

Results of a Language Needs-Analysis Survey of Saga University Freshman and Sophomores in Native-Speaker Active English Classes

Coleman South

Center for Research and Development in Higher Education

Saga University

Introduction

In 2006, a new program was established at Saga University with the primary purpose of improving students' English communication ability. The program in its current form has three elements: 1) one-credit Active English (AE) classes for Japanese freshmen (Honjo) and sophomores (Nabeshima); 2) non-credit classes in academic writing (2 levels), academic speaking (2 levels), TOEFL strategies and practice, and TOEIC strategies and practice for all Saga students through the International Student Center; and 3) various English for Academic Purposes courses (2 credits each) specifically for individual departments. The teachers of the classes are all native speakers of English, each with decades of English-teaching experience in various countries of North America, Asia, and Africa. Two of them are from Canada, two from the U.S., and one from Australia. While the Saga University system labels all the AE classes, regardless of level, as simply 「英語 N」, where "N"=native English-speaking teacher, the English labels are more descriptive, denoting both the style of the classes (active) and students' English skill level at entry: AE 1, AE 2, and AE 3. The survey was given to only the AE students, so all references that follow are to those students, only.

There are several variations in the AE program when comparing the Nabeshima campus to the Honjo campus. For Nabeshima, these are as follows:

* Spring Term classes are 1) for doctor-course students, 2) fairly large with 20-24

students per class, but 3) divided into AE 1, AE 2, and AE 3 levels like those at Honjo.

- * Fall Term classes are 1) for nursing students, 2) considerably larger classes (28-32 students), but 3) divided into only two levels (usually 2 & 3, but rarely 1 & 2).
- * All students are sophomores.
- * Classes are mandatory for all sophomores, and thus a fairly large number in each class seem to resent being in the class and have little motivation as a result. Class management is also a problem because of this factor plus the large class size.
- * Students may take the AE class only once.
- * Classes are always on Mondays, but different periods in spring and fall: 2nd period in spring, 5th in fall.
- * The placement for each student is determined by the results of a pre-test, an English-language skills test given prior to the start of each term.

At Honjo, on the other hand, these are the variations:

- * Classes are limited to a maximum of 16 students each, although rarely there are 17 or 18. Small class sizes are absolutely essential for effective language teaching.
- * Provided that enrollment in Fall Term allows it without creating classes beyond the size limit, students who take the classes in the spring may continue in the fall and get one credit for each class, or a total of two credits. (The teachers all encourage this strongly, as it gives those continuing students double the amount of exposure to the target language and thus aids significant improvement in English-language skill levels.) Generally, from 30%-100% of the students who take the spring courses do register again in the autumn.
- * Separate classes are scheduled for students from each of the Honjo departments at different days and periods but for each department's students, the same day and period both terms, thus allowing students the chance to continue. Economics students have 4th period on Wednesdays, Agriculture students have 5th period on Thursday, Culture and Education students have 4th period on Friday, and Science and Engineering (being the department with the most students) has 5th period

both Wednesdays and Fridays.

- * AE classes are optional for students, and thus, they are generally well-motivated to improve their English-language skills.
- * Placement in the Honjo classes is determined by the results of their English portion of the Saga University entrance exam, and confirmed by the same pre-test given to the Nabeshima students.

Research Questions

In this writer's opinion, when a teacher is choosing text books, supplementary materials, and class activities, it is not only useful but necessary to determine what students desire to gain from the classes they take. This is particularly true when those classes are optional. Because of this belief, I designed a questionnaire for all my AE students in Fall Term, 2009 to 1) determine differences between those for whom the classes are mandatory (Nabeshima) and those for whom they are optional (Honjo) and 2) better fit my classes to students' needs and desires. Please see Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire given to the students, which are also the research questions for this study.

The questionnaire was designed to get information about several aspects of the students' English-language study:

1. Why the students are taking the classes and thus what they hope to gain from them. Question 1 serves to glean this information, which is the most important for the teacher, I believe.
2. Aside from assignments for classes, what the students' current out-of-class English-learning activities are, if any. Questions 2-5 are designed to evaluate these activities. (The questions are not comprehensive, however; one could also ask about pen pals, key pals, conversation partners, international friends, reading habits, etc.)

3. Students' overseas experiences, if any, and desire to travel overseas if they have not already done so--question 6.
4. Students' mental habits when using English--question 7.
5. The worst and best experiences of the students related to studying or using the English language--questions 8 & 9.
6. Any general information the students want to convey that may not be covered by the questionnaire or emphasis of things already covered--question 10.

