

Networked English Language Education at Waseda University: Toward creating Asian-Pacific Intelligence (1)

**Michiko Nakano, Norifumi Ueda, Kazuharu Owada, Masanori Oya,
Eichiro Tsutsui, Junko Negishi, Makoto Yoshimoto and Yusuke Kondo
Waseda University**

Abstract

This paper summarizes our poster presentations Q-9 Common European Framework (CEF) and English Tutorial Textbooks, Q-12 On line Assessment of Classroom Activities in English Tutorial Lessons and R-10 An Introduction of WeTEC (Web-based Test of English Communication) and WeTEC-mini renamed as English Skill Check Test.

We describe our efforts to promote learning across borders in a networked culture by helping students to overcome linguistic challenges and encouraging collaboration with others. The program consists of a three-step system: English tutorials at the first step, Cross-cultural Distance Learning at the second step and Cyber seminars at the third step with lectures on demand and face-to-face interaction, and collaborative IP video-conferencing among students. In (1), we deal with English Tutorial System.

1 Introduction

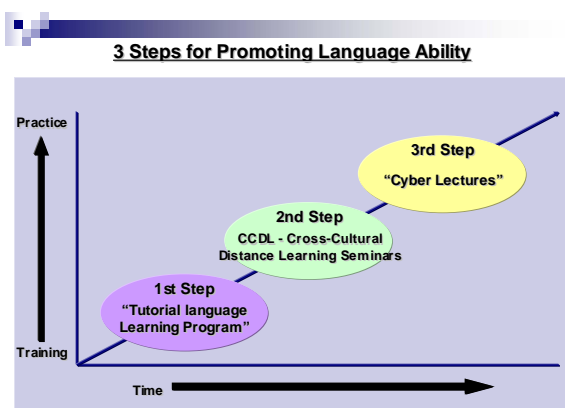
This project has been supported by Digital Campus Consortium (DCC). DCC whose cooperate members are major industries in Japan has aimed to realize a new model of university education for the 21st Century. Our mission was to educate Global Citizens who are active international intellectuals and who can solve real problems in the world. For this purpose, we established three-staged educational system: the first stage is to improve the proficiency levels of their target languages (English, Chinese, Russian and Japanese), the second one, to enable the students to interact with overseas partners and to discuss controversial areas in the world and the third, to interact with overseas specialists in the field. For the purpose of the first stage, we established Language Tutorial Systems in which a group of four students are taught by one tutor. This language programs were essential for the students at Waseda University, since their proficiency in spoken English was not up to the international standards; average TOEIC score was 550. We will describe some typical language tutorial in the next section.

English Education at Waseda University is based on a three-step system with English Tutorial as the first step. The students take a placement test called WeTEC which is based on Item Response Theory and Computer-Adaptive test. They are divided into 6 levels: beginners, basic, pre-intermediate, intermediate, post-intermediate and advanced. The textbooks are sequenced, based on European Common Framework (2001). English Tutorial lessons are designed to provide interpersonal as well as situationally authentic tasks and focused on speaking with a group of four students whom one tutor is coordinating. The 173 tutors teach 10000 students who are constantly

encouraged to be autonomous. I will demonstrate our method of learner-autonomy.

After communications skills in English, students proceed to the second step called Cross-Cultural Distance Learning (CCDL). In this program, they communicate one-to-one with students overseas using the Internet. This gives them a reason and opportunity to use English as a tool of global communication. 68 universities mainly in Asian countries have participated in the program. The CCDL program includes group discussion via videoconferencing. They are encouraged to present their ideas on such issues as common heritage in Asia, co-existence in Asia, environmental problems and popular cultures, using Power Point Slides or Digital Video. This gives them lessons on planning ability, since students have to plan and prepare for discussions by themselves.

Final step of the Waseda Method is interactive distance learning called Cyber Seminars and Cyber Lectures. This program is designed to help students study their majors in English with overseas partners, using a cyber network spread all over the world. Students can study on-demand Internet lectures first and then they can have live interactive sessions with overseas students, making full use of the IT network.



