

# The Stamp of Approval: Motivating Students towards Independent Learning

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## Abstract

In 2006, the Toyo Gakuen University (Togaku) English Education Development Center (EEDC) established an English Lounge in order to encourage students to study English outside class, provide access to online learning resources, and create opportunities for social interaction in English. In short, the aim of the lounge was to promote learner autonomy. However, this facility remained underused, and few students engaged in independent English study outside of class time. A Stamp Card system was designed for the 2009 school year promoting autonomous learning and trialed by one teacher with a single class. Based on the outcomes of this project and discussion with other EEDC instructors, the cards were revised for the 2010 year. The system was implemented by several EEDC teachers in a collaborative attempt to increase learner autonomy and lounge attendance. This paper evaluates the first semester of using the cards in a coordinated manner, examining teacher reflections on how the cards were used in classes, usage data, and student feedback gleaned from an end-of-term questionnaire. It also discusses ideas for future improvement.

## Introduction

The English Lounge (EL), opened by the EEDC of Togaku in 2006, is a relaxed, comfortable space where students can go to have natural conversations with other students and teachers. The EL is based at the Nagareyama campus, which serves approximately 1200 students, all first and second years, for whom English is a required subject. The EL is open to all the students, throughout the day, with *Lounge Time* sessions offered every lunchtime in which students can chat to a teacher or intern over lunch. The EL also serves as a self-access learning center, with learning support and advice available in a study area staffed by teachers during the lunch hour. The lounge is stocked with graded readers, newspapers, and other learning resources. The EL also has several computers with high-speed Internet access. The students are encouraged to use

the *English Lounge Website*, which has links to a wide range of high quality web-based resources for English language study. Yet, these facilities and resources were under-utilized. Attendance at *Lounge Time* sessions was low; teachers saw the same faces week after week, and attempts to attract more students through parties and events were largely unsuccessful. Self-reports from students suggested that few learners were making use of the website or graded readers, or engaging in any kind of independent study.

At the beginning of the 2009 school year, one instructor (Taylor) designed a Stamp Card system to promote autonomous learning and trialed this system with a single class. In 2010, a group of EEDC teachers decided to embark upon a collaborative action research project in an attempt to facilitate learner autonomy and boost attendance more effectively. The following research questions were devised:

*How can we get our students to study on their own outside of class?*

*How can we boost attendance in the English Lounge?*

The response to these questions was informed by Taylor's project, Birchley (2007), and other action research projects conducted at Togaku (Taylor & Birchley, 2008; Taylor, 2009). This research showed that the student population at this university fail to engage in independent study unless supported by a tracking system which helps learners to break down and manage their tasks. The Stamp Card (SC) was revised and a wallet-sized version was created (see Figure 1). Students could earn stamps for completing the following tasks:

- Participating in a *Lounge Time* session or event
- Attending a self-study support session
- Reading a graded reader borrowed from the EL or campus library
- Learning a fixed number of vocabulary items using the online web-application *Smart.fm*
- Engaging in pronunciation practise using the online web-application *EnglishCentral*

The items were chosen to encourage students to explore a range of study methods and develop in all skill areas. Students could develop their speaking skills during *Lounge Time*, focus on grammar or any area of weakness in *Self-study support*, and benefit from extensive reading when using graded readers. *Smart.fm* helps learners expand their vocabulary, and *EnglishCentral* helps learners work on their pronunciation as they acquire language from watching videos. These applications were selected because they are popular with students, have a bilingual user-interface, allow students and teachers to track student progress, and are based on sound research principles

Self-study Card		Name:			
Lounge time / event	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	
Self-study support	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>			
Graded readers	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	
Smart.fm	<input type="text" value="50"/>	<input type="text" value="50"/>	<input type="text" value="50"/>	<input type="text" value="50"/>	
EnglishCentral	<input type="text" value="1000"/>	<input type="text" value="2000"/>	<input type="text" value="3000"/>	<input type="text" value="4000"/>	

Figure 1: The 2010 stamp card

(see *Literature review* below).