Explanations of Data Tabulation and Labeling

Points related to the tables and the students' responses:

- A AE 1 students have the lowest level English-language skills and AE 3 students have the highest level English-language skills as shown by the English-language section of the Saga University entrance exam scores (Honjo) or by the native English-speaking teacher-designed pre-tests scores. In the four years of this program, the teachers have found the methods of placement at both campuses to be quite accurate and effective.
- B In order to determine differences in responses based on the students' various fields of study, students' comments and responses are further subdivided into their departments: Nursing, Agriculture, and Science and Engineering for AE 1, Economics and Culture and Education for AE 3.
- C The abbreviations in the headings and text are as follows: Nurs=Nabeshima's nursing students; C&E=Culture and Education students; Econ=Economics students; S&E=Science and Engineering students; and Ag=Agriculture students.
- C "N" under each heading for each table shows the number of students who chose a listed response or wrote a comment for that question.

The Data and Related Comments

First, a note of explanation about the questions in Table 1: the responses to questions b, d, and f would likely show what is referred to as "intrinsic motivation"--motivation coming from within the student; they are motivated by their own psychological or emotional reasons. On the other hand, those for questions a, e, c, and g would likely show more of what is referred to as "extrinsic motivation," or motivation coming from sources outside the student.

TABLE 1 Student Responses to Question 1

"What is your main purpose for taking this class? (Choose as many as you want.)"

| Answer Choices | AE 1 | AE 3 | | AE 1 | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| | Nurs (N=29) % of N | C&E (N=16) % of N | Econ (N=14) % of N | S&E (N=12) % of N | Ag (N=10) % of N |
| a) I think it will help me find a good job after I graduate. | 28 | 38 | 14 | 17 | 50 |
| b) I want to travel outside Japan. | 28 | 94 | 29 | 75 | 70 |
| c) I plan to write my graduation thesis (論文) in English. | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| d) I enjoy studying English (and/or other foreign languages). | 45 | 38 | 29 | 33 | 0 |
| e) I think I will need it for business in the future. | 21 | 19 | 57 | 58 | 60 |
| f) I want to speak to many non-Japanese people. | 7 | 43 | 43 | 42 | 30 |
| g) I need the credits! (単位) | 55 | 19 | 29 | 17 | 40 |
| h) Other (describe) | 0 | 0 | 1 "No special reason." | 0 | 1 "I want to speak native English." |

Looking at Table 1, as might be expected, a handful of C&E students were the only ones planning to write their theses in English. Also, as one should expect of students studying any aspect of culture, nearly all of them are learning English because they want to travel abroad.

English skills as a benefit in finding a job wasn't chosen by a large percentage of students except in agriculture, yet perhaps ironically, more than half the Econ and

S&E students expect it to help them in business in the future.

An unexpected result for me was that Econ students and S&E students were more similar in their responses (other than travel outside Japan) than were S&E and Ag students (both of which are studying physical sciences) or Econ and C&E students (both of which are studying social sciences/liberal arts).

More than half of Nab students choosing "I need the credits" was not at all surprising, given that they are required to take the course, but the fact that 45% of them said that they enjoy studying foreign languages was surprising to me. Also, the fact that none of the Ag students choose that reason seems curious in light of the fact that 70% of them want to travel overseas.

Finally, the primary reason for most students' study of English appears to be the desire to travel internationally.

TABLE 2 Student Responses to Question 2

"How often do you watch English-language movies."

| Answer Choices | AE 1 | AE 3 | | AE 1 | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| | Nurs (N=29) % of N | C & E (N=16) % of N | Econ (N=14) % of N | S & E (N=12) % of N | Ag (N=10) % of N |
| a) Never | 28 | 6 | 7 | 25 | 30 |
| b) Rarely (only 2-3 times per year, for example) | 44 | 69 | 43 | 50 | 50 |
| c) Sometimes (maybe once a month, or so) | 28 | 25 | 36 | 25 | 10 |
| d) Often (at least several times per month) | 0 | 0 | 14 | 0 | 10 |
| e) Every week | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

TABLE 3 Student Responses to Question 3

"If you watch them, do you focus your attention on trying to understand the English, or do you just read the subtitles (字幕)?"

| Answer Choices | AE 1 | AE 3 | | AE 1 | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| | Nurs (N=21)* % of N | C&E (N=15)* % of N | Econ (N=9)* % of N | S&E (N=12)* % of N | Ag (N=7)* % of N |
| a) I focus on the English. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 0 |
| b) I only read the subtitles. | 71 | 27 | 39 | 33 | 43 |
| c) I try to do both. | 29 | 73 | 61 | 45 | 57 |

* The N in this table is different in most cases from those in Table 2 because it counts only those students who responded with b, c, or d to question 2.

