our users. In order for TOEIC tests to deliver fair and accurate scores, a secure testing environment must be maintained. ETS sets strict standards for the test administration throughout the world. Just like in all of the countries we operate in, IIBC in Japan meets ETS’s strict standards and treats all test takers in an equal and fair manner.

At times, we face the dilemma of service and quality. Some say, “It takes too much time for the results to come out,” but we would like our customers to understand that a certain amount of time is required to provide accurate scores. There are several check processes in place before scores are released. Every single question is examined by statisticians, psychometricians, and assessment development staff. These procedures are necessary in order for ETS to ensure consistency, validity and reliability.

We employ specialists in various fields from around the world

— Please tell us about the organization of ETS, which develops the test.

Currently working at ETS are more than 300 people with doctorates, including specialists from various fields such as engineering, psychology, education, measurement, computer science, mathematics and statistics. It is necessary to have knowledge of various research fields in order to offer high-quality tests.

Further, it is also necessary to have people who understand the various cultures of the world to develop the test. And for that, we hire highly specialized staff from around the world who are well versed in diverse cultures. ETS is based in Princeton in the U.S., but experts from all over the world with a depth of knowledge in global English work on the different aspects of test development.

TOEIC® Speaking & Writing Tests evaluate the productive part of English communication skills

— Of late, there is increasing attention in Japan on English speaking and writing abilities, and more and more people are showing interest in TOEIC® Speaking & Writing Tests. Please offer some advice regarding the tests.

Communication, at the basic level, is the act of receiving and sending messages. Whether it is written or spoken, communication generally goes back and forth. We use reading and listening skills to receive and interpret messages and speaking and writing skills to respond to those messages. Listening, reading, speaking and writing skills are all interconnected and having abilities in all four skills is necessary to demonstrate a complete English proficiency. You have to acquire the power of observation or receptive skills to boost your productive or active skills and vice versa.

For example, you might receive an email in English. You must use your reading skills to interpret the message and your writing skills to generate a response that the other person will easily understand. When you answer the phone you must use your listening skills to understand what the caller is trying to say and then use your speaking skills to formulate an appropriate response. A person who absorbs information accurately and creates accurate information is a good communicator.

Amid advancing globalization, the opportunities to communicate in English are assuming increasing importance. Do not look at the TOEIC® Speaking and Writing Tests as just tests. Instead use them as a tool to improve your communication skills in English and a way to open up your opportunities.

Specific to the TOEIC Speaking and Writing Tests, I would like test takers to understand that they are not meant to scare them, but to improve their abilities by showing both strengths and weaknesses.

Some test takers think that they will lose marks because of wrong pronunciation or accent, but such worries are unnecessary. Further, even if a test taker uses the wrong word or grammar, it is not a major problem as long as the meaning is conveyed.

Test takers should not be overly concerned about vocabulary. As long as the listener can understand the message, word choice is not so important. Difficult words are not necessary for communication. It is best to use simple words and simple sentences so as to convey in a way that the listener understands.

You grow as you fail, therefore you gain in confidence.

— What message would you like to give to those learning English in Japan?

You cannot become proficient in English without practicing it. Japanese people are shy and might be afraid to be laughed at if their English proficiency is not perfect. However, nobody laughs when a foreigner asks a question in poor Japanese in Japan. Similarly, nobody will laugh at a Japanese in the U.S. even if his/her English is not good.

I too could not speak an iota of English when I first came to the U.S. The friends at work and students I knew there encouraged me by saying, “Don’t worry. We know you are not a native speaker,” and eventually I learned to speak English. And a few months later, they told me, “You have become really good,” and I became confident.

Everybody has to start from zero. Before sprinting off suddenly, walk first. Practice and improve your ability little by little. You will feel encouraged when you realize that your capabilities are improving and you will be able to devote yourself to practicing. Please understand that and continue with your studies.

— Thank you very much.
Use of the TOEIC® Program around the World

The TOEIC® Program is currently used in 150 countries worldwide. We asked the TOEIC representative offices* in six of those countries—South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan, Colombia, and Hong Kong—to tell us about demand for English, English language education, and use of the TOEIC® Program in their countries.

* Representative offices are organizations that implement and administer the TOEIC® Program.

