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著者	YONESAKA, Suzanne
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An Analysis of First-Year Students' Perceptions of Their EFL Needs

Suzanne YONESAKA

An analysis of 286 first-year students at Hokkai Gakuen University on their perceived needs regarding English as a Foreign Language was conducted. The questionnaire investigated three areas: 1) reasons for entering university, 2) objectives in learning English, and 3) desirability of proficiency in various English skills. Responses were analyzed for differences by gender and by major (American, British, and Canadian Studies; Japanese Studies; Non-humanities). Results indicate strong differences by major and gender, with implications for EFL curriculum development.

Keywords: *Needs analysis; Japanese universities; English as a Foreign Language.*

The concept that learners are aware of and responsible for their own learning goals has had particular influence on the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), but also more generally, on language curriculum all over Europe and North America. The analysis of learners' needs has been an integral part of curriculum planning and development since the Council of Europe's hallmark report by Richterich and Chancerel (1972). This report was a clear directive to place priority on student input when implementing and updating language curriculum and programs. Schools have commonly utilized what Brindley (1989) categorized as objective needs, primarily analyzing

information about the student population and the structural aspects of the language in question. In contrast, the present study is a subjective needs analysis, deriving subjective data from the learners themselves about their own perceptions of language needs and goals.

The use of learner needs analysis to help determine or review language study objectives and curriculum is especially pertinent for Japanese universities now. The Ministry of Education is encouraging universities to establish foreign language curriculums that will reflect their schools' unique needs and to begin self-evaluations of their student populations and programs. Generally, however, Japanese universities do not yet take students' perceptions of their own needs into account when developing curriculum.

Background

In ESL and ESP situations, the impetus for doing needs analysis is often imposed from above in the form of administrative regulations or budgeting allocations that require programs to demonstrate their importance. However, in many EFL situations, research on perceived needs tends to originate at the grass-roots level, sparked by teachers' concerns about the relevance of their set curriculums rather than by government or administrative directives. Therefore, EFL needs analysis research is an assortment of unique surveys done at a variety of institutions, and tends to be unpublished.

Lombardo (1988) conducted a perceived needs analysis on a random sample of 200 students (out of a total of 1165) at all EFL levels and in all four years of a school of economics in an Italian university. These students take general education English courses from three to six hours a week, in streamed groups of 25 per class. The questionnaire col-

lected information about the students' foreign language background and information related to their current and future English needs and interests. Results showed that "the main reasons students gave for wanting to know English were to use it in their jobs and to interact with non-native speakers." (p.34) Students at all proficiency levels rated speaking and understanding to be far more important than reading or writing. Writing well in a foreign language was seen as something of a luxury and/or too difficult to achieve. On the other hand, students felt that they "could always find a way to deal with a written text on their own but... really needed assistance with what they had little opportunity to practice in a non-English speaking country, namely listening and speaking." (p.39) We might expect similar perceptions of the four skills in the Japanese university context.

In Japan, Widdows and Voller (1991) surveyed 86 Japanese Ss at four different universities (Tohoka Gakuen University, Shizuoka; Meiji Gakuin University, Tokyo; Waseda University, Tokyo; Keio University, Tokyo) on their language needs and learning-style preferences using the Profile of Attitudes, Needs and Student Interests (PANSI) (see "Instrumentation") questionnaire. The means of each item were ranked for each population group, with responses judged to be highly consistent across groups. It is unfortunate that a more detailed data analysis was not carried out, and that the subjects cannot be considered typical of university students in Japan. However, the survey instrument has caught the attention of others wishing to investigate Japanese students' EFL needs.

One study (Busch, Elsea, Gruba, and Johnson, in press) which based its survey items on the PANSI investigated the perceived needs of 348 students and 30 instructors at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) English Language Institute. ANOVA was used to find

significant differences of means between student population groups (by year, by gender, etc.). A similar investigation (Harrison, Mont, Gruba, Kanberg, Osher, and Progosh, 1992) of 796 students was conducted at Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages (KIFL), also using a PANSI-based questionnaire. In this case, data was treated as frequency data, and since “one main function of the survey was identification of major trends in student responses (rather than a precise analysis of differences among responses)” (p.3), researchers looked at the percentages of Ss who responded at the top third of the rating scale on each item. This survey found vast differences among student groups’ perceived needs, depending on major, gender, and year of study.

Purpose

The purpose of this needs analysis is to explore students’ perceptions of their needs regarding English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Because of the strong emphasis on EFL in the newly-established Faculty of Humanities, it is vital to discover how the perceptions of students in this faculty differ from those of students in other faculties. It is also important to distinguish between the perceived needs of students in the Faculty of Humanities’ two departments, the Dept. of Japanese Studies, and the Dept. of American, British and Canadian Studies. Finally, with the new directions that general education courses all over Japan are taking, this study hopes to provide insight into how students outside the Faculty of Humanities perceive their general education English needs. Because these three groups of students have distinct EFL curriculums, any differences shown by this study could have a direct impact on curriculum planning.

This paper also explores possible differences between male and

female students' viewpoints. Because the population of women students at this university is relatively small, it is far too easy to remain unaware of their particular needs. Admittedly, these may not be needs that could be addressed directly through the curriculum (as is possible at women's colleges, for example); however, simply the consciousness that differences may exist is important.

This analysis of students' perceived needs has three purposes: to inform curriculum development; to provide input for instructors wishing to create student-centered teaching materials; to provoke discussion on student perceptions.

Instrumentation

This study used the Japanese-language version of the PANSI questionnaire, with slight modifications. Developed by Widdows and Voller (1991), the PANSI questionnaire contains five parts, the first three of which were used in this study. Voller (personal communication, 1993) notes that a great amount of time was spent constructing the survey items from Japanese university students' answers to open-ended questions on goals and needs, so it was felt that items based on the PANSI would have face validity for this study.

