

# English Education in the Department of Contemporary Communication —Further Development

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## 1. Introduction

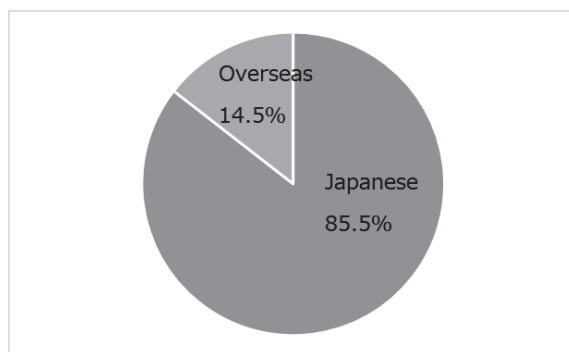
At the Department of Contemporary Communication there are six units which cater for students' interests: Business and Management, Hotel and Bridal, Medical Clerk, Life Design, and Fashion and Beauty. Last year, an English Communication unit was added to these five original units. The purpose of establishing an English Communication unit was to improve the English abilities of our students. However, there are many students who have poor English skills. The present issue is to search for effective ways of teaching to enhance the English ability of each student regardless of their ability. With this in mind, the purpose of this project is to survey the attitudes of students towards English and consider how we should approach English education.

## 2. Survey of the students' situation

Figure 1 shows how our department consists of about 85 % Japanese students and about 15 % overseas students.

**Figure 1.** Student Population of the Department of Contemporary Education (Second year students, 2019).

	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Japanese	59	85.5
Overseas	10	14.5
Total	69	100

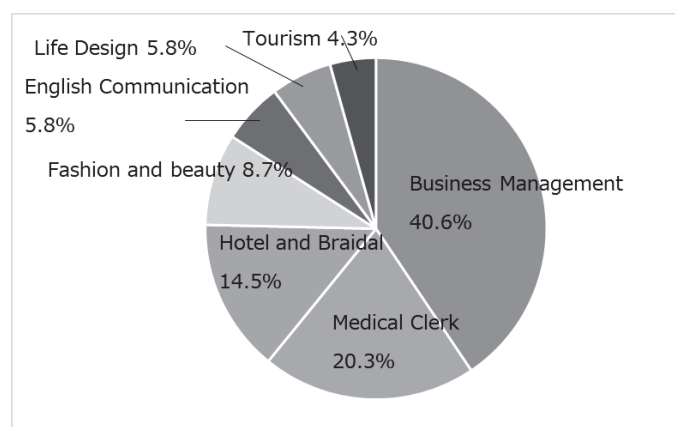


With regard to English ability, most overseas students have studied English. In fact, the English ability of these students is generally higher than that of the Japanese students. Needless to say, as a whole, students from the Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka have much higher English ability than those of Japanese students. This fact is clear in the results of the English placement test which was taken just after entering our college. The large gap between the ability of Japanese and overseas students constitutes one of the main challenges regarding the management of English courses.

We began our survey of gauging student attitudes towards English by looking at the unit students take. As indicated in Figure 2, the most popular unit is Business and Management, followed by Medical Clerk, Fashion and Beauty, Hotel and Bridal, English Communication, Life Design, and Tourism. The popularity of the Business and Management unit may lie in the fact that it provides students with basic skills and manners for business, such as the correct way to answer a telephone, the way to leave and receive messages, and practice in pop advertisement creation. Students also receive basic, practical knowledge about various kinds of companies. In this way, the Business and Management unit appeals not only to students who wish to become office staff but also to other students considering a wide range of careers.

**Figure 2.** The Number of Students Studying each Unit

Unit	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Business Management	28	40.6
Medical Clerk	14	20.3
Hotel and Bridal	10	14.5
Fashion and Beauty	6	8.7
English Communication	4	5.8
Life Design	4	5.8
Tourism	3	4.3
Total	69	100



The second most popular unit is Medical Clerk. Medical Clerk is one of the most popular certifications which women, especially young women, would like to obtain. The Medical Clerk certification offered in this unit is not a national qualification. Despite this, working as a medical clerk seems to enjoy particular reverence among students compared to other office work. This would seem to be the reason why our students are inclined to take the Medical Clerk unit.

In contrast, only 5.8% of students take the English Communication unit. This fact undoubtedly indicates that our students are not so interested in English.