In situations in which English is being taught as a foreign language (English as a Foreign Language--EFL)--one in which students are taught a foreign language in their own country, the chances to use the target language (TL--the language being learned) outside the classroom are extremely limited unless students actively seek such chances. This is in stark contrast to English which is being taught in a country where the native language (or one of the official languages) is English (English as a Second Language--ESL). In the latter situations, students must use the TL during nearly every waking hour--with host families; at grocery stores, restaurants, post offices, and banks; and when using public transportation, for example.

Further, in most Western countries when students are studying a foreign language (EFL) in college, they are in those classes and listening labs a total of 4-6 hours per week, with classes at least 3-4 days per week; this is a dramatic contrast to universities in Japan, where they are exposed to the language for a only a meager 1 1/2 hour on one day per week. American college students studying Japanese, therefore, will get as much class and lab exposure to the Japanese language in one year as most Japanese students studying English in Japan get in about *four years!*

Because of the forgoing limitations of EFL in Japan, out-of-class exposure to English is extremely important. Thus, I always advise my students regularly to watch English-language movies, listening carefully to the speech rather than reading the

Japanese sub-titles. I also strongly recommend listening to English-language music over and over again, trying to understand the words. Movies and music are two things most students love and watch or listen to regularly, so good listening practice with the TL comes easily if they simply put in a little extra effort. Additionally, music and movies give excellent examples of the way native speakers actually speak, including things such as elisions (omitted words and phrases), contractions and other word reductions, slang, linguistic chunks (pieces of language in which certain words are nearly always used together—set phrases, in other words), and intonation. These are in rather stark contrast to typical ESL/EFL recordings, where the language is almost always simplified and spoken much more slowly and clearly than we speak it in real life.

It became clear from the survey responses to question 2 that 2/3 or more of the students do watch English-language movies at least several times per year and thus have an opportunity to focus on their English listening comprehension. However, the responses to question 3 show that—except for Nurs students—a large majority try to focus on both the English language and the sub-titles, thus perhaps making it more of a translation exercise than a pure experience of trying to understand the spoken language while putting it together with the actions in the movie.

Interestingly, the Nurs students showed the highest percentage who try to focus only on the spoken language. This perhaps confirms their responses to question 1, that nearly half of them are studying English because they are intrinsically motivated—the simply *want to study* it and *enjoy studying* it.

TABLE 4 Student Responses to Question 4

"How often do you listen to English-language music?"

| Answer Choices | AE 1 | AE 3 | | AE 1 | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| | Nurs (N=29) % of N | C&E (N=16) % of N | Econ (N=14) % of N | S&E (N=12) % of N | Ag (N=10) % of N |
| a) Never | 21 | 0 | 14 | 8 | 0 |
| b) Rarely (only 2-3 times per year, for example) | 42 | 19 | 21 | 17 | 30 |
| c) Sometimes (maybe once a month or so) | 24 | 37 | 14 | 41 | 30 |
| d) Often (at least several times per month) | 10 | 25 | 21 | 17 | 0 |
| e) Every week | 3 | 19 | 30 | 17 | 40 |

TABLE 5 Student Responses to Question 5

"If you listen, do you try to understand the words?"

| Answer Choices | AE 1 | AE 3 | | AE 1 | |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Nurs (N=23)* % of N | C&E (N=16)* % of N | Econ (N=12)* % of N | S&E (N=11)* % of N | Ag (N=10)* % of N |
| a) Yes. | 9 | 43 | 33 | 28 | 30 |
| b) No. | 22 | 6 | 25 | 36 | 10 |
| c) Sometimes. | 69 | 51 | 42 | 36 | 60 |

* The N in this table is different in most cases from those in Table 4 because it counts only those students who responded with a or c to question 4.

