2026年度　国際キャリア学科

英　　　語

〔自己推薦ＡＯ（Ｂ）〕　15・26－Ｊ1

注　　意

1．監督者の合図があるまで問題冊子は開かないでください。

2．解答はすべて解答用紙のきめられた箇所に記入してください。

Response to a Reading Passage

This is a test of your reading comprehension and your ability to respond to the issue presented in a text. What do you think about the problem discussed in the passage? Write a response in which you summarize the main issue and present your own views on the topic. Your response should be between 300 and 500 words in length and written in English.

In 1930 the famous economist John Maynard Keynes published an essay entitled "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren," in which he forecast that technological advances and increased productivity would lead to a significant reduction in working hours, down to around 15 hours per week, in roughly 100 years. Some 95 years have passed since then, and there have indeed been great advances in technology. When Keynes was writing, most people did not even have a telephone. Photocopying machines had not been invented yet, and there still people whose job was to write out copies of documents. The Internet did not exist; neither did industrial robots or artificial intelligence. Billions of hours of boring work, physical and mental, are saved every year due to these advances.

That far, Keynes was right. But his prediction that people would only need to work 15 hours a week has proved very, very wrong. People seem to be working as hard as ever. How could this brilliant scholar, probably the most famous economist of the 20th century, have got it so wrong?

There are four main reasons.

First, there is the basic question of what people want most. Technology taking over tasks from humans could give humans more free time — or it could enable them to do other kinds of work, and earn more money. These days people spend a lot of money on things that did not even exist in Keynes' day: cars (a luxury only for the rich in 1930), a computer, a smartphone, a flat-screen color TV, central heating etc. Overseas holidays are far more common, and average houses have grown in size.

Rather than choosing more leisure, most people have chosen (or been pressured) to work more to afford these things. We have kept working more not to survive, but to consume more.

Secondly, the benefits of new technology have not been shared fairly. Keynes assumed that productivity gains would benefit everyone. But instead of that, a large share of the gains went to the wealthiest individuals and corporations. We have multi-billionaires whose wealth exceeds that of many countries. At the same time, many people work long hours just to afford housing, education, and healthcare, especially in countries with weak social welfare systems. If wealth were distributed more fairly, many more people would be able to reduce their working time.

Thirdly, work is still an important part of people's identity. When we meet someone for the first time, we often ask "What do you do?" The idea that good people work hard will not easily change. For many people, being a "proper" worker is a matter of pride.

Fourthly, the social contract between employers and workers has started to crumble. Fewer people are working in steady jobs where they can expect to be employed for life. More and more people are working part-time, or on short-term contracts, or even doing casual work paid by the hour or the day. Fear of unemployment makes people employed in insecure positions work more, not less.

Just as important as how many hours people work per week is the question of how many years they work in a lifetime. In Keynes' time countries were just starting to establish pension systems, with the retirement age typically set at 65. Remember — in those days people did not live as long as they do now, so only a minority of people lived long enough to retire and draw their pension.

In the 1960s to '80s, economic prosperity and the expansion of welfare states led many countries to lower the retirement age. Some countries offered early retirement to ease unemployment and make room for younger workers. Average effective retirement age in many countries fell to the mid-50s to early 60s.

However, since the 1990s retirement ages have started to rise again. Rising life expectancy and aging populations have reduced the amount of money being paid into pension systems and increased the amount being paid out. The strain on pension funds is threatening them with bankruptcy in some countries. This has led to raising the official retirement ages, to 66, 67, or even higher in some cases.

Here in Japan the official retirement age has been gradually raised from 60 to 65. But many employees are rehired after retirement on short-term contracts and much lower pay, often continuing to work well into their seventies out of economic need.

Poor old Keynes. If he were alive today, he would be shocked to see how little the world has moved towards converting better technology into better life styles.