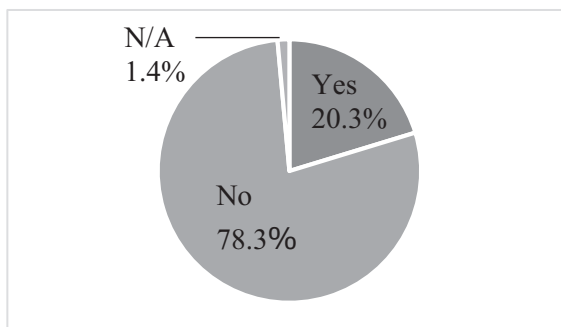
### 3. English learning experiences

Before discussing the future of English education in our department, we will focus on a survey of the students' experiences of learning English. Students were asked when and where they started learning English. As Figure 3 shows, about 20% of the

students started to take English lessons in kindergarten or elementary school. It should be noted that English has recently become a compulsory subject at elementary schools in Japan.

**Figure 3.** Students who began studying English while of kindergarten or elementary school age.

	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	14	20.3
No	54	78.3
N/A	1	1.4
Total	69	100



However, when our college students were elementary school students, English was not necessarily a compulsory subject. Accordingly, the fact that 20% of students have learned English since their childhood, shows that they may have studied English independently, perhaps encouraged reebly their parents. Opinions may be divided as to whether 20% is positively high or negatively low. However, it seems more than we expected, given the low number of students who take the English Communication unit. Perhaps, as already inferred, this figure is an indication of the parents' interest in English education.

In connection with this question, we asked students where they started to learn English. As indicated in Figure 4, we can see that private-tutoring schools were the most popular choice.

We might assume that the decision to study English at private-tutoring schools reflects the parents' views of the importance of learning general English skills, such as grammar and reading, as early as possible. That is to say, although they may have practiced English conversation, the goal may well have been to learn general English to prepare for school entrance exams.

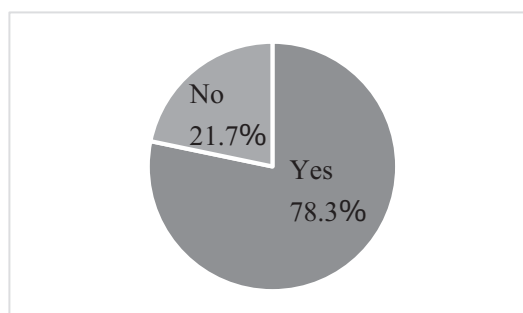
**Figure 4.** Location of English lessons while students were of kindergarten or elementary school age.

	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Private-tutoring schools	9	64.3
English conversation schools	3	21.4
English Tutor	0	0
Other	2	14.3
Total	14	100

Let us move on to the English language learning experiences of our students at junior high school. According to our survey, 78% of students had English lessons with native English speakers (Figure 5).

**Figure 5.** Students who experienced English lessons with native speakers.

	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	54	78.3
No	15	21.7
Total	69	100



As native English speakers are sent to most junior high schools on government-run programs, most of the students could experience English lessons with them. Regarding the frequency of such lessons, Figure 6 shows that most of the students had them once a week. From this fact, we can see that students had the opportunity to communicate with native English speakers, but not often. In other words, lessons with native speakers were a novel introduction to learning English, but perhaps had little lasting effect on student attitudes towards English.

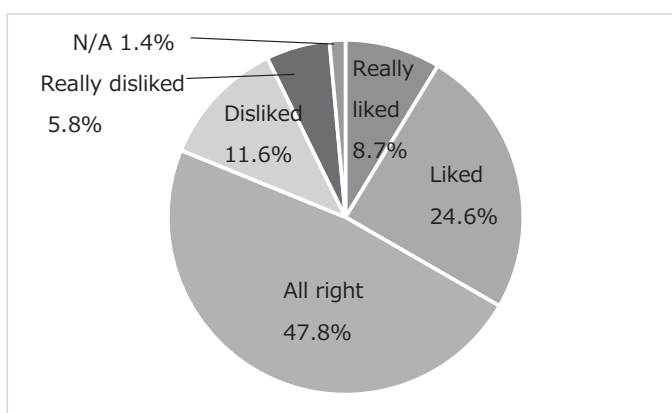
**Figure 6.** Frequency of English lessons with a native speaker teacher at junior high school.