South Korea: YBM

The TOEIC® Program plays an important role in English education, which is a national priority

Test takers increased rapidly from the 1990s to the 2000s

South Korea’s first TOEIC® Listening & Reading Test (TOEIC® L&R) took place in January 1982. The test received considerable attention at that time, when most English tests in South Korea still focused on evaluating grammar and reading comprehension skills, whereas the TOEIC L&R included a listening comprehension test. That same year, Samsung became the first company to introduce the TOEIC L&R to evaluate the English skills of employees, and adoption of the test by a succession of other major companies followed.

In the 1990s, the government-driven globalization policy and increasing corporate expansion abroad meant that more companies were focusing on improving their employees’ English language skills. The notion that English skills are essential for competing in international markets became prevalent, and the number of test takers increased. In 1993, 11 years after the test was introduced, the number of test takers reached the 100,000-mark, and that number then doubled over the next two years, with 200,000 test takers in 1994 and 400,000 in 1995. By 2002, the number had reached 1.1 million.

In 2004, the government announced a plan to reform the existing national exam system, and as a result the TOEIC L&R drew even more attention. Subsequently, the TOEIC L&R came to be used to evaluate English for South Korea’s university entrance exams, the national bar exam, the patent examination, and the CPA exam, as well as in public service examinations. By 2015, many government institutions and public companies had joined private companies in introducing the TOEIC L&R for performance appraisal.

With the introduction of the TOEIC® Speaking & Writing Tests (TOEIC S&W®) in December 2006, it became possible to assess all four English language skills using the TOEIC® tests.

The TOEIC® Program Also Widely Used by Universities

The TOEIC Program is currently used for a wide variety of purposes by approximately 1,600 South Korean companies, institutions and universities.

In recent years, outstanding English ability has a key requirement for finding work in South Korea, and universities all over the country are using the TOEIC Program to help their students find jobs. The program is used by many universities and graduate schools for an array of other purposes as well, including admission, credit recognition, student exchange programs, and as a graduation qualification.

Of individuals who took the TOEIC L&R in 2015, approximately 56% were students. In addition, more than 80% of the test takers had an undergraduate or advanced degree.

In a survey of 204 South Korean universities conducted by YBM, 65 of them used the TOEIC L&R for admission, and there were also 65 universities who awarded credits based on the test. In addition, 110 universities used the test for scholarship applications, 104 for student exchange programs, and 118 as a qualification to graduate.

The number of companies that use the TOEIC Program has been increasing annually. In 2015, the number of companies and institutions using the TOEIC L&R and/or TOEIC Speaking® Test was 514, 64 of which used both tests.

Use of TOEIC L&R and TOEIC Speaking Test (2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>No. of universities</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<td>Admission</td>
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<td>Scores in SP tests used</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credit recognition</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Test (s) used</th>
<th>No. of companies/institutions</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tr>
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<td>TOEIC L&amp;R</td>
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<td>Scores in IP tests used</td>
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<td>TOEIC Speaking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TOEIC L&amp;R and TOEIC Speaking</td>
<td>64</td>
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</table>

Notes: 1. SP (Secure Program) tests are directly managed by IIBC.
2. IP (Institutional Program) tests are administered by individual organizations.

Changes in TOEIC L&R Average Scores

Average scores in the TOEIC L&R have increased annually, reaching 677 in 2015.

Comments from YBM in South Korea

“In today’s world, national borders are meaningless as companies expand their business into global markets. At the same time, the development of telecommunications technologies has led to an exponential increase in the number of SNS users. In this context, companies are using English as a communication tool to find new business realms and opportunities, and educational institutions are working to strengthen the global competitiveness of students. English communication skills will continue to be essential, and the TOEIC Program will continue to be the most fair, reliable, useful, and popular tool for evaluating English skills in South Korea.”
The TOEIC L&R was first administered in Indonesia in the early 1990s. Initially the number of test takers remained low, at somewhere between 900 and 2,100. But in 2004, when ITC Indonesia took over as the TOEIC representative office, the number of schools offering IP tests began to increase, and the number of test takers broke through the 100,000 mark for the first time in 2007. During the period from 2004 up to the present, TOEIC tests have been administered in 33 of Indonesia’s 34 provinces, bringing the cumulative number of test takers to 754,083.