The SCs were used mostly in required Freshman English (*Kiso Eigo*) classes, which are taught at Togaku in teams of four teachers, one responsible for each skill area. *Speaking* and *Reading* are taught in regular classrooms, whereas most *Listening* and some *Writing* classes are scheduled in CALL and PC rooms equipped with headsets with microphones. It is usually possible for *Speaking* and *Reading* teachers to reserve one-off lessons in a CALL or PC room. There are 20-26 students in a class, and the students are divided according to department and level. There are three departments; Business Administration - *Gendai Keiei* (G), Human Sciences - *Ningen Kagaku* (N) and International Communication - *Kokusai Komyunikēshon* (K). Ability levels range from false-beginner (1) through to high-beginner (10).

The EEDC teachers involved in this project each utilized the SCs in different ways over the course of the spring 2010 semester and gathered usage data and student feedback from an end-of-term questionnaire. Teachers then shared their experiences on the outcomes of this project. Through the analysis of the collected data, feedback, and reflections, teachers were able to learn from each other in various ways and gain insights into how to help the students develop more effectively as autonomous learners.

### ***Literature review***

This section looks at the literature and research on the principles of motivation, strategic investment, and learner autonomy. It also considers what has been written about vocabulary

learning since one aspect of the SC is the use of *Smart.fm* to increase vocabulary proficiency.

### ***Principles***

#### *Motivation*

According to Brown (2007, p. 68), “the most powerful rewards are those that are intrinsically motivated within the learner. Because the behavior stems from needs, wants, or desires within oneself, the behavior itself is self-rewarding; therefore, no externally administered reward is necessary.” Maslow (1970) stressed the importance of *intrinsic motivation* as a step toward self-actualization. Dörnyei (2001, 2005), Deci (1975), and Raffini (1996) have also demonstrated the importance of intrinsic motivation in learning. While intrinsic motivation is the ideal, extrinsic motivation tends to be the norm. As results and future approaches to the SC are considered, the principle of motivation, of helping students move from external to intrinsic rewards, must remain a top priority.

#### *Strategic investment*

A principle following intrinsic motivation in importance is that of strategies. As Brown’s (2007) *Principle of Strategic Investment* states:

Successful mastery of the second language will be due to a large extent to the learner’s own personal “investment” of time, effort, and attention to the second language in the form of an individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language (p. 69).

Nation (2001) points out that “no matter what the teacher does or what the course book presents, ultimately it is the learner who does the learning. The more learners are aware of how learning is best carried out, the better learning is likely to be (p. 394).” Along these lines, a primary goal of the SCs is to guide students to recognize the variety of strategies represented on the cards so they may adopt and adapt the strategies that suit their own learning styles.

#### *Autonomy*

Another closely related principle is that of *learner autonomy*. Brown’s (2007) *Principle of Autonomy* states that “successful mastery of a foreign language will depend to a great extent on learner’s autonomous ability both to take initiative in the classroom and to continue their journey to success beyond the classroom and the teacher (p. 70).” Hopefully, the SCs will encourage a move toward greater autonomy while keeping in mind that learner autonomy requires development and nurturing. As Brown (2007) argues:

Learners at the beginning stages of a language will of course be somewhat dependent on the teacher, which is natural and normal. But teachers can help even beginners to develop a sense of autonomy through guided practice and by allowing some creative innovation within limited forms (p. 71).

### ***Vocabulary learning***

#### *High-frequency words*

Independent vocabulary study is a focal point of the SCs. The importance of vocabulary for understanding can hardly be overstated. In particular, high-frequency words are needed to understand almost any text. According to Nation (2001), “high-frequency words are so important that anything that teachers can do to make sure they are learned is worth doing (p. 16).” The justification for this statement is that 90.3% of all text in conversation and 78.1% of all text in academic texts are covered by the 2000 most frequent words from West’s *General Service List* (1953) of 2000 word families. *Smart.fm* has goals based largely on these same 2000 words.

