

First Year English Students' Background, Interests and

Motivation: Before Instruction

by

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Introduction

Several studies have been done in Japan to explore the attitudes and motivation of English students in Japanese universities. Widdows and Voller (1991, 134) looked at the "motives and views" of students in five relatively prestigious universities and found that there was a great "dichotomy between what students want to learn.... and what they are actually taught". Tweles (1996) in a comparison study between Japanese and Chinese students found that Chinese students had more "instrumental" motivation to studying English than the Japanese students who tended to have a more "integrative" motivational approach. Redfield and Larson (1995) compared the attitudes towards instruction of English students in different faculties at Kansai University and found that in many respects the attitudes of students in the different faculties were similar. All the above studies were done using questionnaires, either as part of a formal needs analysis, or simply because teachers have wanted to know more about their students.

It is common to perform some sort of needs analysis when a new teaching program is initiated to aid in determining what types of teaching methods and materials will be most appropriate for this particular group of students. A needs analysis is a multifaceted task, one aspect of which would be to gather information related to students' background, interests and motivation relative to the particular area of study. The present questionnaire study was primarily designed to explore the background, interests and motivation of students studying English in Yokkaichi University's newly established Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences.

As a matter of course, teachers develop an understanding of their students' background, interests and motivation through their experiences with them, but it is useful to have this understanding corroborated by objective data. Besides being influenced by their current experiences, a teacher's understanding and attitudes are also based on previous experience, his/her studies and the "conventional wisdom" passed between teachers. Hence, it is quite possible for teachers' assumptions about their students to become outdated, especially during periods of time in which substantial changes are taking place within the educational context in which they work.

Just such a possibility currently exists as several important changes have occurred in the Japanese educational context during the past decade that directly affect English language education at the high school and junior high school level. Three important changes are: 1) The AET and JET programs have introduced native English speaking teachers into most Japanese high schools, 2) University entrance exams increasingly contain sections related to both listening and communicative English usage, and 3) The Japanese Ministry of Education (Mombusho) in 1993 issued new guidelines urging schools to make language instruction more focused on developing communicative skills. These new guidelines resulted in the addition of three communicatively based elective courses to the high school curriculum, of which students are required to take at least one. In light of these changes, it may be that some of teachers' basic assumptions about their students' background, interest and motivation will have to change to keep abreast of students' changing experiences in their high school English classes.

It is important to note that these changes in educational policy related to English instruction are a reflection of more sweeping changes that have taken place in the past 20-30 years, not only in the world of language education, but also the world of linguistics where the structuralist paradigm has largely been replaced by the cognitive/communicative paradigm. These changes have resulted in the communicative approach to language instruction having become the mainstream approach to language instruction in much of the world. In Japan, however, there has been resistance to communicative teaching methodology, and even though the three changes outlined above have taken place in Japanese high schools, change in real terms may actually be occurring relatively slowly. One of the purposes of this paper is to explore the educational background of our students to see to what extent high school English classes have become more "communicatively" oriented.

Besides exploring student background, this study also aims to explore the degree to which students are motivated to study in our English classes, as well as what might be some of the specific interests and goals fueling their motivation. The issue of motivation and how it relates to language learning has been of interest to educators for some time as, obviously, motivation is an important factor in the learning process. In a seminal work by Gardner and Lambert, it was proposed that there are two types of motivation, "instrumental motivation" which would reflect the utilitarian value of linguistic achievement" and "integrative motivation" which would play a role if students were "interested in being accepted as a member of that other group" (1972, 3). Instrumental motivation would motivate a language learner to study English in order to achieve a particular goal in the outer world, to become more employable or to further one's career, for example, whereas integrative motivation would motivate a learner to study in order to better understand or relate socially within the second language culture.

Actually, this distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation is more appropriate for an ESL (English as a Second Language) situation in a country where English is the first language and substantial opportunities to relate within the first language culture are available. Benson (1991, 36), citing Cooper and Fishman, questions the validity of the "integrative/instrumental" construct in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) situation such as Japan, and posits a third category of motivation, "personal motivation" which refers to factors neither integrative nor instrumental that relate to an individual's own "development and satisfaction".