In Indonesia, economic conditions and insufficient general demand for English learning have hindered growth in the SP program, and as a result the overwhelming majority of TOEIC L&R Test takers use the IP program. As of September 2016, ITC Indonesia was offering IP tests to approximately 1,200 universities, around 300 vocational schools, and some 600 companies. In Indonesia many people go on from compulsory education to vocational schools, where they can acquire knowledge and skills directly connected to work, and the TOEIC L&R is used at both universities and vocational schools to assess English language ability and support job-hunting. The majority of individuals taking the TOEIC L&R are vocational school students, and Indonesia therefore stands out for its exceptionally high number of 15- to 19-year-old test takers.

At companies, the TOEIC Program is used for recruitment tests as well as for promotions, overseas assignments, and proficiency mapping. Indonesian companies have recently faced ongoing budget cutbacks due to the economic slowdown, but the number of test takers is increasing nevertheless.

Comments from ITC Indonesia

“Indonesia’s economy is still entrenched in primary industries such as agriculture and fisheries, with little in the way of industrialization, tourism, or a services industry. Unfortunately, therefore, the demand for English language learning and proficiency is still tentative and hesitant. At ITC Indonesia, we are working hard to popularize the TOEIC Program by marketing it to the government, corporations, and higher education institutions (including public universities). At the same time we are offering training, guidance, and other assistance to individual learners of English.”

Key Data

Republic of Indonesia

| Land area: | Approx. 1.89 million km² (approx. five times Japan’s land area) |
| Population: | Approx. 255.0 million (as of 2015) |
| Capital: | Jakarta |
| Main language: | Indonesian |

Test Takers Increasing at Companies Too

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Connectere Singapore was incorporated in March 2001 and administered its first TOEIC L&R in May of that year. The TOEIC Bridge® Test was introduced in 2007, and the TOEIC S&W were introduced in 2011. Connectere Singapore offers both the Public Testing Program for individual applicants and the Institutional Program (IP Test) for administration by institutions. Both public Tests and IP Tests are securely administered by Connectere’s staff and its trained supervisors and proctors. According to data for 2016, 60% of test takers took IP Tests and 40% took public tests. Furthermore, 80% of test takers were working adults, while 20% were students.

In fact, the majority of these test takers are from countries outside Singapore, and the schools and universities that adopt the TOEIC Program are not local Singaporean institutions but schools for non-Singaporeans. English is one of Singapore’s official languages, so children start learning English from around the age of two, and high school lessons and exams are conducted in English. Consequently, the level of English ability among Singaporeans is very high. In the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a global education survey for 2012, Singapore ranked second among 64 countries for mathematics and third for science and reading. What is more, Singaporean students took the PISA tests in English, whereas students in most other Asian countries take the tests in their native languages. For this reason, companies usually assume Singaporean employees are proficient in English.

The Singaporean government’s incentives for foreign companies, coupled with good infrastructure, strategic geographical location, and advanced language ability, have made Singapore a much favored location for regional headquarters of companies looking to expand their businesses in the Asia Pacific region. As a consequence, Singapore has been highly rated among the most business-friendly cities/countries in the world.

In recent years more companies have been moving their production facilities and physical offices out of Singapore due to the high costs of running businesses. Most that remain are primarily operating high-end manufacturing that requires more advanced skills. These are companies that require higher levels of English proficiency among their employees. They therefore make use of the TOEIC Program for a wide range of purposes, including appraising individuals for hiring and promotion purposes, placing employees in English training programs and evaluating how much they have learned, and for assessing current levels of proficiency. The TOEIC Program has therefore become an excellent tool for foreigners working in Singapore to learn English and demonstrate their English language ability.

In some cases, Singapore-based regional headquarters use TOEIC L&R scores to set benchmarks for staff employed in various different job grades or types of work, and to use these as standards for offices around the world. Thus the TOEIC Program is utilized for a variety of different purposes within companies and is playing a key role.

Comments from Connectere Singapore

“We have continually promoted the effectiveness of the TOEIC Program among global and regional companies based in Singapore. Regional headquarters are usually staffed by high-end managers who do not have much trouble communicating in English. However, we believe that it is possible to influence them to adopt the TOEIC Program for their offices outside of Singapore.”
Practical English Language Education Needed in Taiwan

In Taiwan, English language education is mandatory from the third grade of elementary school all the way to the first year of university. Of approximately 160 universities nationally, 120 have English departments and more than 20,000 English majors enter the job market each year. However, the average TOEIC L&R score for Taiwan as a whole is 532, which is only about A2 to B1* level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). As a result, many corporations complain of the lack of personnel proficient in English, and the reality is that English education at Taiwan’s schools is not meeting the actual needs of the workplace.