As might be expected with youth, listening to English-language music is extremely common except among Nurs students, nearly 2/3 of which claim they rarely or never listen to it. The reason for the latter is not clear at all to me, especially given the popularity and ubiquitousness of English-language music throughout the world, and particularly in Japan.

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect for all students--even those at Nabeshima that do listen to it, however, is that from 64% to 90% of them reported trying to understand the English lyrics at least "sometimes."

TABLE 6 Student Responses to Question 6

"Have you traveled overseas?"

| Answer Choices | AE 1 | AE 3 | | AE 1 | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Nurs (N=29) % of N | C&E (N=16) % of N | Econ (N=14) % of N | S&E (N=12) % of N | Ag (N=10) % of N |
| a) Yes | 38 | 57 | 36 | 17 | 50 |
| How many times? | 1,2,2,1,1,2,2, 1,1,1 | 2,1,1,2,3,2,1, 3,1 | 1,1,1,1,1 | 2,1 | 1,1,1,1,2 |
| b) No | 62 | 43 | 64 | 83 | 50 |
| Do you want to? Yes/No (% of "No") | 91/5 (no response from 1) | 100/0 | 78/22 | 90/0 (no response from 1) | 60/20 (no response from 2) |

Again, as one might logically expect, C&E students have the most international travel experience as well as the most desire for it, while S&E students reported the least experience. Curiously, though, while extremely few S&E students reported any international travel experience, all but two reported a desire to travel abroad.

TABLE 7 Student Responses to Question 7

"When you need to speak or write English, do you THINK in English, or do you THINK in Japanese, then try to translate your ideas to English?"

| Answer Choices | AE 1 | AE 3 | | AE 1 | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| | Nurs (N=29) % of N | C&E (N=16) % of N | Econ (N=14) % of N | S&E (N=12) % of N | Ag (N=10) % of N |
| a) I try to think in English. | 3 | 25 | 14 | 33 | 20 |
| b) I think in Japanese. | 80 | 56 | 79 | 42 | 60 |
| c) I'm not sure what I do! | 17 | 19 | 7 | 25 | 20 |

This question is related to a commonly-held assumption among many language educators as well as self-reporting from many fluent English-language learners that, in order to function well and become fluent in a TL, one must learn to *think* in that language when using it. Thinking in one's native language then translating those thoughts into the TL to express ones self is not an effective way to communicate. For

example, in interviews with several non-native speakers of English who are fluent in English, all of them responded that they virtually always think in English while using that language. As an interesting aside, a few also told me they realized that English was becoming "part of them" when they started having dreams in that language.

My own experience as a language learner confirms both of these phenomena: for many years, I have been thinking only in Japanese when I use Japanese, and recently, I have begun to occasionally have dreams in which the Japanese language, not English, is used.

Among the responses of the students to this question, the one that intrigues me the most is that S&E students reported the highest percentage of trying to think in English. Is this a function of their more analytical nature as students of science, engineering, and technology? It's an interesting rhetorical question and one that might deserve further study and elaboration.

The fact that a fair number of students reported not knowing what they do is not surprising to me, given that thought process itself is something that people do not often think about. In part, this is because thought processes are somewhat automatic, subconscious, and developed over a lifetime, thereby becoming habitual, it seems.

TABLE 8 Student Comments for Question 8

"Please describe the WORST experience you've had studying or using English."