These three general aspects of the construct of motivation, i.e. instrumental, integrative, and personal, directly relate to many teachers' observations that some of their students are motivated to study English more for work related reasons, while other students see English as being more useful for future travel. As can be seen from the previous discussion of motivation, the first reason related to work is definitely instrumental, whereas the second reason related to future travel is probably instrumental, but could also be somewhat integrative. Related to Benson's idea of "personal motivation" it does also seem that some students want to continue studying English simply because they like it, or perhaps because they feel challenged by the fact that they have studied considerably and still feel unable to communicate at a basic level. The purpose of this study, however, is not so much to explore the construct of motivation as it is to obtain useful information concerning what relating to English study might be motivating to students at Yokkaichi University. Hence, this study will attempt to determine whether students are more motivated to study English for reasons related to work, travel or personal considerations.

To conclude, the primary goals of this study are to learn more about the background, interests and motivation of students related to English study as they begin classes in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences at Yokkaichi University. It is hoped that the data obtained will provide a baseline against which students in the future can be compared to see how the changing educational environment affects them. Secondarily, as there was also an opportunity to give a similar questionnaire to English students in the Faculty of Economics, data from these classes will also be looked at to see what the similarities and differences might be between students in the two faculties.

Methods

Subjects:

The subjects in this study include first-year students (N=195) from the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences who elected to study English in Spring of 1997. This group was comprised of all the students in this faculty who attended the first classes in all six sections of English Communication - Basic, (classes A–F in the tables).

Also included is the data from two classes of English students (N=65) from the Faculty of Economics. One class was from the School of Economics and the other was from the School of Commerce. This group is comprised of all the students who attended the first day of classes in these two classes of English 1. The students in the Faculty of Economics were assigned to the classes by student number, and will be considered a random sample of English 1 students for the purposes of this study, (classes E1 and E2 in the tables).

Two factors related to faculty membership should be kept in mind as these factors may substantially influence the data: 1) Students in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences who feel very unmotivated towards the study of English cannot study other languages, whereas all students in the Faculty of Economics must study English regardless of motivation to do so. 2) As all students in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences had to decide which language to study shortly before completing this questionnaire, this decision-making process itself may have increased these students' awareness of their motivation and interests related to English study.

Materials:

There were nine items in both forms of the questionnaire (See Appendix A and B). Six items (Items 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9) were Likert type, 5-point scale questions. Two items (Items 5 and 6) asked students to rank 5 areas of language study. One item (Item 4) was a multiple-choice question including an "other" choice which gave students the opportunity to write in their own answer. The questionnaire was translated into Japanese, and both English and Japanese versions of each question were included on the questionnaire.

Procedures:

The questionnaire was given to students to complete on the first day of classes in April of 1997 by their regular classroom teachers. This questionnaire was given after roll was taken, but before any instruction or description of course content took place. Students were instructed that this was an anonymous questionnaire and to not write their names on it.

Analysis:

The data was tabulated and analyzed using JMP statistical software for Macintosh computers. The descriptive data for the Likert items includes the raw scores showing the frequency of students in each class who chose each Likert scale value, as well as the mean Likert scale value for each class and faculty on each question. Likert scales are designed to elicit from students some sense of the degree to which they agree/disagree or like/dislike something. In this case, students had to choose on a scale of between 1 and 5, with 1 being a very negative response and 5 being a very positive response. Essentially, 3 will be considered a neutral response, and the total of 1 and 2 responses will be considered the overall frequency of negative responses, while the total of 4 and 5 responses will be considered the overall frequency of positive responses. The descriptive data for Items 4, 5 and 6 will also show raw scores and

frequency for each answer choice.

The comparative analysis used to look at faculty differences includes chi-square data, LogLikelihood and Pearson ratios, all found in the "Tests" section of the tables. The alpha for statistical significance (p values) was set at .05, typical for this type of study. Those values that are statistically significant at this level will be marked with a star *.

Results/Discussion

The purpose of Question 1, "How much did you enjoy your English classes in high school and junior high school?", was to get a general sense of how enjoyable students' previous study of English had been. This is important information, because to some extent, students' previous experiences with English will influence their present attitudes. Looking at Table 1, it can be seen that the likert average for first year students in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences was 2.48, and that 51% of the students (total of 1 and 2 responses) felt negative about their previous experiences with English, whereas, 12% (total of 3 and 4 responses) felt positive. This indicates that it would be a good idea to make it clear from the beginning that English classes at Yokkaichi University will be different from their high school English classes, in ways that are important to students (it will be clearer what students' preferences related to English study are when we look at Question 7 later).