Section One of the PANSI contains 14 possible objectives for embarking on a full-time university course. In the original questionnaire, Ss are asked to rate the importance of each objective on a five-point Likert scale with descriptors for each anchor point. In Section Two, Ss are asked to do the same for 15 language skills in which they would like to become proficient by the time they graduate.

For the present study, modifications were as follows: An extra point was added in both the positive and negative direction, for a total

of three negative and four positive points. This was in response to the tendency for answers to cluster up at the positive end of the scale. Doyle (1975, p.22) claims that "there is nothing inherently wrong with an asymmetrical scale such as this one, so long as there are at least a sufficient number of both favorable and unfavorable alternatives". All of the anchor points were given written descriptors. Some of the items were slightly modified, notably those that made the Japanese translation clearer. Finally, it seemed that the items in Section Two of the PANSI explore language along the dimensions of 1) formal or work-related function, 2) informal or interpersonal skills, and 3) abstract knowledge of language, or language as a subject of study. Items were reworded to make this distinction clearer, with the intention of examining these clusters.

Section Three of the PANSI questionnaire asks English-major Ss to indicate the reasons for studying English by checking any number of the 16 reasons given. Section Four asks non-English-major Ss to check any of the 15 reasons given, plus a question asking whether or not they would choose to study English if it were not compulsory. Only Ss who answer positively are asked to complete the rest of Section Four.

For this study, several of the questions were refined to eliminate unnecessary differences between the two sections. To ensure that all items were carefully read (in other words, that the absence of a check actually meant NO and not that the item had been overlooked), in this study each reason was listed as a separate item to which Ss had to specifically respond YES or NO.

The questionnaire also contained a section for encoding the following demographic variables: student number; major; sex; year in school. There were also questions asking whether the students are foreign, returnee, adult, or regular students and whether they are in the day

program or night program.

Both Japanese and English versions of the revised questionnaire were rechecked and final versions were agreed upon. (See Appendix.)

Subjects

Subjects (Ss) were 286 first-year students (M=209 Ss, F=77 Ss) at Hokkai Gakuen University. Demographics are as follows:

For the purposes of this study, Am., Br. and Cn. Studies (ABC) Ss

FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS BY MAJOR AND GENDER (%)

MAJOR	Male	Female	Total
Am. Br. Cn. Studies	47 16.4%	34 11.9%	81 28.3%
Japanese Studies	55 19.2%	23 8.0%	78 27.3%
General Ed.	107 37.4%	20 7.0%	127 44.4%
Total	209 73.1%	77 26.9%	286 100.0%

are treated as English majors. The non-humanities majors (G.E.) do not represent a stratified random sample of the other faculties (Economics Dept.=46 Ss; Law Dept.=78 Ss; Unidentified=4 Ss); however, since their general education English courses are all the same, they are treated as one group for this study.

Three Ss identified themselves as “continuing”, and one as “foreign”. The remaining 282 “regular” Ss have taken six years of (essentially) mandatory English grammar-translation courses in junior and senior high school. 231 Ss (81%) are enrolled in day courses, and 55 Ss (19%) are enrolled in night courses. All daytime Ss are enrolled in two required general education English courses. In addition, ABC Ss are

enrolled in three, and Jpn Ss in one, required English courses.

Procedure

Questionnaires (Japanese version) were piloted with a group of 25 Ss at another school. No questions or administrative problems occurred.

Questionnaires were administered by participating English instructors during classes in mid-June 1993, to more than 400 first and second-year Ss, but for purposes of this study, only questionnaires from first-year Ss will be considered.

After distributing questionnaires and specially printed optical cards, instructions for filling out the demographic section and answering the questions were given. Students were free to take as much time as needed to complete the questionnaire in class, most spending about 25 minutes. No questions concerning procedure or concerning the content of the questionnaire were reported. However, upon collecting the completed optical cards, it was found that one section of approximately 20 Ss had not been given the necessary time or instructions to successfully complete the survey. The survey was re-administered to them the following day with no further difficulties.

Although problems that would affect the analysis' validity were not encountered, because this survey was part of a larger project including other schools, it was not possible to maintain stringent administrative procedural controls. Other institutions doing in-house needs analysis sometimes choose to have all students gathered in one room to answer the survey, or they sometimes provide taped instructions. In the future, if this university considers conducting its own needs analysis, it may wish to review administrative procedures as well as survey content.

Data analysis

Optical cards were read by optical mark card reader into Excel 4.0 through a program designed to pull out cards that did not meet the following criteria: demographic information except for student number and present year had to be complete; information had to be consistent, for example, students who were English majors had to have completed the section for English majors only; all questions on all appropriate sections had to be answered. Optical cards that did not meet all the criteria were automatically rejected. (This university had an overall rejection rate of 3.5%.) Finally, var. 35 "I have no objectives" was eliminated from the data analysis as it is a confusing item that would be better answered by a Yes or No response. Data was then analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package For Social Sciences) version 4.0, an academic standard for university research in North America.

Data resulting from the PANSI survey has been analyzed both parametrically (Busch, Elsea, Gruba, and Johnson, 1993) and nonparametrically (Harrison, Mont, Gruba, Kanberg, Osher, and Progosh, 1992). With the addition of the two extra anchor points, the response scales were judged to be continuous, and an item by item check showed mostly parametric response patterns. Finally, as the purpose of this study is to discover trends among the major and gender groups rather than to examine only frequent responses, sections 1 and 2 were analyzed as continuous data.

Results

Section One: Main Objectives in Attending University.