Moreover, the regulations and procedures common in Taiwanese workplaces tend to make it difficult for foreign professionals to develop careers there over the long term. This, in turn, has become an invisible factor holding back the internationalization of the Taiwanese workplace.

Taiwan’s government, however, is enacting proactive measures to facilitate globalization, such as setting entrance and exit standards for English language ability at universities and fundamentally reviewing and updating the content and methodology of English education.

Comments from Chun Shin Limited in Taiwan

“ETS has always contributed to advancing the quality of education by bringing together research findings and knowledge to provide fair and valid assessments under the TOEIC Program, as well as surveys and related services. We at Chun Shin Limited support these efforts and would also like to dedicate ourselves to promoting use of the TOEIC Program. By employing the program to evaluate language ability fairly in a wide range of settings, we aim to support English learning and help people understand that the language ability that results from such learning contributes to realizing the ambitions of many people.”
**Colombia: IPLAED Corporation/IOW**

**Emphasis on English Education Increases the Importance of the TOEIC® Program**

**Key Data**

**Republic of Colombia**
- Land area: Approx. 1,139,000 km²
- Population: Approx. 47.79 million (as of 2014)
- Capital: Bogotá
- Main language: Spanish

**TOEIC® Program Brand Takes Root over the Past Ten Years**

Since introducing the TOEIC L&R in 2004, IPLAED Corporation has operated the TOEIC Program in Colombia and Ecuador. When it was first introduced, the TOEIC Program brand was not known at all in these countries, but IPLAED Corporation worked to popularize the program with IOW, its sister company within the same corporate group, and the brand steadily penetrated these markets. The current focus is to expand the use of the IP tests, which are currently utilized by 111 companies and 73 schools and universities, for a total of 184 organizations.

The number of test takers for 2016 (including those taking TOEFL Junior*) is expected to exceed 25,000, according to data available at the end of the year. In terms of gender distribution, more men took the tests than women, at around 65% compared to 35%. There was considerable diversity among the occupations and age of test takers, but in general middle managers were more likely to take the TOEIC L&R, while senior executives and top managers tended to take the TOEIC S&W ad and blue-collar workers often took TOEIC Bridge Test. Of the anticipated 25,000-plus test takers in 2016, 70% only took the TOEIC L&R, and the average TOEIC L&R score is estimated to be in the 500–540 range.

At companies the TOEIC Program is used to evaluate employees for promotion in 70% of cases, and as an aid for making recruitment decisions in 30% of cases. It is also employed by companies as a psychometric measure of job aptitude with regard to professional English ability. In the educational sector, the program is used at language schools to measure English language proficiency, while at universities it has become a graduation requirement and is therefore regarded as a key prerequisite for entering the job market.

In the past, Colombia’s governmental authorities specified no compulsory requirements for English education levels. But now a number of ministries have determined that the professional population as a whole should try to reach a minimum of CEFR B2* level, although this is still no more than a target to aim for. For educators and English teachers, however, the ministries do require a minimum of B2 level. This is having a positive effect on English education at universities and language schools.

* B2 is the level at which an individual can understand complex content relating to his/her own field of specialty and express an opinion clearly and fully.

**Comments from IPLAED Corporation in Colombia**

“IPLAED Corporation has acted as the ETS representative office in the Colombian and Ecuadorian markets for 12 years now. We intend to continue our current efforts to extend TOEIC Program services, targeting every city in Colombia and Ecuador. Partly due to the large scale of our markets, we sometimes provide financing to build-in house test centers within universities and other institutions, which we then operate ourselves. This enables us to provide flexible services, not only for TOEIC L&R, but also for TOEIC S&W. We have always made a selling point of providing rapid score turnaround, delivering scores within 48 to 72 hours, irrespective of the number of test takers. This service, unrivalled by our competitors, has been well-received.”

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**Hong Kong: Smart Education Co. Ltd.**

**Rolling Out the TOEIC® Program in Hong Kong, Macao, and South China**

**Key Data**

**Hong Kong**
- Land area: Approx. 1,100 km²
- Population: Approx. 7.29 million (as of July 2015)
- Main languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, English, etc.