2.1 English Tutorial System in the past: 2000-2002

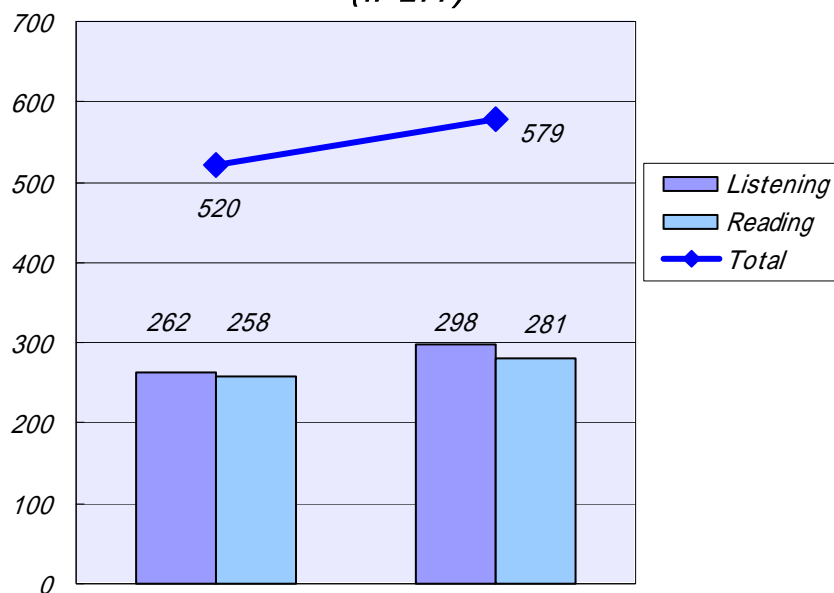
English Tutorial System has been reformed almost every year. The past evolving history of English tutorials needs to be touched on here. The original purpose of English tutorial in the past was to improve students' English speaking abilities to get things done in daily and work-place transactions. We prepared two courses with three levels: general and business English at the respective levels of beginners, intermediate and advanced. Tutorial lessons are held twice a week, totaling 24 hours. In addition to the tutorial speaking exercises, the program had the following features:

- ◆ Original Textbooks based on Council of Europe Frame-work(CEF) since 2001
- ◆ Web-Based Materials for Essay Writing
- ◆ Students write three types of essays in a term; the topics are chosen by each student and similar to problem-solving self-paced tasks.
- ◆ Faculty members give feedback on-line.

- ◆ Teacher-Student, Student-Student Discussion on BBS
- ◆ Students are required to watch several on-demand videos about essay writing per unit.
- ◆ Students write an essay in the MS Word format and attach it on the BBS.
- ◆ Faculty members correct the essay and return it onto the BBS.
- ◆ Students correct the errors and submit the revised essay again.
- ◆ Students can ask the questions on the BBS or by e-mail.
- ◆ Students give presentation in English based on the best essay s/he wrote, using Power Point Slides.

Registered students are supposed to take the TOEIC-IP test for the class level classification before the start of the Program. They can also take the TOEIC-IP test again at the end of the Program if they wish.

**Fig 1 . The average scores in April and July
(n=277)**



Total	No.	Min.	Max.	Ave.	SD	t-value	d.f.	P
April	277	250	935	520.29	116.15	15.35	276	P<0.001
July	277	260	925	579.48	117.95			
Listening	No.	Min.	Max.	Ave.	SD	t-value	d.f.	P
April	277	105	495	262.24	67.25	12.89	276	P<0.001
July	277	95	495	298.05	68.72			
Reading	No.	Min.	Max.	Ave.	SD	t-value	d.f.	P
April	277	100	440	258.05	64.74	9.64	276	P<0.001
July	277	90	430	281.43	61.40			

They improved the total scores on average by 59 points. With an alpha level of .05, this gain score was statistically significant, $t(276)=15.35, P < .001$.

In 24 hour training, the students managed to raise their score 59 points on average. Due to these Tutorial programs, our students came to have meaningful sessions with over-sea partners in the second stage called Cross-Cultural Distance Learning seminars (CCDL in short). The cross-cultural distance seminars with overseas partners gave our students authentic communication activities. In the next section, we will describe CCDL activities in the classroom.

2.2 English Tutorial System since 2003

In 2004, we had about 8500 students enrolled in English Tutorials; in 2005, we had 97000 participants. We faced two challenges with this popularity of our educational system; firstly, we found that TOEIC-IP are not feasible, to accommodate 5000 students per term. So, we also implemented computer-adapted on-line placement test called WeTEC, based on IRT. In addition, we could not maintain the past system, due to the lack of classroom spaces. Every scoring had to be done by a tutor in charge of each tutorial rather than by full-time or part-time lecturers. For this reason we devised the following on-line scoring system: Two can-do points Assessment, On-time bonus, Preparation, Participation, Self-Reflection Task (currently called Lesson Review Task). In the following sections, we will summarize these innovations.