	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Once a week	37	68.5
Twice a week	0	0
Three times a week	0	0
Four times a week	1	1.9
Five times a week	0	0
Once a month	8	14.8
Twice a month	6	11.1
Once six months	1	1.9
Other	1	1.9
Total	54	100

Let us move on, then, to a question that is very important when considering English education in our department. When asked whether they liked English at junior high school, 47.8 % of students answered it was *all right* (Figure 7). This answer is typical of Japanese: They are inclined to take a non-committal stance. Therefore, it is difficult to know how to interpret this ambiguous answer. The only thing to conclude is that they did not particularly like English.

**Figure 7.** Students' responses when asked whether they liked English at junior high school.

	Number of students	Ratio(%)
Really liked	6	8.7
Liked	17	24.6
All right	33	47.8
Disliked	8	11.6
Really disliked	4	5.8
N/A	1	1.4
Total	69	100



Meanwhile, about 33% of students responded as either *liking* or *really liking* English at junior high school. Interestingly, those who *did not like* English (about 17%) is fewer than those who *liked* English. It is surprising that as much as 33 % of students liked English at junior high school. Again, given the present attitude of the students at Eiwa College towards English, we would have expected the ratio of students that did not like English to be higher.

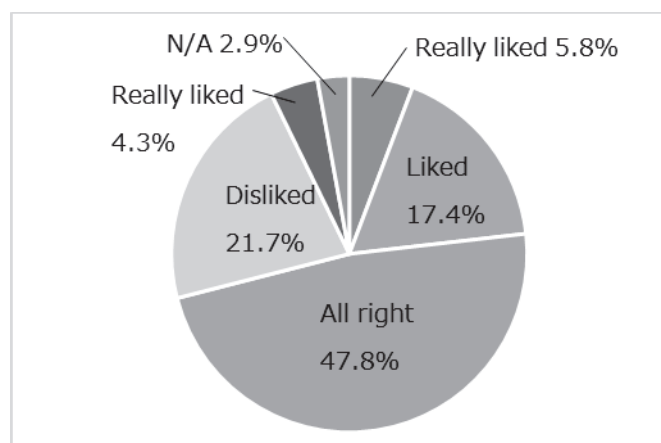
On analysis of the reasons why students said they liked English at junior high school, a common point was that they had a *sense of achievement* in English. For example, they could make themselves understood in English. Such sentiments are of course not restricted to the study of English. Positive feedback in any subject will lead to positive attitudes towards that subject.

Concerning the main reason why they did not like English, the most common response was that it was *difficult to understand* English. Although the students who liked English, as stated above, had a sense of achievement, the students who did not like English seemed aware that they were not *good at* English, since they could not understand it. Thus, it can be said that feelings of achievement may positively affect a student's confidence and performance. Accordingly, an important factor for teachers to consider is how to encourage students and give them confidence to study English.

Next, we were interested to see whether there would be a change in students' attitudes towards English at senior high school. Figure 8 shows that about 23 % of students responded that they *liked* English or they *really liked* English.

**Figure 8.** Students' responses when asked whether they liked English at senior high school.

	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Really liked	4	5.8
Liked	12	17.4
All right	33	47.8
Disliked	15	21.7
Really disliked	3	4.3
N/A	2	2.9
Total	69	100



The number of students who liked English at senior high school is fewer than the figure for junior high school. This indicates that more students began to dislike English, perhaps because they could not follow the English classes at high school. Interestingly enough, the number of students who answer English is *all right* at senior high school is the same as the number for junior high school. The reasons students gave for either liking or disliking English were the same as those given for junior high school, as stated above. Therefore, it is clear that the number of students who disliked English increased at senior high school.

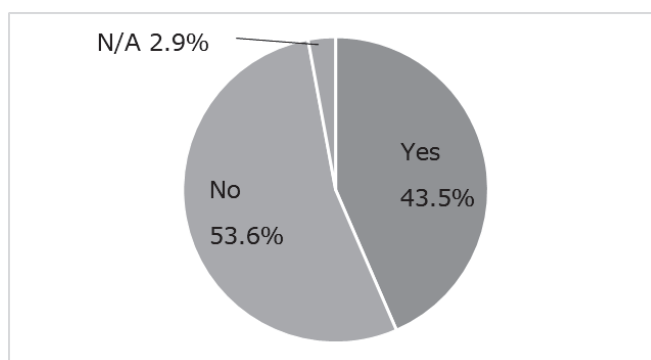
#### 4. Attempts at English proficiency tests

Student attitudes towards English might also be gauged by their willingness to take proficiency tests. Figure 9 shows that 43.5 % of our students have obtained some kind of English certification.