**Cooperating with Corporate Clients and Schools to Support English Language Acquisition**

Smart Education was established over a decade ago and has been a leading provider of high-quality, innovative e-learning and assessment solutions in Greater China. Since July 2011, Smart Education has been the official representative for the TOEIC Program in Hong Kong and Macao. In 2012, Smart Education won the EPN Global Recognition Award from ETS for its efforts in promoting ETS assessments.

Smart Education has been working closely with corporate clients to effectively use the TOEIC Program as the global benchmark for their employees in the areas of recruitment, promotions, overseas placements, and training. The company works extensively with universities, vocational colleges and secondary schools to help students acquire the English skills needed to succeed in the global economy. It also conducts presentations at universities in Hong Kong, Macao, and China.

**Comments from Smart Education Co. Ltd. in Hong Kong**

“Smart Education was appointed by ETS as the TOEIC representative office for South China in 2014, and we are promoting the TOEIC Program in the eight Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangxi, Anhui, Hunan, Hubei, Yunnan, and Hainan. We have continued to deliver excellent results, receiving the 2015 ETS Preferred Network Bronze Club Award for our contributions to the TOEIC Program in South China.”
At the opening event held on the first day, the stage was taken by the three popular J-Wave DJs who would later appear in the SPEAK UP NIGHTS evening events: Ms. Rachel Chan (hosts SMILE ON SUNDAY at 9:00–13:00 on Sundays), Mr. Matthew Ireton (hosts ZAPPA at 5:00–6:00 on Mondays and Tuesdays), and Mr. Sascha Boeckle (hosts BEAT PLANET at 11:30–14:00 from Monday through Thursday). The DJs each talked about their feelings toward English and offered tips for communicating in English and other advice, enlivened by personal anecdotes.

Mr. Matthew, who was born in the United States and lived in both the US and Japan up until university, talked about the importance of finding ways to interact with English more often. He recommended that learners should use their interests, such as movies or J-Wave, to increase their opportunities to hear the language, and try using English to talk about those interests.

Ms. Rachel, who has extensive overseas experience, including time spent as a student in the United States and a period living in London, advised English learners to just take action rather than being hesitant. She urged the audience to go ahead and try doing something they enjoy, such as speaking or studying English, or taking the TOEIC® tests, because there are some things one can understand only after getting involved. Ms. Rachel also pointed out that Japanese people have a charming sense of humility but it can be perplexing for people outside Japan, so she urged the audience to be more international in their approach by doing such things as speaking out more often.

Mr. Sascha, a DJ who is perfectly at ease in three German, English, and Japanese, also encouraged the English learners by pointing out how in the past there were hardly any opportunities for Japanese people to interact with English, but now there are all sorts of resources available, such as English-language movies and content on the internet, so there are opportunities to learn English everywhere. All that learners need to do is seize those opportunities.

Event in Collaboration with J-Wave: SPEAK UP NIGHTS

Each of the three DJs hosted one evening during the SPEAK UP NIGHTS event organized in collaboration with J-Wave. Each event was organized around a theme set by the host DJs: Ms. Rachel chose “ambitions and passions” as her theme for the March 8 session; Mr. Matthew talked about travel on March 9; and Mr. Sascha chose music as her theme for March 10. Each DJ’s...
talk was followed by a session during which participants discussed the theme in English with others at their table. Although the participants were all meeting for the first time, they spoke up in English and listened enthusiastically to each other’s comments. The evening ended with the J-Wave “radio show experience,” perhaps the most popular section of the SPEAK UP NIGHTS event. Participants had a chance to make a simulated guest appearance on the radio show of the DJs. Those who volunteered to take part went up on stage and talked a little about themselves to the DJs and introduced songs in English, just like a guest on a real show.

Free-Talking Tables: Fun Conversation with Native English Speakers

For the duration of the TOEIC® ENGLISH CAFÉ event, 30-minute sessions at “Free-talking Tables” were offered four times a day. Café visitors had the chance to communicate in small groups with native English speakers who are involved in a diverse range of endeavors, including television personalities. The participants and the three native speakers who are involved in a diverse range of endeavors, including television personalities. The participants and the three native speakers enjoyed humor-filled English conversations on a wide range of topics.

