

# THE LANGUAGE CONNECTION

## BULLETIN BOARD

### ✓ NIC to offer free all-English classes, campus tours

Nevada-California International Consortium of Universities and Colleges (NIC), Japan will offer free, all-English classes on July 24 and 31 at its campus in Shinjuku, Tokyo, mainly for those interested in what classes are like at the campus. On the morning of July 24, there will be three hourlong classes under themes such as "note-taking and discussion" and "reading, writing and discussion." On July 31, campus tours will be added to these classes, each of which will be offered in the morning and afternoon. Each class will consist of up to 15 students. For details, call (03) 5379-5551.

### ✓ Osaka seminar on teaching English to middle school students

The Institute of Language, Education and Culture has organized a seminar on teaching English to middle school students, which will be held July 28 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at A Wina Osaka hotel in Tennoji Ward, Osaka. The keynote speaker will be Masao Kunihiro, one of the nation's leading simultaneous interpreters, who will discuss "Japanese and English in Asia." Four workshops covering shadowing techniques, teaching pronunciation and other topics will follow the lecture.

Admission is ¥5,000. Applications can be made at [www.ilec.jp](http://www.ilec.jp). For details, call (03) 3230-9241.

### ✓ English presentation contest by high school students

Chubu University has announced its inaugural English presentation contest by high school students. Finalists in the contest will show off their presentations, impromptu speeches or debate skills on Aug. 1 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the university's campus in Kasugai, Aichi Prefecture. The resolution for debate is "Japanese students should study English in primary school." For details, call (0568) 51-4144.

### ✓ Participants sought for Tokyo YWCA's international camp

The Tokyo YWCA is seeking participants for an international camp to be held Aug. 6-8 near Lake Nojiri in Nagano Prefecture. Activities will include games in English, swimming and other forms of outdoor recreation. Open to up to 25 children, from second-year to fifth-year primary school students, and costs ¥32,000 per person. For details, call (03) 3293-5421 or [www.tokyo.ywca.or.jp/lang/](http://www.tokyo.ywca.or.jp/lang/).

## SELHi in action

A GRASSROOTS REVOLUTION AT HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

# Creating a yardstick for progress

By Midori Matsuzawa  
Daily Yomiuri Staff Writer

*This is the 11th installment in a series on the government-designated Super English Language High School (SELHi) pilot project.*

**T**AKAMATSU—Today we have all sorts of units at our disposal to measure distance (kilometers), volume (cubic meters) or time (hours). What would it be like if we did not have these units to rely on? First-year students at Takamatsu Daiichi High School were asked to think about this question during an all-English chemistry class last month.

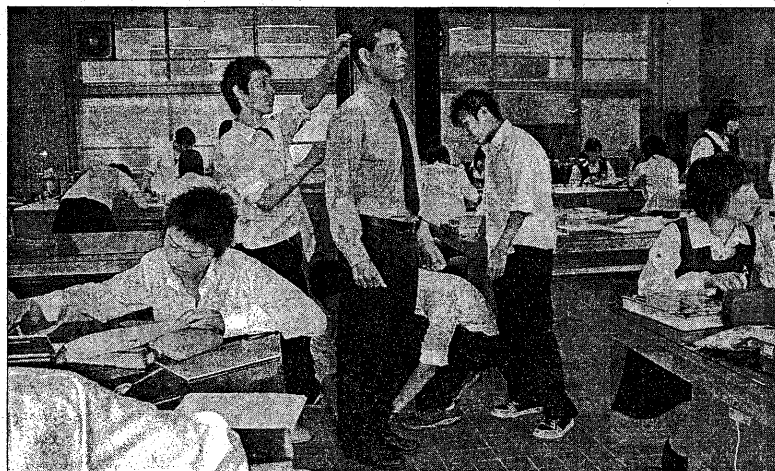
"You have to imagine that you're going back 500 years. There is no (standardized measurement) system. There is no centimeter, millimeter, second or minute," chemistry teacher Jaime Silva, 31, said. "So you have to use your imagination and you have to make a new system."

Silva then divided the class into six groups. He instructed four of the six groups to create their own "units" and then measure six given things, such as the perimeter of a table. The remaining two groups were allowed to use modern measuring tools.

However, only a few students seemed to completely understand the English-language instructions at first. In fact, many of them asked Silva to repeat the instructions during their group work. Eventually, the majority understood what they had to do. Some groups used a pen or a student's hand to measure perimeters, while another group gauged the instructor's height with a string to set the length of a unit they named "one Jaime."