With students in the Faculty of Economics, the results were similar with more students indicating that they felt negative about their previous experiences studying English than that felt positive. The degree, however, was somewhat greater than with students in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences, and the difference was statistically significant at the .001 level ($p > .001$).

QUESTION 1-
How much
did you enjoy
your English
classes in JHS
and HS?

	not at all		so so		very much			
CLASS	1	2	3	4	5	CLASS N	LIKERT AVE	
A	5	9	13	4	1	32	2.59375	
B	7	11	11	4	1	34	2.4411764706	
C	4	8	18	5	0	35	2.6857142857	

D	7	16	6	2	2	33	2.2727272727
E	7	10	14	1	0	32	2.28125
F	4	10	16	5	0	35	2.6285714286
E1 (Econ)	9	9	11	3	0	32	2.25
E2 (Comm)	12	10	8	3	0	33	2.0606060606
Frequency as %							
Environ/Info	16.9	0.3184079602	0.38805970149	0.10447761194	0.01990049751	1	2.4838649096
Economics	0.32307692308	0.29230769231	0.29230769231	0.09230769231	0	1	2.1553030303

The purpose of Question 2, "How much are you looking forward to English classes at Yokkaichi University?", was to get as clear a look as possible at student's current level of motivation, specifically in relation to the study of English in Yokkaichi University. It is important to know the current level of student motivation towards their future English classes as this will influence the degree of attentiveness and amount of effort students apply in their classes. It is also usually the case that a higher level of student motivation allows the teacher to use a broader range of materials with success. When looking at the results in Table 2, it can be seen that the group mean likert score is 2.84, and that 22% of students felt positive about their future English classes at Yokkaichi University, while 25% of students felt negative. Certainly, one could hope for a greater number of students looking forward to their English classes, but considering that students' previous experiences with English study were predominately negative (48% negative in Question 1), it is heartening that students are somewhat more optimistic about their future classes at Yokkaichi University.

With students in the Faculty of Economics, the results were similar with more students indicating that they felt negative about their future English classes than that felt positive. The degree, however, was somewhat greater than with students in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences, and the difference was statistically significant at the .001 level ($p > .001$).

QUESTION 2-
How much
are you
looking
forward to
English
classes at
Yokkaichi
Univ.?

	not at all		so so		very much			
CLASS	1	2	3	4	5	CLASS N	LIKERT AVE	
A	2	4	18	4	3	31	3.064516129	
B	3	9	13	6	2	33	2.8484848485	
C	1	9	19	5	0	34	2.8235294118	
D	1	6	17	6	3	33	3.1212121212	
E	4	3	19	5	1	32	2.875	
F	2	6	18	8	0	34	2.9411764706	
K1 (Econ)	3	15	10	3	1	32	2.5	
K2 (Comm)	5	10	14	3	1	33	2.5454545455	
Frequencyas %								
Environ/Info	0.06598984772	0.18781725888	0.52791878173	0.17258883249	0.04568527919	1	2.9456531635	
Economics	0.12307692308	0.38461538462	0.36923076923	0.09230769231	0.03076923077	1	2.5227272727	

The purpose of Question 3, "How useful do you think English will be to you in the future?", is to assess the degree to which students view English as being useful to them in the future. Whereas the previous question, Question 2, looks at the degree to which students are looking forward to studying English, and hence, focuses on the affective component of motivation, Question 3 seeks to explore the degree to which students might be motivated by the perception that English is a useful skill to acquire. This should give some indication of the degree of instrumental motivation discussed earlier. The important difference between the two questions is that if students are motivated by the idea that English will be useful to them in the future, this should help them maintain their efforts to learn English when activities become less enjoyable.

Looking at Table 3, the likert group mean of 3.62 indicates, in general, that students feel that English will be useful to them in the future. Only 9% of Environmental and Information Science students felt that English would not be useful to them, while 52% felt that it would be. When comparing these results with the results of Question 2 it can be seen that there are considerably more students that view English as being useful to them in the future (52%) than there are students that are looking forward to studying English (22%). Potentially this points to a conflict in some students who may think they should study English, but perhaps don't feel particularly inspired to do so.