1. Overall results.

SECTION ONE: MAIN OBJECTIVES IN ATTENDING UNIVERSITY

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Label
Var 23	4.39	1.51	To enhance job prospects
Var 32	4.04	1.39	To deepen academic knowledge
Var 22	4.03	1.44	To meet people/friends
Var 33	3.67	1.82	To get qualifications
Var 28	3.49	1.58	To explore/develop values/attitudes
Var 29	3.45	1.45	To learn about human relation
Var 26	3.43	1.66	To pursue interests
Var 30	3.01	1.53	To learn to study independently
Var 27	2.84	1.58	To find/develop creative talents
Var 34	2.69	1.52	To become aware of Japan/world
Var 25	2.68	1.66	To learn practical skills
Var 24	2.21	1.62	To become independent from parents
Var 31	1.79	1.90	To delay starting work

Number of valid observations (listwise)=286

It is not surprising that var. 23 “To enhance my job prospects” has the highest mean (4.39); this item sets the tone for other items. If responses in other sections also reflect practical or job-related objectives, then we could hypothesize that Ss conceptualize their English studies as an integral part of their overall goal. On the other hand, this response might simply testify that a degree from this university opens certain employment prospects.

The next two items, var. 32 “To deepen my knowledge of academic subjects” and var. 22 “To meet people and make friends” which are ranked nearly the same, are probably similar to Ss’ goals all over Japan and abroad. The fourth item, var. 33 “To get qualifications (e.g. Eiken test, teaching certificate, accounting certificate)”, seems to tie in with var. 23. Since Japanese society places a high value on certificates, qualifications and professional rankings, this is not too surprising; however, it is important to find out which qualifications Ss are inter-

ested in, and why they believe that attending university will help them attain them.

2. Differences between groups by major.

A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the differences of means between the three major groups, and the Scheffe procedure was used to discover where those differences lie. Eight items varied significantly ($p < 0.05$) between two or more groups.

SECTION ONE: MEANS OF MAIN OBJECTIVES VARYING SIGNIFICANTLY BY MAJOR

	Am Br. Cn	Jpn	G.E.
Var 32 To deepen academic knowledge	4.37		3.76
Var 33 To get qualifications	4.62	3.51	3.16
Var 28 To explore/develop values/attitudes		4.08	3.11
Var 30 To learn to study independently	3.42		2.69
Var 27 To find/develop creative talents		3.26	2.47
Var 34 To become aware of Japan/world	3.16		2.31
Var 25 To learn practical skills	3.52	2.24	2.41
Var 31 To delay starting work	1.58	2.37	1.57

$p < 0.05$

The majority of differences lie, as we would expect, between G.E. Ss and the other two groups. The strongest difference is that ABC Ss rated var. 33 “To get qualifications (e.g. Eiken test, teaching certificate, accounting certificate)” and var. 25 “To learn practical skills which will be useful in work or everyday life (e.g. computing, car maintenance)” much higher than the other two groups, showing a very strong emphasis on practical reasons for attending university. This could mean that a large number of ABC Ss intend to enroll in the third-year “Practical English” elective courses (Translating / interpreting / business skills /

classroom equipment). Finally, it is imperative to investigate the qualifications and skills not only which the ABC Ss are interested in achieving, but which employers consider necessary. Does the curriculum need to offer specific training for English qualifications such as TOEFL or Eiken? Should instructors be attempting to relate specific classroom tasks to test-taking strategies or practical skills (such as requiring essays to be typed)?

ABC Ss also rated var. 30 "To learn how to study independently" higher than did G.E. Ss., an encouraging result in light of the trend in EFL toward strengthening learner independence through self-access centers and by teaching language learning strategies.

Jpn Ss rated var. 27 "To find and develop my creative talents" and var. 28 "To explore and develop my own values and attitudes" significantly higher than did G.E. Ss; they hope to achieve personal as well as intellectual development while at this university—an exciting challenge for the Dept. of Japanese Studies.

Finally, lack of differences between groups' main objectives in attending university can tell us as much as the differences. It is surprising that although ABC Ss rated var. 34 "To become aware of what is happening in Japan and the world today" significantly higher than did G.E. Ss, Jpn Ss did not. Is it because they are already aware or because they are not interested?

3. Differences between male and female Ss.

A T-test for differences between men (209 Ss) and women (77 Ss) showed that women ranked var. 22, 25, 32, and 33—the top four items for all Ss—significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher than did men, implying that women may have a stronger sense of purpose in attending this university. This finding would make sense in light of the many social and

SECTION ONE: MEANS OF MAIN OBJECTIVES VARYING SIGNIFICANTLY BY GENDER

	MALE	FEMALE
Var 32 To deepen academic knowledge	3.90	4.40
Var 22 To meet people/friends	3.92	4.32
Var 33 To get qualifications	3.36	4.51
Var 25 To learn practical skills	2.56	3.00

$p < 0.05$

economic hurdles that Japanese women who wish to attend four-year colleges must overcome. The large difference in means of var. 33 again indicate the importance of discovering what qualifications women feel they need, and whether the curriculum is capable of supporting this need in any way.

Section Two: Desired skills.