#### *Spaced repetition*

In addition to focusing on the most high-frequency words, it is also important to have repeated exposure to them. As Nation (2001) argues:

Repetition is essential for vocabulary learning because there is so much to know about each word that one meeting with it is not sufficient to gain this information, and because vocabulary items must not only be known, they must also be known well so that they can be fluently accessed (pp. 74-75).

Not only is repetition necessary, but the frequency of exposure has an impact on efficiency:

One of the most important strategies to encourage remembering is the use of increasingly spaced retrieval. This can involve an informal schedule for returning to previously studied items on word cards and the recycling of old material, or it can involve more organized review using a computer or filing system (Nation, p. 219).

*Smart.fm* uses algorithms to space the repetitions so that students do not need to focus on managing the timing, but can still benefit from optimal intervals of repetition.

The SCs were designed to implement the principles of intrinsic motivation, strategic investment, and learner autonomy into a single, unified program, one intended to enable students to focus on learning more effectively. These principles will be kept in mind when reflecting on results of the first implementation and all future ideas for improvement.

## **The Project**

This is an action research project. Action research is carried out by practitioners rather than outside researchers. According to Wallace (1998, p.15), “Action research is a form of structured reflection.” It seeks to investigate questions arising from individual learning environments, and its aim is improving things. For Kemmis and Taggart (1988, cited in Nunan 1992):

A distinctive feature of action research is that those affected by planned changes have the primary responsibility for deciding on courses of critically informed action which will seem likely to lead to improvement, and for evaluating the results of strategies tried out in practice (p. 18).

The intervention in this project is the SC system.

### ***SC implementation***

In April 2010, six EEDC teachers distributed the SCs in their classes. The cards were distributed in the *Kiso Eigo* speaking classes, which are held in regular classrooms without computer facilities. One teacher, Talandis, also distributed the SCs in his *English Conversation* class, a second year elective. Every teacher used basically the same card with minor variations. There was no group set of criteria as to how the cards should be used. For some teachers, the emphasis was on the EL. Others put greater emphasis on the web 2.0 applications. Two teachers collaborated with other members of their team, so that teachers who had *Listening* or *Writing* classes based in a CALL room could introduce one or both of the web applications. Three of the *Speaking* teachers took their students to a CALL room to show them how to use *Smart.fm* and *EnglishCentral* and to set up accounts and tracking. Furthermore, there was variation in how the stamp cards fit into each teacher’s assessment criteria. Beck, Murray, and Taylor based 25% of the students’ grade on the stamp card, whereas Hardy, Stout, and Talandis made completion of the stamp card optional. Bonus points were awarded for partial or full completion of the stamp card. Some teachers incorporated the SC into their lessons and consistently promoted it. Others rarely, if ever, mentioned the SC during the course of the semester.

### ***Data collection***

At the end of the first term, the cards were collected and data was entered into a *Google Docs* spreadsheet. In order to provide triangulation, quantitative and qualitative data were also collected from a questionnaire distributed to students on the last day of classes. The qualitative data was analysed, organized, and quantified. Along with the questionnaire, data was also retrieved from an EL attendance log book. Furthermore, each teacher wrote a reflection on how they used the cards and reflected on the results of the questionnaires collected from their students. This process facilitated discussion and planning for the next implementation of the stamp card programme.

## **Results and Discussion**

When the SC intervention was conceived, two questions loomed large in teachers' minds: How could students be encouraged to study on their own outside of class and how could EL attendance be increased? This section aims to discuss these questions by examining the overall effort from both teacher and student perspectives. First, by looking at the various ways teachers implemented the SCs, pertinent issues will be clarified and explored. Next, EL attendance figures will be examined in relation to the SC intervention. Finally, student feedback from the questionnaire will be highlighted and incorporated into a final evaluation of the overall effort.

### ***Varying approaches, common themes: How teachers implemented the SCs***

While the SC intervention was conducted in a spirit of unified aims and goals, implementation in each class varied from teacher to teacher. Examining how this took place can highlight several interesting issues and point toward clear and specific recommendations for improving the future efficacy of the intervention. First, each teacher took great care to introduce the SC system carefully and thoroughly. Beyond explaining how to use the cards in the first lesson, all took time to bring their students to the EL to ensure everyone knew its location and available resources. While all teachers emphasized the lounge time and self-study support tasks, not everyone did so for the more technical Internet-based ones. For teachers emphasizing the *Smart.fm* and *English-Central* card tasks, student orientation also included trips to the PC or CALL rooms.