With students in the Faculty of Economics, the results were similar with more students indicating that they view English as being useful to them in the future than those that do not. The degree, however, was somewhat less than with students in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences, and the difference was statistically significant at the .05 level ($p > .05$).

QUESTION 3 - How useful do you think English will be to you in the future?							
	not at all		so so		very much		
CLASS	1	2	3	4	5	CLASS N	LIKERT AVE
A	0	0	15	7	9	31	3.8064516129
B	4	3	13	8	4	32	3.15625
C	0	3	15	8	8	34	3.6176470588
D	1	1	12	10	7	31	3.6774193548
E	1	2	12	8	7	30	3.6
F	1	3	6	14	10	34	3.8529411765
E1(Econ)	1	7	12	9	3	32	3.1875
E2(Comm)	2	4	14	9	3	32	3.21875
Frequency as %							
Environ/Info	0.03645833333	0.0625	0.38020833333	0.28645833333	0.234375	1	3.6184515338
Economics	0.046875	0.171875	0.40625	0.28125	0.09375	1	3.203125

The purpose of Question 4, "Why did you decide to study English this year?", is to go a step further related to motivation and determine the specific factors motivating students' choice to study English. As was discussed earlier, there is often discussion among teachers as to whether students are more motivated to study English for career goals, future travel, or personal reasons. Taking this into consideration the following answer options were given, and students were instructed to choose the most important one: 1) "English will be useful for travel", 2)

English will be useful for work , 3) "You like English", 4) "Someone recommended you study English", 5) "English is easier than the other languages", and 6) "You are interested in English speaking cultures". Items 7) "not sure" and 8) "other" were also included, and when answering "other", students were instructed to write the reason for choosing to study English.

The results shown in Table 4 indicate that the most frequent answer to Question 4 "Why did you decide to study English this year?" was "English will be useful for work" (28%). The second most frequent answer was, "English will be useful for travel" (19%). Another frequently chosen answer was, "You like English", (11.5%). It will be important to keep these findings in mind when making decisions about curriculum and methodology, as perhaps, more thought must be given to providing practice in language use situations oriented towards the workplace than that which is provided by many textbooks which have a decidedly "English for travel" perspective.

Although work seems to be an important motivating factor for these students, it should also be noted that more than 2/3 of the students chose one of the other reasons as the most important reason for deciding to study English, and 12.5% chose "other". These students wrote a variety of reasons often related to their own personal interests, such as, "I want to be able to speak English", and "English is the common language of the world" (see Appendix C for a list of these responses). Clearly, it is important to keep in mind when looking out on a class, the diversity of the goals students may have for their English study, as well as the fact that a number of students have fairly unfocused goals relative to their study of English as evidenced by the 13% who chose "not sure" in response to this question.

It wasn't possible to use the same question with students in the Faculty of Economics because as it is a required course, students do not choose whether or not to study English, and hence, a direct comparison of the results between the two faculties is not possible. Students in the Faculty of Economics, however, were asked a related question, "What do you think learning English is the most useful for?". The purpose of this question was similar to that of the question used with the Faculty of Information and Environmental Sciences, in that it basically aims to determine whether students view English as being more useful for work, travel or other reasons. The percentage of students choosing the "work" option, "English will be useful for work", was similar to that of students in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences, however, many more students in the Faculty of Economics (52%) responded that future travel was the purpose studying English was the most useful for. These results are interesting, but may to some extent be related to differences in the question/answer choices in each questionnaire.

QUESTION 4 - Why did you decide to study English this year?								
(Environ/Info)	A	B	C	D	E	F	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
TRAVEL	8	6	6	8	4	6	38	0.19
WORK	9	7	7	10	13	10	56	0.28
LIKE ENGLISH	4	1	6	3	3	6	23	0.115
RECOMMENDED	1	0	2	1	0	0	4	0.02

EASIER	0	2	6	1	2	1	12	0.06
LIKE ENG CULT	3	2	3	3	2	3	16	0.08
NOT SURE	2	12	2	4	1	5	26	0.13
OTHER	5	2	3	4	7	4	25	0.125

QUESTION 4 - What do you think learning English is the most useful for?