**Figure 9.** The number of students who have obtained certification in English proficiency.

	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	43.5
No	37	53.6
N/A	2	2.9
Total	69	100





Furthermore, Figure 10 shows that most of the students have obtained one of the grades in Eiken, an English certification system unique to Japan. The grading system for Eiken is very different from TOEIC or TOEFL. As Eiken has a variety of grades, from Grade 5 to Grade 1, test applicants can choose which to attempt in accordance with their English ability. In contrast, the TOEFL and TOEIC tests rank all participants on a single, common scale. Among the Eiwa College students who obtained Eiken certifications, the highest grade obtained is the Pre-2 Grade.

**Figure 10.** English proficiency certification obtained by Eiwa College students.

	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Eiken, Grade 4	5	16.7
Eiken, Grade 3	14	46.7
Eiken, Pre-2 Grade	7	23.3
Eiken, Grade 2	0	0
Eiken, Pre-1 Grade	0	0
N/A	4	13.3
Total	30	100

Pre-2 Grade is regarded as the level of English ability that first year students of senior high school should achieve. There is quite a large jump, as regards difficulty, to the next level, Grade 2. None of the Eiwa College students have attained this level, which is the recommended goal for third year senior high students. The content of Grade 2 is equal to the English level required for university entrance exams. With this in mind, students who do not consider applying to universities might believe achieving Grade 2 in the Eiken exam is beyond their scope of ability.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, Eiken is unique to Japan, so the overseas

students at this college are unlikely to have taken it. TOEIC, on the other hand, is known world-wide as a common measure of English proficiency. In our survey, the two students who answered that they have taken TOEIC are most likely overseas students.

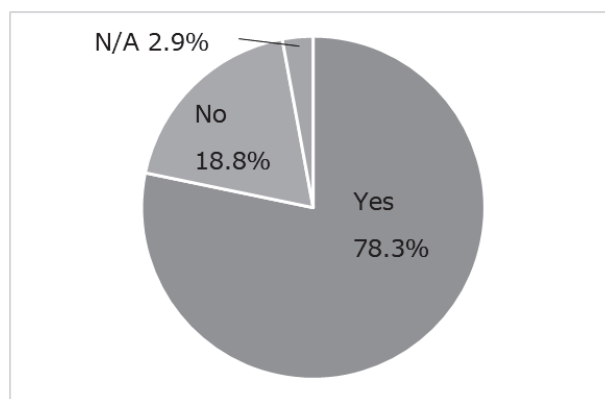
As a whole, due to the fact that only 43.5 % of the students have obtained some form of English certification, it is clear that more than half of the students are not interested in English certification. This may be a direct result of the academic organization of the department. If students were able to major in English, more students may have taken English certifications before or since entering college. Given the status quo, it is to be expected that less than half of the students in this department would have any kind of English proficiency certifications. We should recall that the two most popular units are Business Management and Medical Clerk. Before entering our department, students had already decided their future direction.

## 5. The goals of our college

As mentioned above, many students are not concerned with obtaining English certifications. However, Figure 11 shows that about 78% of students would like to improve their English abilities.

**Figure 11.** Students who wish to improve their English while at Eiwa College.

	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	54	78.3
No	13	18.8
N/A	2	2.9
Total	69	100



We can assume, therefore, that their concern is not with obtaining certifications of proficiency, but improving their general English ability. Above all, they would like to improve their daily English conversation and their ability to read easy English articles in newspapers and magazines.

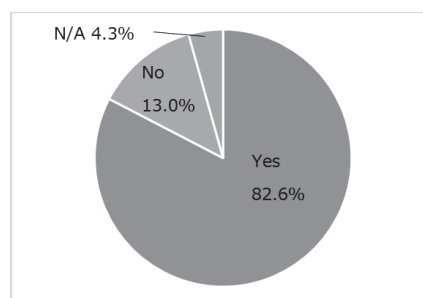
In this respect, our students surely realize that English is necessary in their daily lives. Year by year, more and more foreign tourists visit Japan. Mt. Fuji was

designated as a world heritage site, Shizuoka hosted matches for the Rugby World Cup, and the Olympic games are going to be held in August 2020. As a result, our students will have more chances to meet tourists from overseas in shops, pubs and restaurants. Some students may have attended to such tourists while doing their part-time jobs. Perhaps many of them have already regretted their inability to use English in these situations. However, in spite of this fact, the problem lies in helping students establish and then realize goals as concerns English. As mentioned above, about 43.5% of students would like to obtain English certification. It is common for students to want to achieve their goals with minimum effort. In this respect, it is not so easy to raise their awareness of the necessity to take English proficiency exams and then make the necessary efforts to reach their goal.