Taking students to the PC or CALL rooms led to more students engaging in computer-based study. This help from the teacher was crucial, for without it students did not even attempt to use the applications. In 11 of the 27 classes in this project, none of the students engaged in any study using the web applications at all. The results also suggest a single trip to the CALL room is insufficient. Students need to use an application in class several times to gain familiarity.

In several cases, guidance was provided in terms of where students should keep their cards. For example, Beck and Taylor had their students keep their cards in their wallets or train pass cases. Therefore, students usually had their SCs with them when they visited the lounge and could readily receive stamps. Stout and Hardy, on the other hand, had their students tape their cards on to the inside cover of their textbooks in an attempt to help students not lose them. In hindsight, this proved problematic as students attending the EL sometimes forgot their books and therefore were not able to receive stamps.

Efforts to promote and monitor continued use of the cards were made throughout the semester, although teachers noted several shortcomings in this effort: failure to provide written explanation of the SC system (Hardy), insufficient reminders after the first lesson (Stout), and not enough time spent early in the semester on introducing the *Smart.fm* and *EnglishCentral* applications (Taylor, Omura). One teacher (Murray), decided to consciously not promote the cards, feeling that university-level students should take responsibility for their own learning and thus did not need any prompting. Murray found this approach ineffective.

### ***Optional vs. mandatory approaches***

A key difference in the way teachers implemented the SCs was the decision on whether or not to make card completion mandatory. For Hardy, Stout, and Talandis, the cards were an optional task and seen as a way to entice students to the EL and encourage self-study. In this approach, students partially (Talandis) or fully (Hardy, Stout) completing the cards would receive a bonus towards their grade. In contrast, Beck, Taylor, and Murray required their students to complete their cards, a task constituting 25% of their final grade. Not submitting a card could put a student in jeopardy of failure if they did not do well in other components of the class. Simply put, the optional approach relied on students to be intrinsically motivated while the mandatory one provided students with an extrinsic source of motivation.

Data on SC completion rates collected from fully or partially completed SCs appears to support the latter approach. Table 1 presents the results from the teachers who followed an optional approach to implementing the SCs.

In classes where SCs were optional, only a single student (out of 317) completed a card (0.4%). Only 18% partially filled in their cards, while more than 80% of students failed to submit cards. When considering that many of the partially filled-in cards contained only one or two stamps, it is clear that the SCs were nearly completely ignored by students in the optional classes. In



Teacher	#Classes	#Students	All	Part	None	
Hardy	4	80	1	14	65	
Talandis	7	149	0	28	121	
Stout	4	88	0	15	73	
Totals	15	317	1	57	259	
			%	0.3	18	81.7

**Table 1: SC completion data via an optional approach**

contrast, as Table 2 shows, implementing the SCs via a mandatory approach produced significantly better results.

Teacher	#Classes	#Students	All	Part	None	
Taylor	5	103	23	60	20	
Beck	4	90	0	29	61	
Murray	3	70	1	33	36	
Totals	12	263	24	122	117	
			%	9	46	45

**Table 2: SC completion data via a mandatory approach**

Where the SCs were mandatory, only 9% of students completed them. This outcome could be considered disappointing, since the task comprised such a significant portion of their grade. However, an additional 46% submitted a partially completed card. Figure 2 (below) contrasts the outcomes of the mandatory approach with the optional approach. The percentage of partially completed SCs in the mandatory classes was more than double that of the optional ones, while the rate of non-compliance was significantly less (45 % vs 81.7% respectively). These numbers indicate that while total completion of a SC was rare, many more students were taking advantage of the system via the mandatory approach. Hardy's reflection highlights this point:

Perhaps my biggest regret is not making the stamp card count more towards the final grade. This opinion was shared by some students who commented that the card should have been included in their grade and that they should have been encouraged to participate more.