2.2.1 WeTEC Placement Test

WeTEC-mini and WeTEC have been used for Waseda University students who take English Tutorial Lessons. Both tests are based on Item Response Theory and compiled as a Computer-Adaptive Test. WeTec-mini CD-ROM version was used for Freshmen who have not yet given Computer IDs by the University. Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors take WeTEC.

WeTEC and WeTEC-mini consists of four parts: Vocabulary Section, Idioms and Phrase Section, Listening Section and Dictation Section. Each item in Sections 1 to 3 is assessed in terms of discrimination index, difficulty index, and pseudo-chance level with respect to a learner's ability. Section 4 is estimated in terms of discrimination and difficulty indices.

$$P_j(\theta) = C_j + \frac{1 - C_j}{1 + \exp\{-Da_j(\theta - b_j)\}}$$

a_j = Item Discrimination

b_j = Item Difficulty

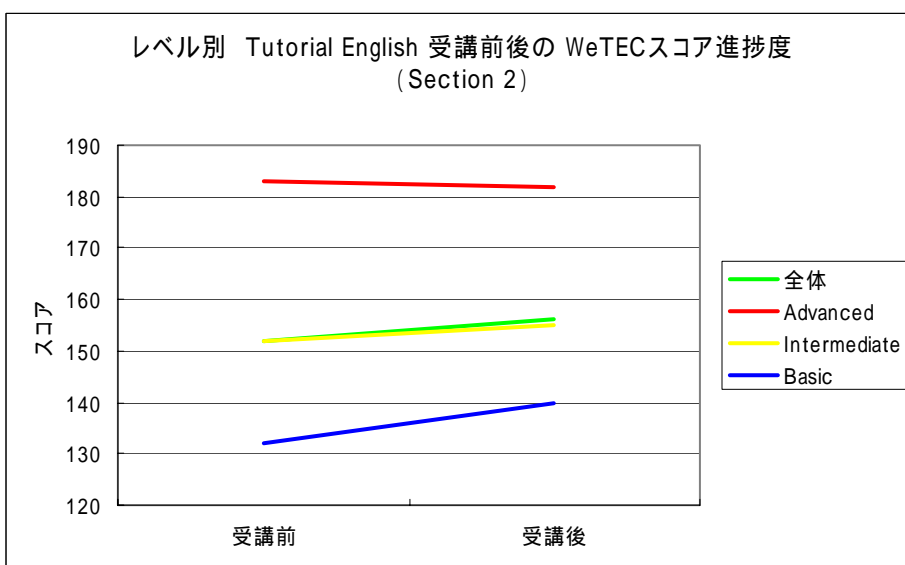
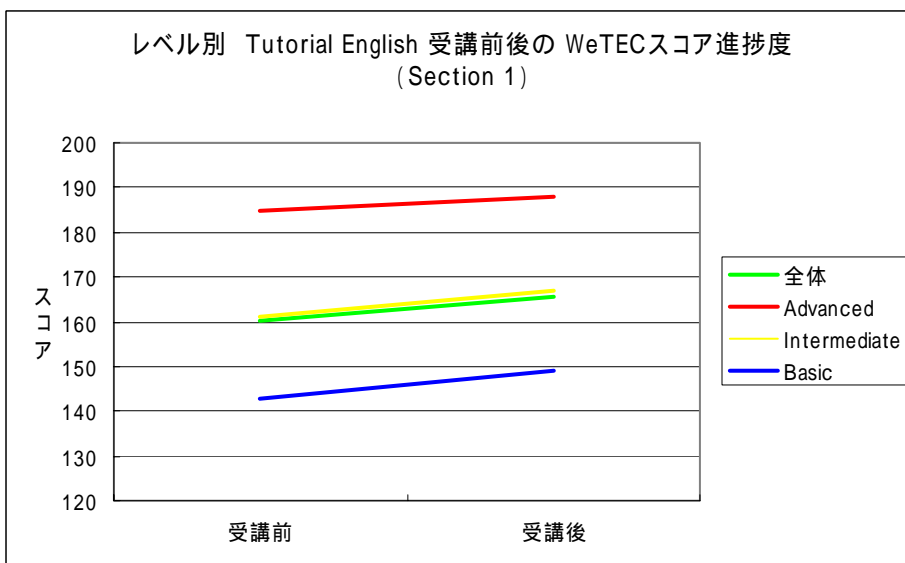
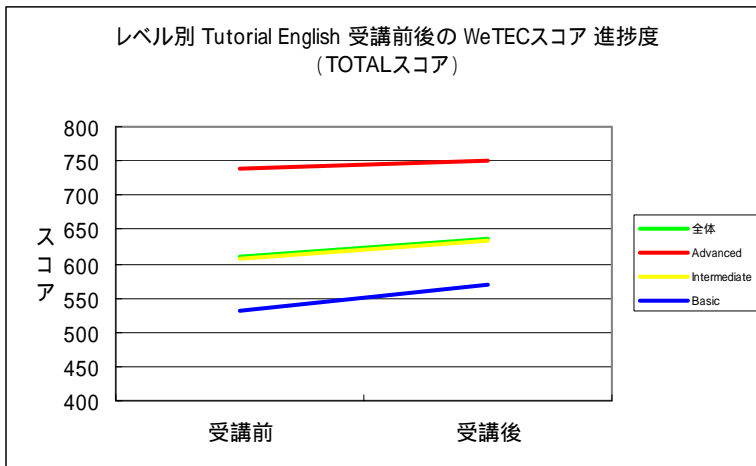
C_j = Guessing