The all-English chemistry class—called "CBI chemistry" to distinguish it from regular chemistry classes—is led by Silva, a Kagawa University biotechnology researcher from Portugal. He said he planned the group work to familiarize students with the concept of the International System of Units (the metric system) coming up in subsequent classes.

CBI stands for "content-based instruction," and



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In an all-English chemistry class led by Jaime Silva, first-year students at Takamatsu Daiichi High School measure their instructor's height with a string to create a unit of length they named "one Jaime."

teaching basic science and math in English is the main focus of the school's SELHi project.

The public school run by the Takamatsu municipal government was one of the first of 18 schools to be designated SELHis when the Education, Science and Technology Ministry launched the pilot project in April 2002.

Like many other SELHis, Takamatsu Daiichi places only a limited number of students in its pilot project English course curriculum—about 40 students each in the first and second grades.

Each SELHi school receives specially earmarked funds during the three-year designation period. Takamatsu Daiichi's designation period comes to an end in March 2005. In the first year, the school researched how best to structure their program. Last year, in addition to regular English-language classes, CBI math and science classes were launched. They are offered once a week.

The CBI chemistry courses were first run by a Filipino postgraduate student from Kagawa University. She was replaced this year by Silva, who is responsible for teaching chemistry and math to the first-year students and biology to second-year students. Several Japanese instructors from Kagawa are teaching second-year students math.

Sciences and math were chosen as CBI courses because the content might be easier for students to follow, said Tomoaki Miyamoto, 37, a teacher in charge of the school's pilot project.

"Students can also depend on factors other than

English—such as numerical formulas, charts and experiments—to understand what they're learning," the English-language teacher added.

The CBI classes are supplied with textbooks from publishers in the United States.

"These classes are 'sometimes difficult but interesting,'" said first-year student Takehito Futaba. "Everybody says chemistry is definitely more difficult than math as we often deal with subject matter we haven't learned yet."

CBI math classes begin with basic calculation such as multiplication and fractions.

Biology teacher Toshiaki Dejima said Silva has a lot of freedom regarding materials and methods of instruction in his CBI classes, and the content of the two teachers' classes does not always overlap. Dejima often offers follow-up information in Japanese to support material taught in the CBI classes.

"The students then get to think about the same topics in both Japanese and English, which I believe really facilitates their understanding of the material," Dejima said.

The 53-year-old also pointed out there are special benefits to studying science with a non-Japanese teacher. The students are eager to communicate in English with Silva, and do extra preparation to understand difficult English technical terms in the textbooks.

Second-year student Eruni Yamamoto said she has become used to listening to instructions in English.

"But I'm still not good at expressing my opinions," she said, after the day's CBI biology class featured a debate over global warming.

"In today's Japan, English is something we study simply to pass our university entrance exams. But here, we're using English for other purposes, which is incredibly helpful," Yamamoto added. "Learning math and science in English has helped me improve my overall ability to communicate in the language."

Many of Yamamoto's classmates also seemed to have a hard time expressing themselves during the debate.

"This frustration has made some of the students demand that their English classes feature more discussion to help them with their communication skills," Miyamoto said.

Silva, who is also a certified teacher of English as a foreign language, said planning CBI classes is challenging because they seek to build a mastery of two subjects at once—acquiring knowledge of math or science while developing English skills.

"We have to try to get a balance," he said. "I think in any one lesson, it's difficult to get the balance between these two things."

Takamatsu Daiichi is highly successful at preparing its students to pass university entrance exams. The school has been able to accommodate the SELHi project without changing its fundamental curricular formula, Miyamoto said. The school was careful to balance the increased number of required English-language classes for its pilot project students with other core subjects.

Improving the quality of English classes is another goal of the SELHi project. For example, English classes are taught almost entirely in English.

"We should still offer English instruction with the entrance exams in mind, of course, but the classes should help students acquire better communicative skills as well," Miyamoto said.

The school has invited several university speakers to host all-English extracurricular programs. During this year's summer vacation, it will hold a five-day intensive training program for first-year students. A four-day series of university-level lecturers has been scheduled for second-year students.

Prof. Matsuo Kimura of Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo, who serves as an adviser to the school's SELHi project, believes Takamatsu Daiichi has excelled at achieving maximum results by taking full advantage of the opportunities and limited time available.

With the end of the three-year project, the school will no longer receive the annual ¥3.5 million in government funds given to SELHi schools. Kimura says the challenge will be to continue to implement what they've been doing under the program.

"Otherwise, the school will regress to where it was three years ago," he said.

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