1. Overall results

SECTION TWO: DESIRED SKILLS

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Label
Var 41	4.70	1.30	Coping in everyday situations abroad
Var 50	4.14	1.66	Talking about myself
Var 42	3.79	1.52	Following English movies/TV/radio/songs
Var 43	3.72	1.58	Reading books/magazines/newspapers
Var 49	3.70	1.55	Translating smoothly into Japanese
Var 53	3.62	1.73	English pronunciation
Var 46	3.49	1.52	Having polite social conversations
Var 52	3.08	1.55	Reading/writing business correspondence
Var 45	2.95	1.60	Vocabulary/idioms
Var 44	2.84	1.59	Writing letters/stories/poems
Var 51	2.77	1.50	English grammar
Var 48	2.69	1.57	Reading technical English
Var 47	2.66	1.57	Following academic/technical lectures
Var 55	2.43	1.61	Discussing technical/academic topics
Var 54	2.34	1.54	Writing technical/academic English

Number of valid observations (listwise) = 286

The means for this entire section are higher than those of Section One, perhaps because it is much easier to visualize and comment on specific skills than on overall goals for going to university, which Ss may never have clearly articulated, even to themselves

Ss' desired skills cluster together surprisingly consistently. The four lowest-ranked skills concern use of technical or academic English (the term "senmon-yougo" also includes business English). To some extent, this seems to contradict Section One's finding that Ss' most important reason for attending university is to enhance their job prospects: wouldn't becoming competent in technical or academic English be desirable? Perhaps Ss' objectives are inconsistent in that they desire the outcome (jobs) without the effort (studying technical English) Or perhaps Ss recognize that graduation from this university automatically means improved job prospects, regardless of whether they have been trained in this area. In any case, as general English courses often use texts that emphasize technical or academic English, some values clarification may be needed.

The four highest-ranked skills seem to concern English as a tool for personal enjoyment. The skill with the highest mean, var. 41 "Coping in a variety of everyday situations in English when I am abroad (e.g. eating out, shopping)" would presumably involve conversational skills. This ties in closely with the next item, var. 41 "Talking about myself, my ideas, and my feelings in English". If students' perceived needs are to be taken into account, then there should be more emphasis on conversational English in the curriculums of all three majors.

The third-highest desired skill, var. 41 "Following English movies, TV, radio, and songs", is thought-provoking. Ss' direct experiences with spoken English are much more likely to occur through these channels than through conversation with native speakers. The prob-

lem with this item is that we cannot distinguish between the mediums (TV, radio, film) and the content (news, songs, etc.), so we do not know exactly what the Ss are responding to. More specific items such as “listening to news items on the radio” and “listening to songs on the radio” could provoke quite different reactions. In any case, this is another area in which a self-access center would efficiently provide the opportunity for practice that Ss desire.

Var. 49 “Translating smoothly from English into Japanese” is actually rather ambiguous in that in Japanese this item can mean either translating or interpreting, either of which are extremely advanced skills that do not have a place in first-year English curriculums. Interviews for student feedback about this survey (conducted by C. Edwards, Hokkaido Musashi Women’s Jr. College) indicate that Ss took this item to mean the silent spontaneous interpreting into Japanese that Ss perform as they listen.

The remaining middle-ranked skills mainly reflect English as a subject of formal study, with grammar at the bottom. Pronunciation, however, has a surprisingly high mean, possibly indicating that Ss realize that fair control of pronunciation is necessary for conversational English.

2. Differences between groups by major.

A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the differences of means between the three major groups and the Scheffe procedure was used to discover where those differences lie. For all three groups, the top two (var. 41 and 50) and the bottom two (var. 55 and 54) variables remain the same. However, the means of all items varied significantly ($p < 0.05$) between two or more groups.

ABC Ss rated all items significantly higher than did Jpn and G.E.

SECTION TWO: MEANS OF DESIRED SKILLS VARYING SIGNIFICANTLY BY MAJOR

	Am Br Cn	Jpn	G.E
Var 32 Coping in everyday situations abroad	5 38	4 59	4 32
Var 50 Talking about myself	5.27	4 29	3.32
Var 42 Following Eng. movies/TV/radio/songs	4 75	3 59	3 31
Var 43 Reading books/magazines/newspapers	4.73	3.53	3.20
Var 49 Translating smoothly into Japanese	4 48	3 78	3 16
Var 53 English pronunciation	4 74	3.44	3.02
Var 46 Having polite social conversations	4 28	3 50	2 97
Var 52 Read/write business correspondence	4.11	2.92	2.52
Var 45 Vocabulary/Idioms	3 81	3 01	2 37
Var 44 Writing letters/stories/poems	4.05	2.59	2.21
Var 51 English grammar	3.58	2 77	2 25
Var 48 Reading technical English	3.56	2 62	2.19
Var 47 Following academic/technical lectures	3 78	2 24	2 20
Var 55 Discussing technical/academic topics	3.52	2.17	1.90
Var 54 Writing technical/academic English	3.38	2 15	1.79

p<0.05

Ss. This indicates that ABC Ss feel the need to master these skills more strongly than non-English majors. For ABC Ss, var. 41 and 50 had a minimum score of three; var. 42 a minimum score of two; most other items a minimum of one. This is the only section of the entire survey in which minimum scores are above zero.

There are also some differences between the other two major groups. Jpn Ss rank var. 45, 46, 49, 50, and 51 significantly higher than do G.E. Ss. Perhaps their interest in the Japanese language extends to an acknowledgement of the importance of grammar and vocabulary study as seen in var. 45 and 51.

In summary, rather than differences in the general rank order of items, there is a significant difference in the strength of the needs, with ABC Ss rating all items much higher, and Jpn Ss rating some items

slightly higher than G.E. Ss. This general consistency in priorities of desired skills for all Ss should allow general education English curriculum to reflect the felt needs of all students.