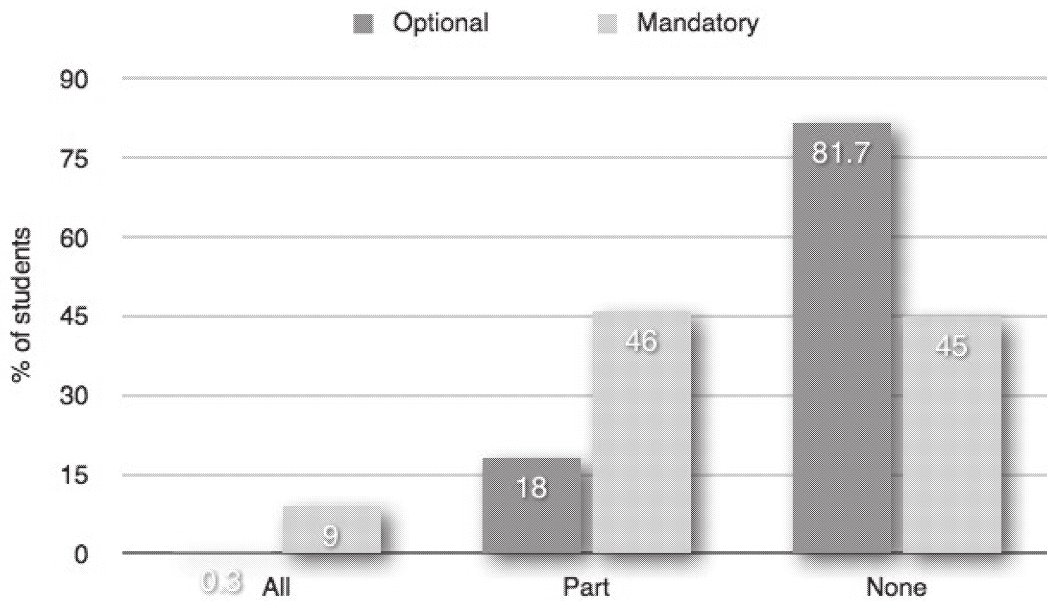


Figure 2: Comparison of optional and mandatory approaches

To summarize, these results strongly suggest that requiring students to fill out their stamp cards produces better results than an optional approach.

### Collaboration

Collaboration proved to be another significant factor. In Beck's classes, collaboration with one other teacher led to more students earning stamps (see Table 3).

	Class	#Students	SC completion		English Central	Smart.fm	
			All	Part	Average points	Average items studied	Average items mastered
No collaboration	N4	23	0	8	0	18	5
	K2	23	0	3	0	19	0
2 teachers collaborating	N8	24	0	10	488	112	69
	G7	20	0	8	1011	210	41

Table 3: Effects of collaboration (Beck)

For classes with no collaboration, 24% of students submitted a card compared to 41% of those in which Beck collaborated. Students spent more time on *Smart.fm* in classes where there was a collaborative effort to introduce the application. Without collaboration, Beck's students failed to use *EnglishCentral* at all. Beck reflected:

The two classes that had the best results (G7 and N8) were classes that had another native-English speaker as a partner. I feel this factor was a key to the success of the experiment, not that the teacher be a native-English speaker, but that more than one teacher in the Freshman English program support the cards.

In Taylor's classes, collaboration had a similar positive effect (see Table 4).

	Class	#Students	SC completion		English Central	Smart.fm	
			All	Part	Average points	Average items studied	Average items mastered
No collaboration	N3	22	4	12	1869	66	32
	K7	20	1	14	1050	46	35
2 teachers collaborating	G3	21	0	19	740	120	78
	G6	19	0	14	510	50	2
3 teachers collaborating	G10	21	18	1	4030	244	189