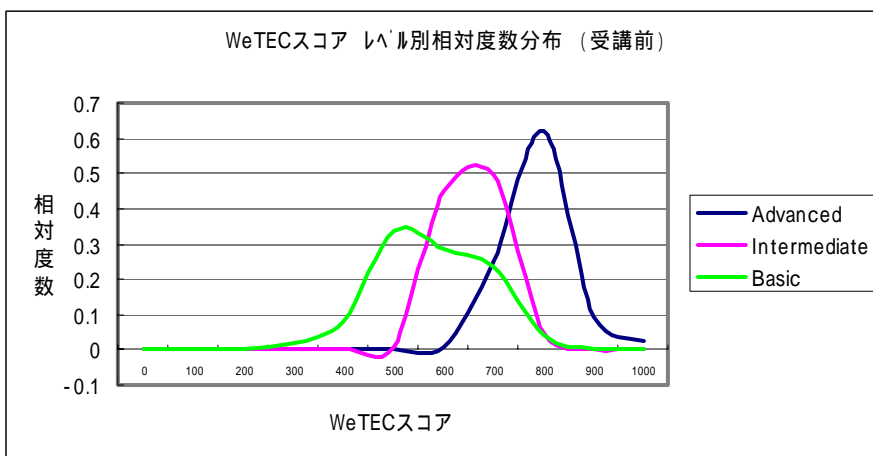
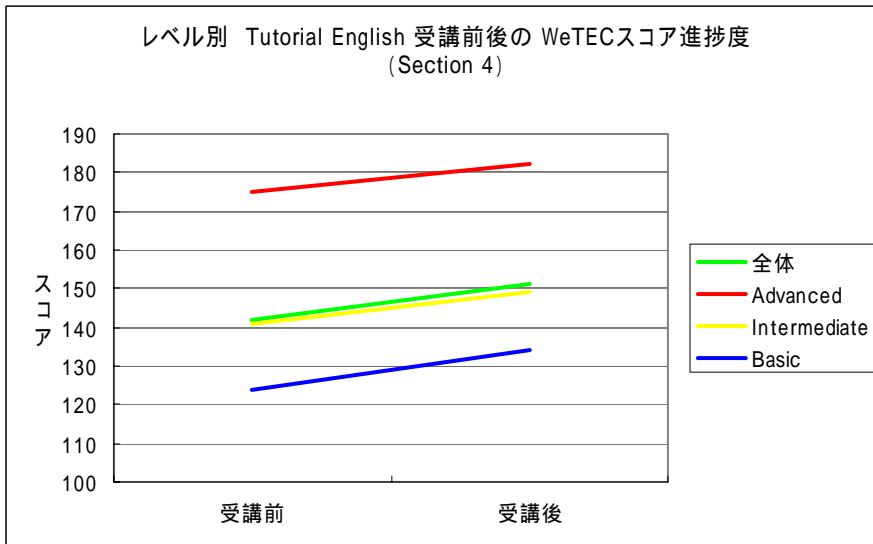
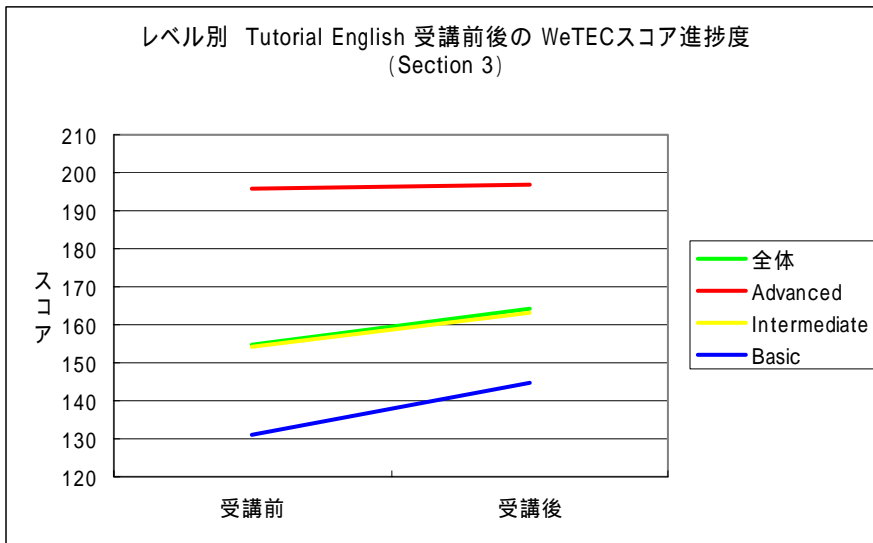
Each section consists of 25 items which are chosen by Item Selection Rule from 4000 item bank:

