

# **Reform of English Education at the University Level, Part 1: The New Role English Literature Should Play**

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## **Abstract**

This paper is the first half of a two-part proposal for the future reform of the general education courses at Hokkaido Bunkyo University. The second half will appear in the next edition of this journal. The main purpose of this paper is to propose that language teachers at the university level shift to a new paradigm in English instruction away from the currently popular idea that proficiency in English can be best acquired through proficiency-test-oriented instruction. The new paradigm advocates the use of English literature in English language instruction. Recently, proficiency-test-oriented instruction has rapidly increased in popularity and is becoming the dominant method in post-secondary instruction in English. It is concurrent with the unproven notion that English literature is of no use for preparing students for real-life communication needs. The proficiency-test-oriented approach was derived not from its own internal validity but from a simple reaction to the "old" literature-oriented approach. Discussing some historical factors that caused the "old" way to prove ineffective, this paper suggests that, to prevent the alternative "new" way from being equally ineffective, the importance and value of using literature for language instruction be recognized again in a new light and implemented with fresh applications. Several requirements to be met will also be discussed that would contribute to making the use of literature in English instruction successful.