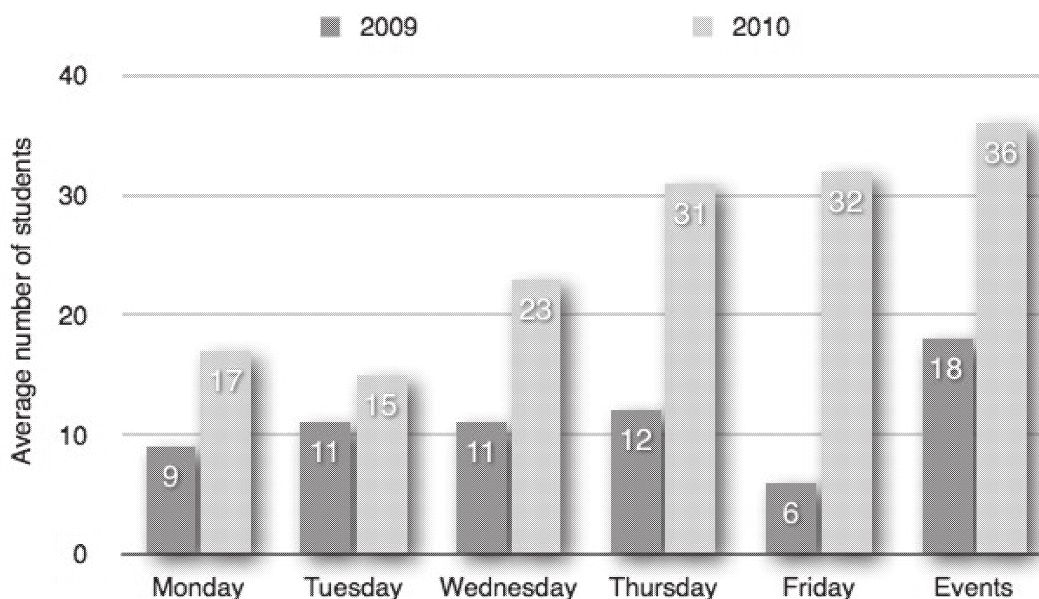
**Table 4: Effects of collaboration (Taylor)**

For classes without collaboration, 72% of students submitted a card, compared to 81% when there were two collaborators and 91% when there were three. G10 students achieved much more than any other class in this project on both of the learning applications used, indicating many more hours of independent study. In G3 and G10 Taylor collaborated with Omura, who built a regular slot into each class for students to use the web applications. This allowed students to become very familiar with the tools, so they were able to use them independently. As Taylor noted, "having multiple teachers utilize and emphasize the SC helped motivation levels, and ... regular opportunities to work on the goals in class also aided the students' progress."

However, collaboration presented some challenges. If one teacher helped students set up accounts with an application which would be tracked by another teacher, the students had to follow instructions very precisely so that tracking was possible. This process requires very careful supervision, and there were instances of failure in this project. For example, in one class Taylor "was not able to trace many of the students' *Smart.fm* accounts ... some students did slip through the net."

### ***Boosting attendance***

One benefit of the SC system was that students became more aware of the resources and facilities provided for them, including the EL. As Figure 3 shows, average EL attendance during the spring 2010 semester increased significantly over the previous year.



**Figure 3: Comparison of average EL attendance between 2009 and 2010**

Percentage increases ranged from 65% on Tuesdays to 433% on Fridays. Events attendance also saw a noteworthy 100% increase. What caused this dramatic rise? While new students, teachers, and EEDC office staff (resulting in an influx of new personnel dynamics) may have played a role, the SC intervention appears to be the key factor. Students needed to come to the lounge to get stamps to complete their cards. This influx resulted in a more vibrant and attractive lounge atmosphere, which in turn provided further incentive to come. As one student commented on the questionnaire distributed at the end of the study:

EnglishLoungeは最初は行きにくかったけど、スタンプカードのおかげで、行きやすくなった。  
身近に英語が感じれた。(sic)

[At first it was hard to go into the lounge, but thanks to the stamp card it became easier to go in there. I was able to feel English up close.]

The feedback from the students is an important source of information and will be discussed in the next section.