(Econ.)	K1	K2	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
TRAVEL	19	17	36	0.52941176471
WORK	11	10	21	0.30882352941
LIKE ENG CULT	1	3	4	0.05882352941
NOT SURE	1	6	7	0.10294117647
OTHER	0	0	0	0

Question 5, "In high school, what English skills did you work with most?" looks further into student background to see which English sub-skills students would report working with most in the high school English classes. This question attempts to determine to what extent the recent changes in educational policy discussed earlier have influenced teaching practices. Traditionally, Japanese high school English education has focused on reading/translation (yakudoku) and grammar, however, if education were to focus more on communicative features of language use, there might be more emphasis on aural and spoken aspects of communication in high school classes.

Looking at the results in Table 5 we see that 95% of students reported that reading or grammar was the skill that they had worked with most in high school, and 80% of students reported that listening and speaking were the skills that they had worked with least. Although we do not have any data that could be used to determine if time spent on listening and speaking skills has increased in recent years, it does seem clear from these results that the focus on grammar and reading/translation continues to dominate high school English education.

It was somewhat surprising to see the relatively low mean likert score (1.9) that listening received, indicating that it was the skill students focused on least in high school, as there is a great variety of recorded materials that teachers could easily use in class. The results of this question point to the low priority given to helping students develop their oral communication skills, and also possibly, to high school teachers' lack of appreciation of the pivotal role that many theorists believe listening plays in the language acquisition process. (Dunkel, 435-438)

With this question, Question 5, and the question that follows, data from both faculties was combined, and no comparative analysis done as it was deemed overly laborious to do so. Also, in looking at the raw scores it appeared unlikely that there are any significant differences between faculties on either of these questions.

QUESTION 5 - In high school, what English skills did you work with most?						
(Environ/Info	(put in rank order : 1= least and 5= most)					
and	not at all		so so		very much	
Economics)	1	2	3	4	5	Likert ave.
GRAMMAR	0.034	0.05	0.05	0.314	0.552	4.3
READING	0.012	0.031	0.086	0.48	0.39	4.21
WRITING	0.168	0.168	0.586	0.07	0.008	2.58
SPEAKING	0.341	0.365	0.188	0.075	0.031	2.09
LISTENING	0.415	0.379	0.123	0.055	0.028	1.9

Question 6, "What English skills do you want to improve most in this class?" , is complementary to Question 5 and looks at students' interests related to English study. The purpose of this question was to get a sense of what language sub-skills students perceive as being the most important for them to study now. When looking at Table 6 we can see that the results are almost an inverse of the results of Question 5. Clearly, students hope to be able to work on improving their speaking and listening skills in our classes, with speaking skills being by far the preferred skill. Providing students with the type of learning experiences that they hope to receive is a good way to increase their motivation and satisfaction. Also, from these results we can assume that students' resistance to doing speaking activities is due to factors other than interest, and this underlines the necessity of designing activities that build confidence and help students feel comfortable using English to communicate.

QUESTION 6 - What skills do you want to improve most in this class?

(Environ/Info	(put in rank order: 1 = least and 5 = most)					
and	not at all		so so		very much	
Economics)	1	2	3	4	5	Likert ave.
SPEAKING	0.039	0.035	0.07	0.1551	0.702	4.45
LISTENING	0.044	0.103	0.171	0.552	0.131	3.62
READING	0.06	0.257	0.438	0.165	0.08	2.95
GRAMMAR	0.456	0.294	0.121	0.069	0.06	1.98
WRITING	0.422	0.321	0.177	0.06	0.02	1.94

Question 7, "How interested are you in learning about English speaking cultures?", aims to determine the extent to which students view learning about English speaking cultures to be interesting. This question was included as there is often discussion among teachers concerning the extent to which students are interested in learning about English speaking cultures. Some educators go so far as to suggest that students can benefit more from learning about foreign cultures through studying a language than they can from the actual language itself. Looking at Table 7 we see that the mean likert score (3.03) is very near neutral 3.0. Approximately 1/4 of students felt positive about learning about English speaking cultures, and an equal number felt negative. Hence, it seems that learning about English speaking cultures is only moderately interesting to the average first year student just out of high school. Firsthand experience such as travel or reading novels set abroad would probably be a good way of inspiring this kind of interest. It would be interesting to see the results of this question if it were given after the first year of study, to see to what extent our English classes, and the generally perspective-broadening experiences students tend to have in their first year in university, would lead them to answer this question differently.