3. Differences between men and women Ss.

A T-test for differences between men (209 Ss) and women (77 Ss) showed that women rated all items significantly ($p < 0.05$) higher than did men, except for var. 48, 49, 54, and 55. The tendency for women to rate items generally higher than men did was also seen in Section One. Perhaps women feel more pressure to please than men; perhaps they are more expressive of their needs than men. Or, as suggested by the results of Section One, they may have a higher personal investment in attending university than men, so their objectives are clearer. In Section Two, the largest differences are in var. 53 "English pronunciation" ($M = 3.29$; $F = 4.52$), var. 44 "Writing personal letters, stories, or poems in English" ($M = 2.57$; $F = 3.56$), and var. 43 "Reading English books, magazines, or newspapers" ($M = 3.49$; $F = 4.34$). Var. 43 and 44

SECTION TWO: MEANS OF DESIRED SKILLS VARYING SIGNIFICANTLY BY GENDER

	Male	Female
Var 41 Coping in everyday situations abroad	4.56	5.06
Var 50 Talking about myself	3.93	4.71
Var 42 Following English movies/TV/radio/songs	3.60	4.31
Var 43 Reading books/magazines/newspapers	3.49	4.34
Var 53 English pronunciation	3.29	4.52
Var 46 Having polite social conversations	3.32	3.94
Var 52 Reading/writing business correspondence	2.89	3.61
Var 45 Vocabulary/Idioms	2.78	3.44
Var 44 Writing letters/stories/poems	2.57	3.56
Var 51 English grammar	2.67	3.03
Var 47 Following academic/technical lectures	2.54	2.97

$p < 0.05$

reflect interests that could be easily exploited in the reading and writing classroom. Var. 53 may reflect the high importance that women place on phatic communication: when conveying emotions, appropriate intonation is essential. Or women rate pronunciation highly because perhaps the English jobs they dream about—stewardess, tour guide, etc.—require good oral skills.

Section Three: Reasons for English—Majors only

1. Overall results

SECTION THREE : REASONS FOR ENGLISH : MAJORS

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Label
Var 72	.15	.36	Japanese business people need English
Var 62	.16	.37	To be an international person
Var 74	.17	.38	To experience non-Japanese thinking
Var 65	.19	.39	To make English-speaking friends
Var 66	.19	.39	To read English books/magazines/newspapers
Var 73	.22	.42	To know about English-speaking cultures
Var 68	.23	.43	To go on holidays abroad
Var 61	.26	.44	To get a non-teaching job using English
Var 64	.28	.45	I enjoy English movies/TV/radio/songs
Var 69	.41	.49	To work abroad
Var 71	.48	.50	To study abroad short term
Var 70	.53	.50	To study abroad long term
Var 75	.58	.50	To keep up with happenings abroad
Var 60	.65	.48	To be an English teacher
Var 63	.68	.47	I got good grades in English
Var 67	.99	.11	English is undemanding

Number of valid observations (listwise)=81

(*Since 0=Yes and 1=No, a low mean indicates a positive response.)

Ss were asked to mark “Yes” to as many reasons for majoring in English as they wanted. At least two-thirds of the Ss responded

positively to the top nine items (down to var. 64). Var. 72 “Japanese business people need English” at the top is somewhat difficult to interpret, as ABC Ss consider technical English skills the least important. In which ways do Ss envision business people using English? The next item, var. 72 “Being an international person” may be meaningless as it is almost a slogan in Japan; however, this item takes on some shape when considered along with var. 74 and 65. This cluster of items supports Koike’s (1985, p.157) finding that “the major purpose of TEFL according to 60.1% of the [university] students is international communication.” However, as ABC students are essentially cultural studies majors, it is surprising that var. 73 “I want to know about the cultures of countries where English is spoken” wasn’t rated higher. Finally, most Ss want to travel abroad, and about half of the English-major Ss hope to study or work abroad, indicating that Hokkai Gakuen University’s present exchange program may need to be expanded.

2. Differences between men and women Ss.

A chi-square (Pearson) for differences between men (47 Ss) and women (34 Ss) showed significant ($p < 0.05$) differences on four variables. Other than Var 72. “Japanese business people need English”, the most frequent reasons given by women for taking English are in order

SECTION THREE: MEANS OF REASONS FOR CHOOSING ENGLISH BY GENDER

	Male	Female
Var 65 To make English-speaking friends	.38	.06
Var 66 To read English books/magazines/newspapers	.28	.06
Var 61 To get a non-teaching job using English	.38	.09
Var 71 To study abroad short term	.60	.32

$p < 0.05$

to make English-speaking friends and to read English. Women Ss also hope to study abroad (short-term) and to get non-teaching jobs that use English far more than men do. The reasons most frequently cited by men other than “Japanese business people need English”, are to be an international person, and to experience non-Japanese ways of thinking. It seems that women Ss cite concrete objectives for studying English more often than do men. Perhaps they are able to do so because they have had to clarify, articulate, and perhaps even justify their goals in attending university and their objectives in studying English.

Section Four: Reasons for English—Non-majors Only

1 Overall results

SECTION FOUR : REASONS FOR ENGLISH: NON-MAJORS

Variable	Mean	Std Dev	Label
Var 91	18	39	Japanese business people need English
Var 87	.30	.46	To go on holidays abroad
Var 93	31	47	To experience non-Japanese thinking
Var 83	.32	.47	I enjoy English movies/TV/radio/songs
Var 84	.34	.48	To make English-speaking friends
Var 81	34	48	To be an international person
Var 85	.38	.49	To read English books/magazines/newspapers
Var 80	.52	.50	To get a job using English
Var 92	56	50	To know about English-speaking cultures
Var 94	56	50	To keep up with happenings abroad
Var 88	72	45	To work abroad
Var 90	.72	.45	To study abroad short term
Var 82	.81	39	I got good grades in English

Number of valid observations (listwise)=122

(*Since 0 = Yes and 1 = No, a low mean indicates a positive response.)

Non-English major Ss (N = 205) were first asked to mark whether

they would take English if it were not compulsory. 122 Ss (59.5%) responded “Yes”, and 83 Ss (40.5%) marked “No”. Only those that responded positively were asked to complete the rest of section four.