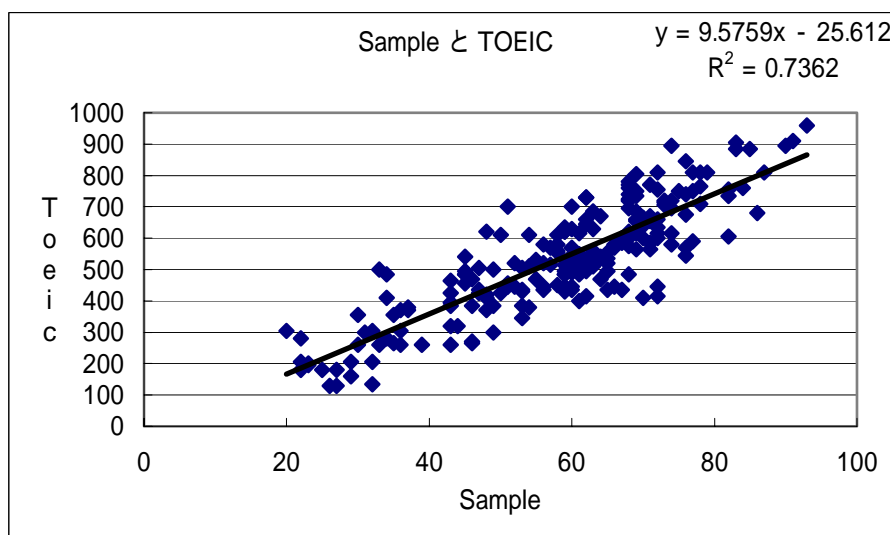
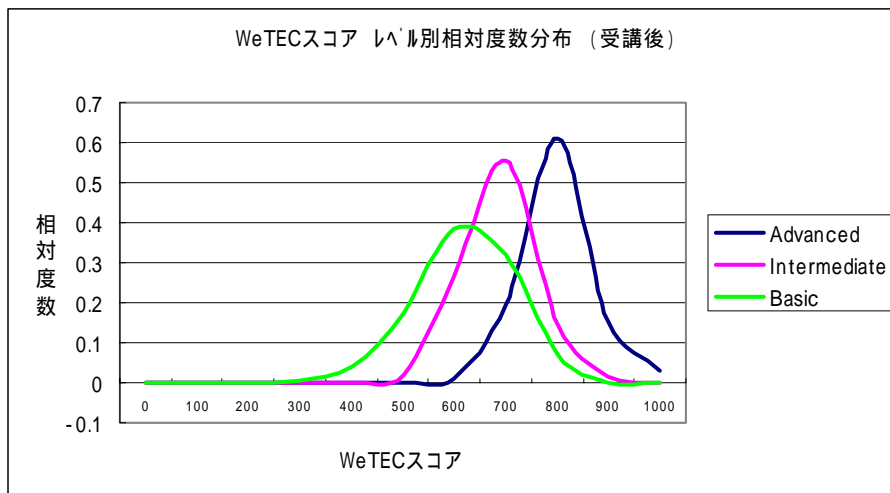
$$\hat{\theta}_{i-1} - 0.5 < b_i < \hat{\theta}_{i-1} + 0.5$$