With students in the Faculty of Economics, the results were similar, however, students here indicated that they were somewhat less interested in learning about English speaking cultures than students in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences. The difference was statistically significant at the .05 level ($p > .05$).

Question 7 -
How
interested
are you in
learning
about
English
speaking
cultures?

	not at all		so so		very much			
CLASS	1	2	3	4	5	GROUP N	LIKERT AVE	
A	1	5	19	5	1	31	3	
B	3	5	16	6	3	33	3.0303030303	
C	0	4	18	10	1	33	3.2424242424	
D	2	8	15	4	4	33	3	
E	2	9	14	5	1	31	2.8064516129	
F	2	6	17	5	4	34	3.0882352941	
E1 (Econ)	3	9	12	7	1	32	2.8125	
E2 (Comm)	3	15	9	4	2	33	2.6060606061	
Frequency as %								
Environ/Info	0.05128205128	0.18974358974	0.50769230769	0.17948717949	0.07179487179	1	3.0279023633	
Economics	0.09230769231	0.36923076923	0.32307692308	0.16923076923	0.04615384615	1	2.709280303	

The purpose of Question 8, "Does it seem interesting to use a computer to study English?", was to determine to what extent the idea of using computers to study English would be interesting to students. This question arose because on one hand, it may be that students value the interaction with the teacher and other students that a typical English class provides, and consequently, would not find the idea of studying English in a computer lab interesting. However, if students were interested in using computers to study English, there are 2 large computer labs on campus, and it may be possible to use them for this purpose.

Looking at the the results in Table 8 we can see that the likert mean for this question was 3.39, and that 42.4% of students felt positive about using computers to study English versus 17.7% that did not. It is important to remember when looking at the results that few students may actually have a clear idea of what using a computer to study English would be like, so their opinions may change after actually doing so. Also, as many students reported

that their previous experiences studying English had been rather negative, they may look at any new approach to studying English as being interesting. Nonetheless, the results indicate that, in general, students are positively disposed to using a computer to study English.

With students in the Faculty of Economics, the results were similar with more students indicating that they felt positive about using a computer to learn English than that felt negative. There was, however, no statistically significant difference between students in the two faculties on this question. This is interesting because it was thought that as there is a distinct emphasis on computer use in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences, that students attracted to study in this faculty might be particularly disposed to computer use. The results, however, indicate that interest in using computers to study English is uniform among all students of English at Yokkaichi University.

QUESTION						GROUP N	LIKERT AVE
	not at all		so so		very much		
8 - Does it seem interesting to use a computer to study English?	1	2	3	4	5		
CLASS	1	2	3	4	5	GROUP N	LIKERT AVE
A	2	2	11	4	12	31	3.7096774194
B	2	4	9	10	8	33	3.5454545455
C	1	6	16	8	3	34	3.1764705882
D	0	5	12	6	9	32	3.59375
E	2	6	15	5	3	31	3.0322580645
F	2	2	13	12	5	34	3.4705882353
E1 (Econ)	2	7	11	6	6	32	3.21875
E2 (Comm)	5	6	9	9	4	33	3.0303030303

Frequency as %							
Environ/Info	0.04615384615	0.12820512821	0.38974358974	0.23076923077	0.20512820513	1	3.4213664755
Economics	0.10769230769	0.2	0.30769230769	0.23076923077	0.15384615385	1	3.1245265152

The purpose of Question 9, "How would you rate your English ability?", was to get a sense of students' perception of their own English abilities. Being aware of Japanese students' tendency to be self-effacing, it was assumed that students would rate themselves quite low, and indeed they did. The mean likert value was 1.89, with 84% of students giving themselves a negative rating, and more than 1/3 of students rating themselves as "very poor". It would seem that students are well aware of their limited abilities to use English. Hopefully, this sense of a lack of English ability will serve to motivate students to study rather than to function as a limiting self-concept which becomes self-fulfilling. Convincing students that they can in fact communicate, albeit by using "broken English", by relying on the substantial English base created by their previous study in junior high school and high school is one of the biggest challenges facing teachers of first year university English students.

