Professor Kenzo Takizawa’s 16-Year Contribution to English at Hakuoh University

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As we all know, happily in 2015 Hakuoh celebrated its 100-year anniversary. It is therefore fitting that we look back with pride and gratitude at some of the steady steps that the university has taken over the past two decades towards achieving this significant milestone. Furthermore, as several key individuals have been associated with this progress, it is appropriate to single out those persons for public recognition of their accomplishments that have helped to create today’s Hakuoh University.

This short subjective article is an attempt to do just that; to reflect on the considerable contribution of Professor Kenzo Takizawa, who retired in March of 2016, to English teaching and learning at Hakuoh University. To begin, I should describe the school in the spring of 2000 when Professor Takizawa and I were hired. At that time, Hakuoh only had one campus, the one now known as the Main Campus, and was made up of the faculties of Business Management, from 1986, and Law, from 1991, as well as the older, from 1974, junior college. In 2000, the total enrollment was 3,996 and the number of full-time teachers was 104.

Since Hakuoh University’s foundation under the late first-President

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Kazuyoshi Kamioka, English has always been a strong point of the school. Professor Takizawa and I were very impressed to find such a large number of native and fluent non-native full-time English teachers working in both faculties and the junior college. Equally surprising was the ‘team-teaching’ system in the university with both a bilingual Japanese and native English speaker working together to teach many of the classes. The students seemed to enjoy the resulting interplay between the two teachers and the chance to hear authentic English in natural situations.

Back then three senior faculty members, Professors Uematsu, Iizuka, and Ohtake, coordinated English instruction across the Business and Law faculties, as well as in the women’s junior college. Soon, the new Business Communication subdivision focusing on English was created. In 2000, the junior college had two-year English and Early Childhood Education associate degree programs which were later expanded into today’s four-year English Education Major and larger Children’s Education Major that, together with the Sports and Health Major and Psychology Major, make up the current Education Faculty. A few years after Professor Takizawa and I came to Hakuoh, construction on the new East Campus (initially for the Law Faculty) was begun right in front of the east exit of Oyama Station.

As the three senior English teachers retired, Professor Takizawa took on more English leadership responsibilities. At the same time, Hakuoh began to steadily expand its relations with various universities abroad; first with Tochigi’s sister-state Indiana in America, then in Taiwan, in other areas in the US and Canada, in the UK, in Norway, in Brazil, in China, in France, in South Korea and in Thailand. As a result, increasing numbers of foreign exchange students studying Japanese language and culture, and some even taking regular classes in Japanese, became somewhat common at Hakuoh. Professor Takizawa quickly recognized the motivational
possibilities of the foreign exchange students’ presence. Therefore, the early *English Lunch Table* was expanded to an *English Lounge* where Hakuoh’s 98.5 percent Japanese student body could informally meet and interact with the exchange students on campus.

One of the first three exchange students was Kyle McLain from Indiana, who formally transferred to Hakuoh and thus became the school’s first Western graduate in 2008. Kyle later went on to pass the highest (level 1) Japanese Language Proficiency Test, and now works at our Hakuoh University Super Science High School in Tomita as an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). Over the next 11 years, as many as one-quarter of the approximately 50 students from Indiana were or had worked as ALTs in Japan after graduating from their US universities. This would later be a key element that Professor Takizawa skillfully used to help successfully rebalance Hakuoh’s exchange relationship with the University of Hawaii.

However, before explaining about that allow me to return to the pivotal year of 2006. As Professor Takizawa himself wrote in an email, “I can recall three achievements during my 16 years at Hakuoh. The first is about the English Education Major. I was assigned to establish a new course in the Faculty of Education in 2006. I was very lucky to work on the curriculum with a very diverse and wonderful team composed of seven experts in different fields.” The work was difficult, as we had to envision and plan—in considerable detail—the entire course of studies for the four years. It was further complicated by the fact that the English Education Major was open to students who planned to take the teacher qualification exam to become elementary school English teachers (a totally new field) or junior high school teachers, as well as those students who wanted to go into non-educationally related jobs after graduation.

To give an example of the magnitude of work involved, the team
determined that English essay writing would be taught at four semester-long Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced and Academic Writing levels in preparation for those students who choose to write their 20-page graduation theses in English. Professor Harris put together the entire writing program that included preparing multiple templates for each of the six essays that the students would be required to write at every level. In addition, there was much computer-related work as the writing students meet in computer-labs to rewrite multiple copies of their essays. A direct result of the writing program is that 30 percent of the 2016 graduating English Education Majors successfully wrote their theses in English. (In Japan today, most universities no longer require undergraduates to write theses—even in Japanese, so having this many students write in academic English is a significant achievement.)

After the new English Education Major was approved and the respective syllabi had been written, Professor Takizawa and I visited the prefectural Board of Education and drove around Tochigi to meet school principals and guidance counselors to introduce our new program to them for their graduating students. “Visiting many high schools to explain the new course with Professor Miller was a fond memory for me. We were serious recruiters. Because of our eager recruitment, we could fill the student capacity of the new course from 2008, the second year it was open. I am very glad that over 40 graduates have passed the teacher employment examination and become regular full-time teachers in elementary and junior high schools so far.”