Surprisingly, as with English majors, the item with the highest-ranked mean— nearly as high for non-majors (.18) as for majors (.15)— is var. 91, that Japanese business people need English. As this perception of English is very strong and is fairly consistent across majors and gender, it would be wise to incorporate it into the curriculum in a positive way. This does not necessarily mean teaching “business English”. Rather, it means relating classroom tasks and, just as importantly, attitudes, to the adult working world. Non-majors do not rate getting a job using English highly. However, though they would not actively seek out a job using English, they realize that English is, like it or not, a part of the Japanese business world.

The next six items have fairly similar means. These items reflect fairly personal, enjoyable reasons such as going on holidays abroad and making English-speaking friends. Falling below that are more “serious” reasons involving getting a job using English or keeping up with happenings abroad. Not unexpectedly, non-English majors rank working or studying abroad towards the bottom.

2. Differences between Jpn and G.E. Ss.

On var. 79, a slightly larger proportion (65.4%) of the Jpn Ss answered that they would take non-compulsory English than would G.E. Ss (55.9%). As for the remaining items, a chi-square (Pearson) for differences between Jpn (51 Ss) and G.E. (71 Ss) showed significant ($p < 0.05$) differences on four variables (var. 82, 91, 92, and 93).

G.E. Ss, like ABC Ss, chose var. 91 the most often. Jpn Ss are the only group to choose var. 93 “I want to experience non-Japanese ways

**SECTION FOUR: REASONS FOR ENGLISH (NON-MAJORS)
VARYING SIGNIFICANTLY BY MAJOR**

	JAPANESE STUDIES	GENERAL ED
Var 91 Japanese business people need English	27	.11
Var 93 To experience non-Japanese thinking	.20	.39
Var 92 To know about English-speaking cultures	.37	.69
Var 82 I got good grades in English	.90	.75

$p < 0.05$

of thinking” the most frequently as a reason for taking English. This emphasis on personal experience is supported by their next three most frequently-cited items concerning English movies, friends, and holidays. Within the Jpn group, it is clear that Ss who want to take non-compulsory English are doing so for cultural and not practical reasons.

Except for the lack of interest in experiencing non-Japanese ways of thinking, G.E. Ss’ reasons for taking English more closely resemble the overall order. However, for these students, having gotten good grades in English in the past plays a larger part in their decision to take English than it does for other Ss.

3. Differences between men and women Ss.

A chi-square (Pearson) for differences between men (92 Ss) and women (30 Ss) showed significant ($p < 0.05$) differences on four variables (var. 84, 85, 90, and 91).

The largest difference is on var. 90, with almost half (Ss=14) of the women students intending to study abroad short-term. Three of the items—studying abroad short-term, making English-speaking friends, and reading English books—are the same items that women majoring in English ranked significantly higher than did the men. These gender-

**SECTION FOUR: MEANS OF REASONS FOR CHOOSING ENGLISH
BY GENDER**

	Male	Female
Var 91 Japanese business people need English	.23	.03
Var 84 To make English-speaking friends	.40	.17
Var 85 To read English books/magazines/newspapers	.43	.20
Var 90 To study abroad short term	.78	.53

$p < 0.05$

based differences cut across majors; it is important to acknowledge them even if they do not directly inform curriculum planning.

Section Five: Desired Skills (Examined as clusters)

Some of the original PANSI survey items describing desired English skills in Section Two were slightly rewritten to make clear distinctions among the following clusters more closely: “Formal English” (var. 46, 47, 48, 52, 54); “Informal English” (var. 41, 42, 43, 44, 50), and “English as a study subject” (var. 45, 49, 51, 53). Each S’s score was arrived at by averaging the ratings of the variables for each cluster. Results show that all groups of Ss (by major and by gender) rated “informal English” the highest and “formal English” the lowest.

Most other needs analysis examine the relative importance of the four skills. In order to look at that element, this study averaged each S’s scores on several variables as follows: reading (var. 43, 48, 72), writing (var. 44, 52, 54), speaking (var. 46, 50, 55), and listening (var. 42, 47). Although these variables given do not represent the full range of tasks that these skills involve, researchers (Sun, 1989) have investigated the relative ranking of the four skills with as few as 15 total items. All population groups ranked speaking skills the highest and writing skills the lowest, comparable to Lombardo’s (1988) findings.

Discussion

Anecdotal evidence from university instructors that students do not have strong goals when they enter university seems to be confirmed by a comparison of the means of Section One with those of the other sections. In qualitative follow-up interviews conducted by C. Edwards, Ss repeatedly commented that for a long time their goals were simply getting into a college appropriate to their level and that they really did not think much beyond that. However, students do feel that attending university will enhance their job prospects. In comparison, Widdows and Voller's (1991) PANSI survey found that the goal most often cited by students for entering university was to increase their academic knowledge. Economically speaking, 1991 is light-years away; at the height of the "bubble", students didn't worry about getting jobs. Students at Hokkai Gakuen university obviously do. However, their inexperience prevents some of them from relating their English objectives to their larger goal of getting a job. Perhaps instructors need to articulate how particular English course objectives might relate to students' larger goals of employment.

There are some overall differences among the major groups. ABC Ss have a strong practical orientation, expressing very clearly their desire for qualification, whereas Jpn Ss are more oriented toward personal development. ABC Ss and female Ss have a stronger sense of objectives concerning their English education.

As is usual with research papers, this paper ends with a call for more research. "Needs assessments should be conducted as an integral part of a cyclical planning-implementation-evaluation process." (Witkin, p.28) However, to avoid burnout, large-scale needs analysis surveys should not be conducted often. In the future, follow-up needs

analysis could be conducted as small-scale, open-ended interviews that explore the most salient results of this analysis or that clarify points of confusion. "The more regularly attempts are made to identify needs systematically, the less call should there be for elaborate, large-scale procedures, since each new attempt can draw on and refine the last." (Gardner, p.75) It is hoped that, along with input from a variety of other sources, student input about their own needs and perceptions will help shape the curriculum in a positive, ongoing direction.