With students in the Faculty of Economics, the results were similar with a majority of students indicating that they view their English abilities negatively. The degree, however, was somewhat greater than with students in the Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences, and the difference was statistically significant at the .05 level ($p > .05$).

QUESTION 9 - How would you rate your English ability?						CLASS N	LIKERT AVE
	very poor		ok		very good		
CLASS	1	2	3	4	5		
A	8	17	6	0	0	31	1.935483871
B	23	7	3	0	0	33	1.3939393939
C	14	16	3	1	0	34	1.7352941176
D	8	19	4	2	0	33	2
E	11	17	2	1	0	31	1.7741935484
F	8	17	9	0	0	34	2.0294117647

E1 (Econ)	18	10	4	0	0	32	1.5625
E2 (Comm)	21	11	0	1	0	33	1.4242424242
Frequency as %							
Environ/Info	0.36734693878	0.47448979592	0.13775510204	0.02040816327	0	1	1.8113871159
Economics	0.6	0.32307692308	0.06153846154	0.01538461538	0	1	1.4933712121

Conclusion

This questionnaire was designed to explore the background, interests and motivation related to English study of students in Yokkaichi University's Faculty of Environmental and Information Sciences. These results can be used to create a general student profile against which one can check one's assumptions about students. A clearer understanding of students' background, interests and motivation should be an aid when making decisions about teaching methods and materials.

To summarize the results, it seems that most students didn't enjoy their previous experiences studying English in high school and junior high school, however, many are looking forward to studying English at Yokkaichi University. Whereas students' previous study in high school focused on developing abilities with grammar and reading, they now hope that their English classes in Yokkaichi university will help them improve their speaking and listening skills.

Students have a fairly strong sense that English will be useful to them in the future, and many responded that they will probably find English most useful at the workplace. There was also a substantial number of students that see English as being useful for future travel or that simply enjoy studying it. The idea of learning about English speaking cultures through language study seems to be only moderately interesting to students. However, the idea of using a computer to study English did seem appealing to many students.

When looking at the data from the Faculty of Economics, in general, we see that students felt similarly about the questions asked. The differences were in terms of degree, not direction. The fact, discussed earlier, that each faculty has a different policy for determining which students study English should be kept in mind when considering these results.

To conclude, it is interesting to use data like this to create a general student profile, but it is also important to notice the variety in student responses on all the questions, and remember that actually each class is comprised of individuals having unique backgrounds, interests and motivation in relation to English study.

Suggestions for Further Research

In the course of doing this study several ideas have come to mind for future research. 1) As this questionnaire was given to students before classes began, it is essentially a look at how students' experiences in junior high school and high school have shaped their attitudes towards English study. It would be interesting to give the same questionnaire to students after their first year of study to see how their experiences in their first year of university have led to changes in their attitudes. 2) One of the reasons for doing this study was to develop some baseline data against which students in the future, perhaps at 5 year intervals, can be compared. Doing so would be one approach to studying the changing characteristics of the student population and the educational context in which they are learning. Finally, 3) It would also be interesting to do a questionnaire study like this in which Yokkaichi students would be compared to other groups of students both in Japan and abroad to see how attitudes vary depending on the educational context.

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Appendix

"OTHER" entries from Question 4, "Why did you decide to study English this year?"

I want to be able to speak English.

I want to study abroad.

I want to live abroad someday.

English is necessary.

I want to be able to speak English.

I choose Chinese class but I couldn't get in.

I want to be able to ask people questions.

I've been studying English longer than Chinese or French. I just think it is better to be able to speak English. It's beneficial for work.

English will be very important in the future.

I have friends who I want to talk to in English. I have foreign friends.

English is the common language of the world. I would like to come to like English.

I want to be able to understand the words of foreign music. I like America.

As I'm not good at English, I want to be able to understand a little bit more. English is going to be the international language. English will be the most useful language form in the future. Someday English will be useful.

I want to be able to speak English.

I've been studying English for a long time and it makes sense to continue. I want to be able to talk with friends from Australia and Singapore about many things. English is the main language of language learning. English is necessary to do anything.

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