### *Student perspectives*

Questionnaires were distributed to students in order to obtain their feedback on the SC system. 87% of the students returned them. While many were returned without comments, those students who did take the time to offer feedback provided some interesting perspectives on the overall effort. When asked what they thought the purpose of the cards was, comments indicated that many were indeed aware of its objectives. The most commonly cited responses were variations on the following themes. The SCs were designed to:

- Help students improve their attitude and enthusiasm for learning English
- Enable improvements in their vocabulary and overall understanding of English
- Provide opportunities for communication, exposure to people from other countries, and international exchange
- Promote the development of independent study skills

The next question (*Did you find the stamp cards motivating?*) was designed to gauge overall student reaction to the cards. As expected, the results were mixed. More than half found the cards motivating because they could improve their vocabulary, interact with native speakers more confidently, or discover new and useful learning resources. The remainder failed to find the cards motivating because the tasks were too difficult, they did not understand what to do, or they felt that they did not have time to complete them.

The fourth question aimed to find out why students did not complete their cards. As noted previously, the most commonly cited reasons were lack of time and interest; a sign that many students lacked sufficient intrinsic motivation. Other reasons for non-compliance included problems with forgetting or losing their cards; a situation that highlights a lack of organization and study skills. Finally, several students indicated they had no idea what the stamp cards were about; a comment revealing a severe disconnect with the educational experience.

The final question sought to elicit advice from the students on improving the SC system. Again, while most students did not answer this question, those that did left a wide variety of suggestions. 20% felt the system should remain unchanged, 14% requested that cards be made easier to complete, and 3% that they be made more challenging. 2% suggested the entire effort should be made optional and 2% would like it scrapped entirely. More constructive feedback suggested that teachers do more to promote awareness of the cards and offer up more support for completing them (11%) or prizes for achievements (8%). Finally, 13% suggested improving the card esthetically by making it thicker or using “sparkly stickers.”

## Towards the Next Cycle of Action Research

### *Summary of main findings*

Once again, the SCs were created with two primary objectives: to foster autonomous learning and to boost EL attendance. Regarding the first aim, the results were mixed. On one hand, the vast majority of students did not complete their cards. However, a significant number at least partially did, more so in classes where the cards were required and when more than one teacher collaborated on their implementation and monitoring. With regard to the second aim, the SCs must be viewed as a success given the sharp rise in EL attendance during the spring 2010 semester. The challenge now remains to increase or at least sustain these levels.

Teacher reactions naturally focused on the positive outcomes of this intervention, with Beck characterizing the overall effort as a “qualified success,” Talandis noting that the results were “something to build on,” and Omura pointing out that the SCs made students more aware of the resources available to them and “gave them a sense of accomplishment.” All agreed the cards served as a useful tool for introducing new learning opportunities and that further modifications and research were necessary to improve the system.

### *Short-term modifications*

Based on the spring semester results, teachers have begun implementing a variety of changes on an individual basis for the fall term. For example, Beck, Hardy, Murray, Stout, and Taylor have created more aesthetically pleasing cards by using heavier colored paper or glossy card. Talandis has provided more focused cards that contain only the two tasks targeted towards interacting in the EL. Hardy has resolved to be more proactive and consistent in reminding his students to use the cards and plans to do routine progress checks. Hardy, Murray, and Stout have taken their students to a CALL room to acquaint them with *Smart.fm* and are using the service themselves for learning Japanese words in order to be role-models for the students. Taylor is experimenting with introducing a competitive element by offering a “fun” prize to the first student in each class to complete a card. Beck has created class blogs for each of his classes that contained links to both *Smart.fm* and *EnglishCentral* in the hope this will facilitate greater results. Two teachers who used an optional approach to the SCs (Hardy and Stout) have switched to a mandatory one, while Talandis has continued as before to see if more time and familiarity with the system will improve results.

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***Recommended changes for improvement***

Building on the 2010 spring results and fall changes, the following changes are recommended for improving the SC system in 2011 school year. Each of these ideas could form the basis of further action research into the ongoing aims of enhancing autonomous learning at Togaku.