(This study is part of a survey investigating the perceived needs of students at 45 private universities in Hokkaido, Japan, that is partially funded by a Hokkaido Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research. Members of the research group are: Cynthia Edwards, Jerald Halvorsen, Keiko Hayasaka, Machiko Horiuchi, Sally Kobayashi, Dale Sato, Suzanne Yonesaka, and Midori Yoshida.)

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APPENDIX

HOKKAIDO LANGUAGE EDUCATION RESEARCH GROUP
THE STUDENT NEEDS ANALYSIS PROJECT (SNAP) SURVEY

Write the personal data and blacken the corresponding bubbles. Then, read the instructions for each section of the survey and blacken the appropriate bubbles on the mark sheet. Do not leave any stray marks on either the mark sheet or survey. Take as much time as you need.

Section 1:

What are your main objectives in attending this college, apart from improving your English? Mark each of the following possible objectives on a scale ranging from [0]-*not applicable at all* to [6]-*highly applicable*.

- VAR 22 A To meet people and make friends
- VAR 23 B To enhance my job prospects
- VAR 24 C To become independent from my parents
- VAR 25 D To learn practical skills which will be useful in work or everyday life (e.g. computing, car maintenance)
- VAR 26 E To have plenty of free time to pursue my own interests (e.g. sports, hobbies, travel)
- VAR 27 F To find and develop my creative talents
- VAR 28 G To explore and develop my own values and attitudes
- VAR 29 H To learn about human relations
- VAR 30 I To learn how to study independently
- VAR 31 J To delay starting work
- VAR 32 K To deepen my knowledge of academic subjects
- VAR 33 L To get qualifications (e.g. Eiken test, teaching certificate, accounting certificate)
- VAR 34 M To become aware of what is happening in Japan and the world today
- VAR 35 N I have no objectives

Note: Do not mark in bubbles O through S.

Section 2:

Of the following, which would you like to be competent in by the time you graduate? Mark each one on a scale from [0]-*not important at all* to [6]-*very important*.

- VAR 41 A Coping in a variety of everyday situations in English when I am abroad (e.g. eating out, shopping)
- VAR 42 B Following English movies, TV, radio, and songs
- VAR 43 C Reading English books, magazines, or newspapers
- VAR 44 D Writing personal letters, stories, or poems in English
- VAR 45 E English vocabulary and idioms
- VAR 46 F Having polite social conversations in English
- VAR 47 G Following lectures in English on academic or technical subjects
- VAR 48 H Reading technical books or articles in English quickly and efficiently
- VAR 49 I Translating smoothly from English into Japanese
- VAR 50 J Talking about myself, my ideas, and my feelings in English
- VAR 51 K English grammar
- VAR 52 L Reading and writing business correspondence in English (e.g. letters, memos, faxes)
- VAR 53 M English pronunciation
- VAR 54 N Writing technical or academic papers in English
- VAR 55 O Discussing technical or academic topics in English

Note: Do not mark in bubbles P through S

Section 3 English Majors:

Why did you choose to major in English? Blacken [yes] or [no] for each of the reasons as they apply to you.

- VAR 60 A I want to be an English teacher
- VAR 61 B I want to get a job (other than teaching) where English will be useful
- VAR 62 C I want to be an international person
- VAR 63 D I got good grades in English at school
- VAR 64 E I enjoy English movies, TV, radio, and songs
- VAR 65 F I want to make English-speaking foreign friends
- VAR 66 G I want to read books, magazines, or newspapers in English
- VAR 67 H English is an undemanding subject
- VAR 68 I I want to go on holidays abroad
- VAR 69 J I want to work abroad
- VAR 70 K I want to study abroad for a long term
- VAR 71 L I want to go abroad on a short term study trip
- VAR 72 M Japanese business people need to know English
- VAR 73 N I want to know about the cultures of countries where English is spoken
- VAR 74 O I want to experience non-Japanese ways of thinking
- VAR 75 P I want to keep in touch with what is happening abroad

Note: Do not mark in bubbles Q through S.

Section 4 Non-English Majors .

Blacken [*yes*] or [*no*] to answer the following question

VAR 79 A If English was not a compulsory subject, would you still choose to study it?

If you answered **NO** to question A, **STOP**

If you answered **YES** to question A, why do you want to study English?
Blacken [*yes*] or [*no*] for each of the reasons as they apply to you.

VAR 80 B I want to get a job where English will be useful

VAR 81 C I want to be an international person

VAR 82 D I got good grades in English at school

VAR 83 E I enjoy English movies, TV, radio, and songs

VAR 84 F I want to make English-speaking foreign friends

VAR 85 G I want to read books, magazines, or newspapers in English

VAR 86 H English is an undemanding subject

VAR 87 I I want to go on holidays abroad

VAR 88 J I want to work abroad

VAR 89 K I want to study abroad for a long term

VAR 90 L I want to go abroad on a short term study trip

VAR 91 M Japanese business people need to know English

VAR 92 N I want to know about the cultures of countries where English is spoken

VAR 93 O I want to experience non-Japanese ways of thinking



VAR 94 P I want to keep in touch with what is happening abroad

NOTE: Do not mark in bubbles Q through S.