One area in which we might instill the motivation to study English is tourism. These days, it is said that young Japanese people do not like to travel to foreign countries. According to our survey, however, about 83 % of the students would like to travel to foreign countries in the future (Figure 12).

**Figure 12.** Students who wish to travel abroad.

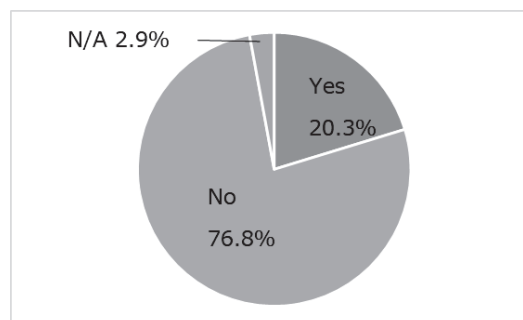
	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	57	82.6
No	9	13.0
N/A	3	4.3
Total	69	100



The countries which the students wish to visit: USA, Korea, Australia, UK, France, Dubai, Ireland, Germany, Indonesia, Singapore, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Russia, Austria, India, China, Egypt, Malaysia, Bolivia. Among the countries they wish to visit are America, European countries, Asian countries, Russia and so on. We did not ask students to state any reasons, and it is clear that their interests are not focused on English-speaking countries.

**Figure 13.** Students who would like to work overseas.

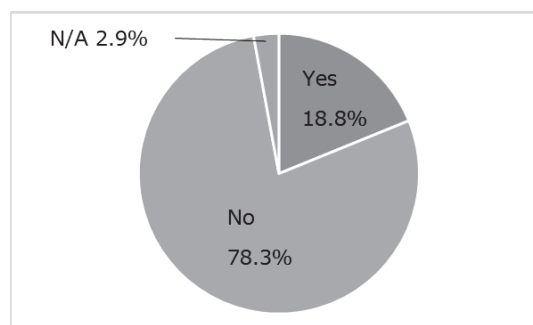
	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	14	20.3
No	53	76.8
N/A	2	2.9
Total	69	100



However, in complete contrast to this, only about 20% of students would like to work overseas (Figure 13).

**Figure 14.** Students who hope to find employment related to using English.

	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	13	18.8
No	54	78.3
N/A	2	2.9
Total	69	100



Similarly, only about 14 % of students hope to find employment related to using English (Figure 14).The most popular jobs were those concerning trade, followed by interpreting, travel agency staff, hotel staff, and wedding planning, as shown below.

**Figure 15.** Types of English-related jobs students would like to do.

	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Interpreter	4	30.8
Translator	1	7.7
Trade	5	38.5
Cabin attendant	0	0
Other *	3	23.1
Total	13	100

\*Other: Wedding planner, Hotel staff, Travel agency staff

## 6. Conclusion

As stated above, this survey shows that nearly 50% of students at Eiwa College have feelings neither one way or the other about English, whereas only about 30 % say they like or really like English. From this fact, we can conclude that still fewer students actually dislike English. However, as mentioned above, the most important things are for us to encourage students to decide a clear goal regarding their study of English at this college, and help them achieve their goals. While we have placement test at the beginning of the first term, which seems to be effective in helping students decide which English courses might suit them, we do not have a means of gauging whether students meet their English goals. The students have to review how much effort they make during their two years at Eiwa College to improve their English abilities. One way to achieve this would be to have them take a placement test at the end of the second year. However, because of budget restrictions, such tests have not been offered. Alternatively, we could make a questionnaire about their goals regarding English abilities. We can then judge if the students achieve their goals, examining the results of their coursework. Based on the responses to such a questionnaire, we need to reconsider the type and content of the English courses we offer.

Therefore, by conducting this preliminary survey, we have been able to identify two departmental goals. The first is to devise a questionnaire with which the students can decide their goals, and the second is to establish a method of review, by which they can assess the progress of their English ability. This is the starting point. From now on, we have to review the English Education of our department repeatedly in accordance with our students' needs and their abilities.

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