The process halts via the following rule:

$SE_{\theta} < .05$ & $SE_{\theta_i} - SE_{\theta_{i-1}} < .001$ where SE stands for Standard Error of Measurement.







2.2.2 Common European Framework and the sequencing of our textbooks

European Council of Education proposed in 2001 the easy-to-use can-do-lists which can differentiate six levels of English Proficiency, in terms of Oral Interactions, Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading. Tutorial English courses at Waseda University used original textbooks published by Waseda University International, Co. Ltd. Since 2002, we have examined our textbooks in view of Common European Framework (CEF) to see whether our teaching materials correspond to A1 (Breakthrough), A2 (Way Stage), B1(Threshold), B2(Vantage), C1(Effective Operational Users) and C2 (Proficient Users). Although we have researched Scsles proposed by Interagency Language Round

Table, OPI, ACTFL and TOEIC Can-Do list, we consider CEF as more relevant to our three-stage Waseda teaching method. European Council was set up by the three major principles : to defend human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law, to standardise member countries' social and legalpractices, and to promote awareness of a European identity based on shared values and

cutting across different cultures. According to Byram (2005), Language policies had the following three

PLURILINGUALISM: all are entitled to develop a *degree of communicative ability in a number of languages over their lifetime* in accordance with their needs

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY: Europe is multilingual and *all its languages are equally valuable modes of communication and expressions of identity*; the right to use and to learn one's language(s) is protected in Council of Europe Conventions

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING: the opportunity to learn other languages is an essential *condition for intercultural communication and acceptance of cultural differences*

DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP : *participation in democratic and social processes in multilingual societies is facilitated by the plurilingual competence of individuals*

Byram (2005 JACET, Keynote Address

Tutorial English courses at Waseda University are categorized into the two major types: General English and Business English. Each type has four levels: beginners, Basic, Intermediate and Advanced. The vocabulary size for A1 and A2 is estimated as 850 words. B1 requires 1500 words and B2, 4500 lemmas. This suggests that in terms of vocabulary size, A2 is the level of junior high school graduates and B1, senior high school level in Japan. Since these vocabulary, idioms, formal schemas, and content schemas relevant for spoken English must be internalized and accessible to be automatic, ready to be used in an appropriate context of situation, we adopted the following alignment in 2004:

C2 or C2+	Advanced (Business Internship)
C1	Advanced (General)
B2	Pre-advanced
B1	Intermediate
A2	Pre-Intermediate
A1	Basic
A1	Beginners

2.2.3 Tutorial Scoring System

Since 2004, English Tutorial lessons introduced the on-line assessment system which includes the following components:

- on-time bonus to prevent the students from being late for the lessons
 - one point max 20 points per semester
- Preparation points max 2, per lesson (2, 1, 0) to encourage the students to prepare for the lessons

- Can-do points: each lesson contains two can-dos Max 16, per lesson
 - For each can-do, tutors can assign maximum of 8 points, depending on a student's performance during the lesson. (8 , 6 , 4 , 2 , 0)
 - Review Lessons (L.7 and L.14) three can-dos Max 24 points
 - L 20 (no can-do point)
 - The total of 34 can-do functions in each of six level textbooks (Grand total of 204 functions) is based on European Framework compiled by European Council of Education.
- Participation Max 3 per lesson (3,2,1,0)
- Self-Reflection Task, Max 2 per lesson(2,1,0): this task is designed to encourage our students to be an independent learners of English in view of Learner Autonomy. They are asked to report to the tutors what they have learned during the lesson and what they have found difficult to master. The students also have to write what are their weaknesses in English and what kind of additional activities they are planning to make up for their weak points, such as memorize five English words a day or read one article in English Newspaper.
- Final Review (Tutor's advice) to each student
- Final Assessment
 - A 480-400
 - B 399-298
 - C 297-191
 - D 190-110

About 90 % students regarded the scoring system as easy to understand and as helpful, according to our survey.

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