大学生の態度・要望・関心事の概要についてのアンケート
回答のしかたについての諸注意

1. 第1部と第2部は全員が回答します。第3部は英語を専攻している学生が、第4部は英語以外を専攻している学生が回答します。あなたに該当する各部のすべての項目に回答してください。回答しない項目があると、すべてが無効になりますので注意してください。
2. 第1部～第4部のそれぞれの指示に従って、該当するところをマークしてください。(つまり該当するところの○を、黒く塗りつぶしてください。)

マーク例

良い例	悪い例
	

(* 薄くて読み取れない)

3. 回答にはHBの黒鉛筆(シャープペンシルも可)またはそれに近いものを使用し、回答を訂正する場合にはプラスチック消ゴムで完全に消してください。
4. 回答用紙は汚したり折曲げたりしないでください。また所定以外のところには記入しないでください。
5. アンケート用紙には絶対に何も書かないでください。
6. 回答用紙と共にアンケート用紙も提出してください。
7. 時間を十分に取って回答してください。

大学生の態度・要望・関心事の概要についてのアンケート

第1部 学生全員

あなたがこの大学に入って2年間または4年間を過ごす目標は何ですか。項目A～Nに、次の7段階基準で答えてください。あなたの場合に当てはまるところの数字をマークしてください。

- 7段階基準
- 0 全然当てはまらない
 - 1 ほとんど当てはまらない
 - 2 あまり当てはまらない
 - 3 少し当てはまる
 - 4 かなり当てはまる
 - 5 大部分当てはまる
 - 6 完全に当てはまる

- A 人と会って友達になるため
- B 就職の可能性を高めるため
- C 親から独立するため
- D 仕事や日常生活に役に立つ実技を身につけるため
(例えばコンピュータの使い方、自動車の整備など)
- E 趣味を生かす時間を得るため
(例えばスポーツ、音楽、旅行など)
- F 創造的才能を見つけて伸ばすため
- G 価値観や人生観を求めて深めるため
- H 人間関係について学ぶため
- I 自主的に勉強することを学ぶため
- J 就職するのを避けるため
- K 学問知識を深めるため
- L 資格を得るため
(例えば英検、教員免許状、会計士など)
- M 日本や世界で起こっている出来事について関心を高めるため
- N 別に目標はない
(マークシートのO～S欄は今回使いません)

第2部 学生全員

英語を学ぶことに関して、あなたは卒業するまでに、どのような英語の能力を身につけたいですか。項目A～Oに、次の7段階基準で答えてください。あなたの場合に当てはまるところの数字をマークしてください。

- 7段階基準
- 0 全然大切ではない
 - 1 ほとんど大切ではない
 - 2 あまり大切ではない
 - 3 少し大切である
 - 4 かなり大切である
 - 5 非常に大切である
 - 6 絶対に大切である

- A 海外へ行ったとき、英語でさまざまな日常的状况に対処すること
(例えば外食したり買い物をするときなど)
- B 英語の映画やテレビ・ラジオ番組や歌などを理解すること
- C 英語の本や雑誌や新聞などを読むこと
- D 英語で手紙や小説や詩などを書くこと
- E 英語の単語やイデオロムをたくさん覚えること
- F 英語で礼儀正しい会話をする事
- G 英語で学問的または専門技術的な講義を理解すること
- H 英語の専門書や論文を速く効果的に読むこと
- I 英語を日本語に円滑に訳すこと
- J 英語で自分自身の考えや感情について話すこと
- K 英語の文法に精通すること
- L 英語のビジネスレターやメモやテレックスなどを読んだり書いたりすること
- M 英語のすばらしい発音を身につけること
- N 英語で学問的または専門技術的な論文を書くこと
- O 英語で学問的または専門技術的な討論をすること
(マークシートのP～S欄は今回使いません)

第3部 英語を専攻している学生

あなたはなぜ英語を専攻したのですか。項目A～Pに、「はい」の人はYを、「いいえ」の人はNをマークしてください。

- A 英語の教師になりたいから
- B 英語が役に立つ仕事につきたいから (英語教師以外で)
- C 国際人になりたいから
- D 中学校や高校で英語の成績が良かったから
- E 英語の映画やテレビ・ラジオ番組や歌が好きだから
- F 英語を話す外国人と友達になりたいから
- G 英語の本や雑誌や新聞などを読みたいから
- H 英語がらくな科目だから
- I 海外旅行をしたいから
- J 外国で仕事をしたいから
- K 長期留学をしたいから
- L 短期語学研修をしたいから
- M 英語は国際語として日本のビジネスにも必要だから
- N 英語圏の文化について学びたいから
- O 日本人と違う考え方を学びたいから
- P 海外で起こっている出来事に遅れたくないから
(マークシートのQ～S欄は今回は使いません)

第4部 英語以外を専攻している学生

次の質問Aに、「はい」の人はYを、「いいえ」の人はNをマークしてください。

A たとえ英語が必修科目でなくても、あなたは英語を選択しますか。

Nをマークした人は、ここで回答は終わりです。

Yをマークした人は、なぜ英語を選択したいのですか。項目B～Pに、「はい」の人はYを、「いいえ」の人はNをマークしてください。

- B 英語が役に立つ仕事につきたいから
 - C 国際人になりたいから
 - D 中学校や高校で英語の成績が良かったから
 - E 英語の映画やテレビ・ラジオ番組や歌が好きだから
 - F 英語を話す外国人と友達になりたいから
 - G 英語の本や雑誌や新聞などを読みたいから
 - H 英語がらくな科目だから
 - I 海外旅行をしたいから
 - J 外国で仕事をしたいから
 - K 長期留学をしたいから
 - L 短期語学研修をしたいから
 - M 英語は国際語として日本のビジネスにも必要だから
 - N 英語圏の文化について学びたいから
 - O 日本人と違う考え方を学びたいから
 - P 海外で起こっている出来事に遅れたくないから
- (マークシートのQ～S欄は今回使いません)