Why did you participate in this event? (Multiple answers permitted)

**SPEAK UP NIGHTS (N = 93)**

- I wanted to try actually speaking English: 52
- I wanted to boost my motivation to learn English: 53
- I wanted to try talking to a native speaker of English: 43
- I was interested in the IIBC’s events: 23
- Another reason: 18

**Free-talking Tables (N = 81)**

- I wanted to try actually speaking English: 40
- I wanted to boost my motivation to learn English: 37
- I wanted to try talking to a native speaker of English: 34
- I was interested in the IIBC’s events: 17
- Another reason: 11

Comments from Participants

**SPEAK UP NIGHTS**

- The J-Wave DJ did a really good job of hosting the event; it was great.
- Because it was a participatory event I felt nervous but excited. I learned a lot from hearing English spoken by people who are better at it than me, and it made me more motivated.
- I was really pleased to get a chance to talk to the J-Wave DJ.
- I was nervous because I’m not used to speaking English, but I ended up wanting to get better at it. I found it stimulating to listen to others at my table and the people who went up on stage.
- I enjoyed the chance to experience the café, the music, and English.
- It was fun. I thought it would be great if this kind of café was not just a temporary but offered here all the time.
- When I heard how amazing other participants were as English-speaking MCs, I thought that I really need to study more.
- I usually study English alone, but today was a really valuable opportunity to interact with other people who are working toward the same goal as me.

**Free-talking Tables**

- I was really nervous, but I managed to relax and enjoy talking.
- The native English speaker coaxed me to speak, and we got a good dialogue going.
- It was good to speak with like-minded people.
- The other people at the table all had unique backgrounds and were strongly motivated to learn English, so I found it inspiring.
- The native English speaker was friendly, chatting about relationships and so on. Even if I struggled to say something in English, he still listened carefully to what I was trying to say.
- I enjoyed lots of English conversation in a relaxed atmosphere.
- The topics were interesting and it was a fun conversation; even though I couldn’t say a lot, I enjoyed it so much that the time seemed to pass by in a flash.
- It helped me realize that my English ability is not good enough.
- The conversation was really interesting and it was fun talking in a group; it made me feel more motivated to study English.

Events Heighten Participants’ Interest in Speaking English

The answers to the questionnaire given to participants in the Free-talking Tables sessions and the SPEAK UP NIGHTS revealed that the main reasons for participating in the event included the desire to try actually speaking English, to boost their motivation to learn English, or to try talking to a native English speaker. When asked which of the four English language skills (listening, reading, speaking, or writing) they were most interested in measuring, almost all participants cited speaking, which reflects their strong interest in expressing themselves in English. Moreover, almost all participants said that the events had heightened their interest in speaking English. The IIBC intends to continue supporting learners of English via the TOEIC® ENGLISH CAFÉ and a range of other activities.

Mr. Sascha hosts a simulated radio show just like a real show.

The Free-talking Tables enabled visitors to relax and enjoy communicating in English.
What Do the TOEIC® Speaking & Writing Tests Mean to You?

As business becomes increasingly globalized, English is used in a growing number of situations at work, and the ability to speak and write English in particular is becoming even more important for tasks such as presentations, meetings, negotiations, phone calls, and e-mail. At the same time, more people are taking the TOEIC® Speaking & Writing Tests (TOEIC® S&W) because they are already using English in their actual work and want to gain an objective understanding of their own current English (speaking and writing) ability. For this edition of the newsletter we identified five women who have taken both the TOEIC® Listening & Reading Test (TOEIC® L&R) and the TOEIC S&W. We asked them what prompted them to take the TOEIC S&W, and what they thought of the tests.

Note: The speaking (S) and writing (W) tests are scored from 0 to 200 in 10-point increments.

My Attitude toward Speaking English Changed Greatly

Hitomi Takahashi  Employee at a trading company

I started learning English out of necessity because I work in a trading company and I found I was using English more and more often to communicate with people overseas via e-mail and phone. Preparing for and taking the TOEIC S&W changed my attitude toward speaking English. I’m surprised at the change in myself. If I’m just going about my daily business and see a non-Japanese person in difficulty, for example, I now make an effort to talk to them. I want to carry on taking the tests regularly as a way to improve my ability to express myself in English and boost my motivation.