***Greater teacher collaboration***

Since each Freshman English class at Togaku is taught by a team of four teachers, it is imperative to have at least two members incorporate the cards in their classes. For example, the speaking teacher could focus on the speaking tasks, the reading teacher could encourage use of the graded readers, and any teacher using a CALL room could spend time offering support on signing up and monitoring *Smart.fm* and *EnglishCentral* progress. As Beck noted, “I believe if all four teachers of Freshman English, regardless of whether they are native-English speakers or native-Japanese speakers, support the program, we will see incredible results.” No doubt such collaboration would have other positive effects, such as promoting communication, team-work, and professional development among Togaku faculty. Coordination for this collaboration could take place during the annual faculty meeting at the start of the school year.

***Mandatory completion***

All teachers who use the SCs in their class should make them a required course component. Of course, they can decide individually how much to weight them.

***More effective orientation***

A bilingual “How-to Guide” that provides justification for the cards and each task on them should be made. This manual must explain the rationale behind the use of *Smart.fm* and *EnglishCentral*, the graded readers, and time speaking in the EL. It should also give detailed instructions on registering for the sites and getting started. A corresponding instructional video illustrating these steps would benefit the process as well.

***More effective monitoring***

Teachers will be encouraged to provide regular weekly reminders to complete the cards and be encouraged to come up with creative alternatives that enable students to report on their progress with the SCs.

***Prizes***

Student feedback on the questionnaire suggested that awarding prizes for exemplary SC

participation could motivate those who appreciate an element of competition. This would diversify the sources of positive reinforcement received for completing the cards. For example, an award can be given to students who learn the most words, read the most graded readers, or visit the EL the most.

#### *More graded readers*

To avoid a potential shortage of graded readers due to increased SC participation, the Togaku supply of graded readers needs to be increased.

### **Conclusion**

Much was learned from this first iteration of the SCs, and based on the results, much more needs to be done. It is clear now more than ever that helping students cultivate strong and lasting intrinsic motivation for learning English will require a long-term commitment. This effort, however, is worth pursuing. As Scarcella & Oxford (1992) conclude:

Language learners... must extend themselves beyond their stylistic comfort zone to use techniques and behaviors that might not initially feel right to them. It is easy to see that learners cannot just use the old tried and true tactics; they need to develop others as well... Teachers can help their students develop beyond the comfort zone dictated by their natural style preferences (p. 63).

Autonomous learning is a process that will not develop overnight, but with a steady, continuous, and collaborative effort, the SC system will serve as a valuable vehicle for bringing about a sea change in Togaku student learning behavior.

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**Appendix: Questionnaire handed out to students at the end of the spring 2010 semester**

基礎英語 1-4A Semester 1 Questionnaire

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Your English teachers would be very happy if you could answer these questions in English or Japanese. It may take about 5 minutes.

お手数ですが、以下の簡単なアンケートにお答えください（約5分）。日本語でも、英語でも結構です。

1. How many stamps did you receive for each activity below?

以下の項目で、それぞれいくつのスタンプをもらいましたか？

- Lounge time/event \_\_\_\_\_
- Self-study support \_\_\_\_\_
- Graded readers \_\_\_\_\_
- Smart.fm \_\_\_\_\_
- EnglishCentral \_\_\_\_\_

2. What do you think the purpose of the stamp cards is?

このスタンプカードのねらいは何だと考えますか？

3. Did you find the stamp card motivating? Why or why not?

スタンプカードを使うことで、英語に対する意欲が上がりましたか？

理由も教えてください。

4. If you didn't use the stamp card, why not?

スタンプカードを使わなかった方への質問です。なぜ、使わなかったのですか？

- I was too busy 忙しかった
- I was not interested 興味がわかなかった
- I did the activities, but I forgot to get a stamp 活動はしたが、スタンプをもらうのを忘れた
- I lost my stamp card and didn't replace it スタンプカードを紛失して、新しいカードをもらわなかった
- What is a "stamp card?" スタンプカードそのものを知らない
- Other (please write) その他 \_\_\_\_\_

5. How can the stamp card system be improved?

今後、スタンプカードをより良くするためにはどうしたらいいと思いますか？

Thank you for your time!  
ご協力ありがとうございました。