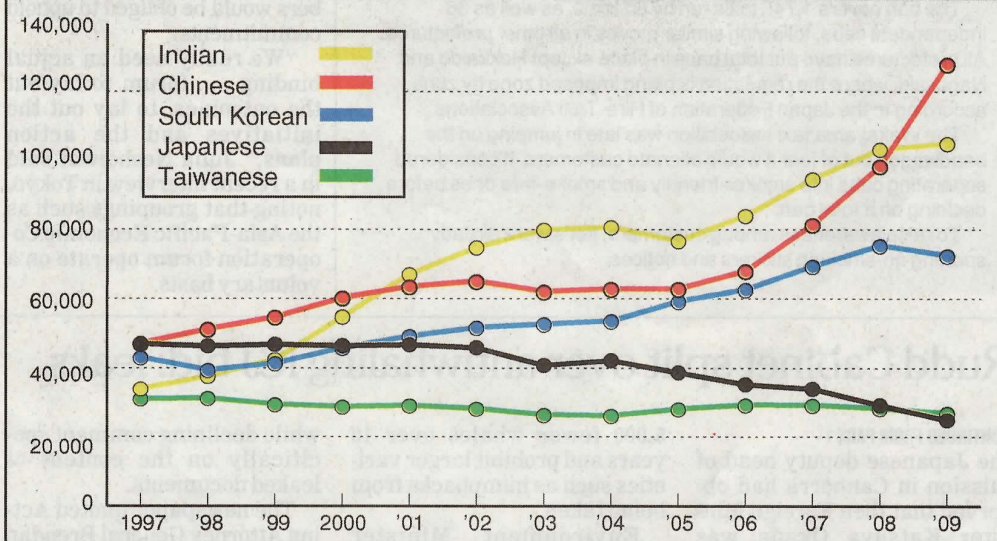


Asian students studying in the United States



INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, "OPEN DOORS"

wa, manager of the Benesse Educational Research and Development Center. "Leading companies set the bar high for English ability. And there is a huge gap in salaries between the nation's leading companies and the group ranked in the second tier."

However, the hunger for English has created problems for schools.

"Some Japanese elementary schools are reportedly struggling with classroom disruptions by misbehaving students. But in South Korea,

some schools are facing classroom dysfunction because many — sometimes about half the members of a class — take a month off to go abroad to study English," said Kim Tae Hoon, an associate professor of education at Seisa University in Hokkaido.

According to a report in The Korea Times, the number of elementary school children studying abroad rose to 8,298 in 2007 from 2,453 in 2005.

Many mothers and their children move to nations where English is the native

language, including Canada and the U.S., so their children will gain fluency in the language, while their fathers stay in South Korea, working hard to earn money to support this pursuit, according to Kim.

Backed by this kind of fervor, South Koreans' overall English ability is getting better, experts say.

The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) is one yardstick.

The average score for South Koreans jumped to 619 in 2009

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