Accurate Gauging My Own English Communication Skills

Ryoko Okutsu  Employee at a manufacturer

My work requires English, but I am not at the level where I am completely comfortable with the language. So I decided, first of all, to try taking the tests to understand my current ability. When I took the tests, my impression was that the content of the questions closely reflected real-life communication scenarios, so it seemed that the content would come in handy for work. I think the ability to speak and write English will become more important in the future, so I want to have an accurate understanding of my own English communication skills and make use of that understanding when studying.

Practical Questions Helped Me Imagine Using English for Work

Mai Kikushima  Employee at an IT company

The first time I took the TOEIC S&W was before I found my job. I really enjoyed taking the tests, but there were some questions I couldn’t answer as well as I wanted to. Although I was annoyed, it actually motivated me by making me determined to be able to answer the next time. And something else I gained from the tests was an idea of what I wanted to do in terms of employment, because the practical nature of the content made me want to use English in the same way for work. My speaking test score also enabled me to use my English speaking ability as a selling point in actual job interviews, which was helpful. So I would recommend the TOEIC S&W to those about to embark on job-hunting.

Using TOEIC L&R and TOEIC S&W to Measure Overall English Ability

Yuriko Nishiyama  Manga artist

In actual conversations you have to keep up the tempo and reply quickly. The way the tests were timed was similar to actual communication, so they were good practice. However, I struggled to organize my opinions coherently, so I didn't achieve my target scores. Taking the tests made me aware of the need to make a habit of forming coherent opinions. I want to continue taking the TOEIC L&R and TOEIC S&W regularly to measure my overall English ability.

Test Measures the Ability to Convey Information Required in Communication

Megumi Suzukawa  Employee at a manufacturer

In the TOEIC® Speaking Test, you have to produce "output" during the test itself, and I enjoyed the opportunity to speak English. Before taking the test I thought I would have to produce everything correctly, but later I heard that the marking criteria focus on the communication of meaning, rather than pronunciation or minor mistakes in vocabulary. So I realized how different it is from conventional tests. I think this really is a test that can measure the ability to communicate.

Note: Megumi Suzukawa only took the TOEIC® Speaking Test.
All the measures described were valuable case studies in implementing practical training and human resource development programs through a process of trial and error. After the presentations, all the seminar participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire, and for all three presentations around 80% of respondents replied that they had found the presentation “useful” or “somewhat useful.” Specific comments received from participants included: “The strategies for motivating employees uninterested in English were useful”; “I got a clear idea of what I need to do as a training organizer, and where my company is falling short”; “I got some hints about how to cope successfully when things don’t go well.”

We intend to continue using TOEIC Seminars to address topics of practical use for representatives of corporate HR departments.

Shimada said that, “Undertaking the task of writing this essay made me think again more clearly and deeply about what I had learned and felt, so I was able to grow as a person.”

A reception was held after the awards ceremony, and the award winners, who had appeared a little nervous during the ceremony, started to look more relaxed, talking about their ambitions and goals with the judges and past award winners who came over to congratulate them. The reception was extremely useful to the award winners by allowing them to receive advice from the past award winners, who are now already in university or working, regarding ways to study English and future career paths. We will continue holding the IIBC Essay Contest to support high school students in their endeavors.

Awards Ceremony for the 8th IIBC Essay Contest
This year’s theme: “An intercultural experience that changed me”

On November 12, 2016, the awards ceremony for the 8th IIBC Essay Contest was held at the New Otani hotel.

For the 2016 event, 172 essays were submitted for the main award, from 119 schools, and there were eight award winners in total, including the first prize winner. In addition, three prizewinners were selected for the AJS President’s Award, which has been offered since 2014 in collaboration with the America-Japan Society, Inc. (AJS). We also received 1,090 essays from 28 schools for the Encouragement Prize, which recognises all schools that submit 20 essays or more.

The theme of the essay contest was: “An intercultural experience that changed me.” The contest’s aim is to encourage high school students, who are expected to play an active role on the global stage in the future, to ponder the importance of overcoming communication gaps and achieving mutual understanding with people from different cultures.