As Professor Takizawa mentioned, we only got 47 of the 50 students we wanted in our first year (2007). However, from the second year onward, the program has been considerably oversubscribed, in one year by about 50 percent. Interestingly, four of those very first 47 students have married
fellow classmates. (So, perhaps we should also promote ‘finding a marriage partner’ as one of the potential byproducts of the program.) One of those first English Education Major students who married a classmate was Masato Yano, and they now have a baby son. At Hakuoh, Masato and Indiana exchange student Brian Young became close friends and Masato visited Brian’s family in the US several times. Masato was Hakuoh’s first (of five) students to study in Bergen University in Norway. Later, Masato completed his MBA in America that led him to a business consulting position with an international firm in Tokyo. In 2016, Brian Young received his Ph.D. in the study of earthquakes, and he is engaged to be married.

As in all Hakuoh teacher preparatory programs, we assist our students to go and practice-teach for three or four weeks, usually at the junior high or elementary school that they graduated from. Under Professor Takizawa’s leadership, we have helped our students to succeed by setting a minimum TOEFL score required to apply to go and practice-teach and also by establishing certain courses, for example Communicative English Teaching and English Education Methodology IV to enable our students to get hands-on experience teaching English classes (most recently with foreign exchange students who hope to become ALTs in Japan in their future).

In tandem with our student practice-teaching preparation, Hakuoh was requested by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to help provide in-service training to licensed local teachers. This was another serious responsibility and one that Professor Takizawa wrote about being proud of in the same email that I quoted from above. “The second (achievement) is about the summer course for the renewal of teaching licenses. I was assigned to be the head of the preparatory committee for the course in 2008, and Hakuoh was able to start the course
in the summer of 2009. There was a lot of trial and error along the way, but I feel very good knowing that over 1,000 local teachers have come to take courses at Hakuoh every summer.” Kenzo Takizawa, Harry Harris (for several years) and I taught the general English communication class to between 50 and 60 licensed teachers of various English ability levels. The course content and testing requirements are somewhat rigid, but we were able to construct the classes in such a way that all the local teachers successfully passed and were recertified. Over the years, this has also helped to build connections and goodwill between Hakuoh’s Education Faculty and local teachers and schools.

Returning to Hakuoh’s relationship with the University of Hawaii (UH). Thanks to early efforts by Dr. Joyce Tsunoda, a former UH Vice Chancellor before becoming a Hakuoh professor, we had established a sister-school relationship with UH. However, this was a reciprocal relationship based on a balance of exchange students between the two institutions. After Hakuoh had sent five or six students (mostly English Education Majors) to UH without any of their students coming to Hakuoh there was a problem. Fortunately, former Hakuoh Education Faculty Dean Kanji Akahori had forged a strong relationship with UH College of Education Dean Donald Young. This connection enabled Professor Takizawa to draw up a plan with Professor Oki and others of inviting UH students who wanted to work as ALTs in Japan after graduating from UH. The plan allowed them to train and be teaching interns in our affiliated junior and senior high schools. His plan was successful and has quickly rebalanced our relationship, thereby allowing Hakuoh students to again study at the University of Hawaii.

Throughout his full 16 years at Hakuoh University, Professor Takizawa has also been an accomplished oral-history researcher and biculturally focused author who considers his “third (accomplishment as) publishing
books. Thanks to the subsidies from Hakuoh University, I have been able to publish two books in collaboration with my wife, Karen. In 2009, we could publish *Eigo komyunikeshon ryoku anmoku no ruru 22 (Unwritten Rules of Communication Style)*. This year we have published a new book, *World War II Revisited: Two POWs, Two Sides, Two Stories*. This is our life work.”

Professor Takizawa often made use of the earlier work (*Unwritten Rules of Communication Style*) when teaching local teachers in the summer in-service seminars at Hakuoh, as well as in his regular English education classes. It is comforting to know that these communication research insights of both Kenzo and Karen (she, being a professor at Hosei University) are being used by past and present Hakuoh University students, as well as licensed teachers all around Tochigi.

The second book, *World War II Revisited: Two POWs, Two Sides, Two Stories*, which he refers to as “our life work” is a greatly expanded, well-documented and adroitly balanced (*Two Sides, Two Stories*) addition to their 1999 *GI spoon yonhaibun no kometsubu*, published by the *Mainichi Shimbun* in Japanese. A recent Amazon Japan review of the book, after praising the clear prose and in-depth fieldwork (including thousands of miles traveled retracing each POW’s respective odyssey) wrote, “the story of the two POWs, each among the very few who survived their battles and captivity, is a moving, cross-cultural analysis of the different mindsets of Americans and Japanese 70-plus years ago.... Furthermore, Karen and Kenzo’s bicultural personal observations make the book extremely relevant to today’s world.” US Ambassador Caroline Kennedy wrote a thank-you letter. What a wonderful way to end your teaching career to complete your “life work” with your spouse.

Last April, with trepidation I stepped into Professor Takizawa’s shoes as the Chief of the English Education Major. Thanks to both his profound
advice and the tremendous cooperation of my understanding colleagues (each of whom he had so skillfully nurtured), the English Education Major has been able to move forward. I must however add, that the sheer volume of work that Professor Takizawa had so uncomplainingly shouldered so efficiently for so many years is amazing! The success of the English Education Major is due, more that anyone else, to Professor Kenzo Takizawa’s steady leadership and his vision of what kind of English education our Hakuoh students (and Japan) need for the future. In April of 2000, the incoming younger Kenzo Takizawa spoke to the faculty about “melting into” Hakuoh University. Although he has now retired, and we all wish him a well-deserved rest after so much hard work, I think that every Hakuoh English Education Major teacher and student carries much of Professor Takizawa’s thinking that has “melted” into each of us.