We received a large number of essays based on students’ experiences of coming into contact with a diverse range of cultures and sets of values. The first prize was awarded to Ms. Ayaka Shimada of Shibuya Kyoku Gakuen Makuhari Senior High School for her essay “Raghad’s Hijab,” which discussed the hijab* worn by her Palestinian friend. Upon receiving the award, Ms. Shimada said that, “Undertaking the task of writing this essay made me think again more clearly and deeply about what I had learned and felt, so I was able to grow as a person.”

A reception was held after the awards ceremony, and the award winners, who had appeared a little nervous during the ceremony, started to look more relaxed, talking about their ambitions and goals with the judges and past award winners who came over to congratulate them. The reception was extremely useful to the award winners by allowing them to receive advice from the past award winners, who are now already in university or working, regarding ways to study English and future career paths. We will continue holding the IIBC Essay Contest to support high school students in their endeavors.

*A veil worn by women to cover the head and sometimes the body.
In recent years, it has become more common to use English in business situations, and more people are therefore looking to improve their ability to speak or write about their thoughts or intentions in English. In December 2016, we held workshops on two different themes to help such businesspeople improve their ability to convey information in English.

I. Workshop on Cultivating English Communication Skills Used in Business

Key is learning how to improve the ability to convey information in English

One of the workshops, titled “Cultivating English Communication Skills Used in Business,” was held on December 1 and 8 at Bellesalle Tokyo Nihonbashi. The workshop was held on two separate days—in accordance with participants’ scores on the TOEIC® Listening & Reading Test—to respond to the needs of test takers, who said that they wanted to spend time learning methods for studying English.

The workshop instructor was Ms. Ayako Yokogawa, a designated associate professor at Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology and an ETS-certified TOEIC® Propell Workshop Instructor. At the workshop she explained study methods that make use of the TOEIC® Speaking & Writing Tests (TOEIC® S&W) to enhance the ability to convey information in English.

Ms. Yokogawa started by pointing out the need to make it easier for a listener or reader to understand one’s meaning, emphasizing three key points regarding English style: (1) The speaker or writer is responsible in an English-language context; (2) Every assertion must be accompanied by a reason; and (3) One should develop from themes to comments. She then went on to give a detailed explanation of points to be careful about when responding to TOEIC S&W questions, as well as other topics that included effective learning cycles.

In the participatory activities that followed, participants formed pairs with the person sitting next to them and tackled various speaking and writing tasks. The venue became a hive of excitement as pairs with the person sitting next to them and tackled various speaking and writing tasks. The venue became a hive of excitement as participants spoke English with the participants and responded to their questions about studying English. Participants had fun chatting with the native English speakers in a relaxed atmosphere about such topics as music, food, and Japanese customs. Participants also posed many questions to Mr. Hakoda about specific study methods to improve their English language ability and other issues of concern.

In the questionnaire given to participants, around 90% of respondents replied that their motivation to study English really boosted their motivation and “Fun workshops like this are helpful for keeping up the motivation to learn English.”

II. Workshop on Building Confidence in Conveying Information

The secret to building confidence in conveying information is to let your guard down with English

The other workshop, titled “Building Confidence in Conveying Information,” was held on December 12 at the Toranomon Hills Forum.

Some English learners are unable to speak in English because they lack confidence, perhaps because they are worried about whether their intended meaning is getting across correctly, or because they are embarrassed if their grammar or pronunciation is not perfect. During this workshop, Mr. Katsuyoshi Hakoda of AEON English conversation schools was invited to participate along with three native English speakers to discuss about the key points to master when trying to communicate in English.

During the opening panel discussion, participants were clearly nodding in agreement with advice from the guests, such as: “Stay relaxed and try to speak even if it is not perfect English” or “Use subjects you know about, such as Japan, as topics for conversation.” During the working sessions, which were the main event, time was allocated for the guests and IIBC staff to join individual tables, where they spoke English with the participants and responded to their questions about studying English. Participants had fun chatting with the native English speakers in a relaxed atmosphere about such topics as music, food, and Japanese customs. Participants also posed many questions to Mr. Hakoda about specific study methods to improve their English language ability and other issues of concern.

In the questionnaire given to participants, around 90% of respondents replied in the affirmative to the question, “Did you gain confidence in conveying information in English?” In addition, we received comments such as: “Interacting with people who are positive about learning English really boosted my motivation” and “Fun workshops like this are helpful for keeping up the motivation to learn English.”

We intends to continue organizing events to support English learners, so keep an eye out for similar events in future.