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>AE 1</p> | <p>Nurs</p> | <p>*When I was high school (HS) student, I couldn't remember a lot of words and a English teacher that I don't like teach us English.</p> <p>*When I was HS, I was tired test every day.</p> <p>*I talked English but my English didn't convey.</p> <p>*I couldn't talk English to foreigner when I was spoken to in street.</p> <p>*I couldn't speak English well when I was spoken to foreigner.</p> <p>*I was tired of English class which was first grade in Saga Univerisity.</p> <p>*I couldn't understand what they said when I was talk with non-Japanese.</p> <p>*I got worst mark in English exam. I was last place in my class.</p> <p>*Nothing.</p> <p>*I took low marks in the test.</p> <p>*It is now! I forget English words, grammar...I can't understand what native teacher is speaking. It's too fast, I can't understand.</p> <p>*My speaking English couldn't understand other person.</p> <p>*I can't understand what native speakers say.</p> <p>*I failed an oral examination of English official approval.</p> <p>*I couldn't get good score for English test in HS.</p> <p>*When I taked entrance examination in this college, I didn't understand a long English sentence.</p> <p>*Foreigner ignored me when I speak to him.</p> |
| <p>AE 3</p> | <p>C&E</p> | <p>*When I am a junior (JHS) and senior HS student, I almost study grammer. I hardly study pronunciation and take native English teacher's class, so if I speak English to native person, I can't very inform.</p> <p>*When I was HS student, I studied English every day but when I talked American, I couldn't speak English fluently. I couldn't convey my opinion. it was so sad.</p> <p>*I think there is no worst experience I had study or use English.</p> <p>*When I was HS student, I have to memorize so many words for quiz in cram school. I felt very frustrated, because I couldn't get a perfect score. I competed my friend. I lost.</p> <p>*My English exams was bad.</p> <p>*When I was HS student, people who are foreign country called me in English to be told about street. I was susprised and couldn't talk in English.</p> <p>*I studied English through English grammar's books only is so boring for me.</p> <p>*Memorizing words using words book. It was very boring for me.</p> <p>*When I was a elementary school (ES). I met a foreigner at the street. He talked to me. But I didn't know English and, cannot speak. So I ran away. Now I think that was rude.</p> <p>*The experiance I went to New Zealand. We were introduced farmstay family. Farmstay family mother tell us about her son who was killed by traffic accident. But we couldn't understand what she said so we ask her again and again... x_x We let her feel bad.</p> <p>*The worst thing was that I couldn't understand English foreign country, so my host mother was in trouble.</p> <p>*I always worry about grammar when I speak or write English.</p> <p>*I wasn't able to make myself understood in English when I went to Australia.</p> |

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Econ | <p>*I couldn't understand English words in English class.</p> <p>*I went to Malaysia. I did home stay in Malay's house. I sometimes couldn't tell my opinion and thinkings. I felt very sad.</p> <p>*I had pretended to know pronunciation of a word, but it was wrong.</p> <p>*I couldn't speak English well when I went to England. Thus, I couldn't buy clothes.</p> <p>*I got bad points in mini test.</p> <p>*I couldn't answer the question in an English test that perform every week. Though I tried to talk in English, what I wanted to say wasn't understood.</p> <p>*When I went around my city, a person asked me how to get to the station. I tried expaining the direction but I couldn't. I wished I would study English very hard.</p> <p>*I was studying English, but I could not talk native American.</p> <p>*I couldn't speak all English my JHS days. So, I writed words that I must speech in public the next day. But, I lost it the day morning... I cried only in my mind. I speeched poor English in public.</p> <p>*When I went to England, I couldn't understand English so I couldn't enjoy.</p> |
| AE 1 | S&E | <p>*Teacher was angry with me. Because I can't speak English.</p> <p>*When I studied English at JHS age, I don't remember English grammar because a lot of rules.</p> <p>*Nothing.</p> <p>*When I was a JHS student, I used wrong English words in class. Then, I'm laughed at by my friends. This is the worst experience I've had using English.</p> <p>*When I was HS student, English test is low score everyday.</p> <p>*When I studied English in HS student, I didn't understund. I goes without saying that the test was bad.</p> <p>*The WORST experience is not to undertand words when forgine country people speak</p> |
| | Ag | <p>*When I traveled to Canada, my English was not understood by foreign people. English pronunciation was very difficult.</p> <p>*Nothing</p> <p>*My worst experience I've had studying English is English test in center test. My English center test is worst points.</p> <p>*I have studied English long time, But I can't try to talk foreign people. I feel my English is no mean when I can't speak to foreign people.</p> <p>*When a foreign person told me, I did in English, but she couldn't understand.</p> <p>*I tried to learn English. A time of test, I couldn't gain many points. I was scolded by my parents.</p> <p>*Chinese students spoke English very well when I went to China in HS trip. I didn't think that I was good at speaking English, so I couldn't talk them in English.</p> |

(Not all students commented. Also, some comments were too vague or their meaning unclear, so those are not shown here.)

(All comments are typed exactly as the students wrote them with grammar, word form, spelling, and punctuation errors uncorrected. However, where I think the student means something a little different than what he/she wrote, I placed that in parentheses with "?".)

I divided the students' comments about their worst experiences studying or using English into the following groups of related comments a) school or class, b) tests, c) communicating with people who are not Japanese, d) and no bad experience. The percentages of comments related to each category are shown in Table 8-1.

TABLE 8-1 Student Comments Related to Categories, Question 8

| Categories | AE 1 | AE 3 | | AE 1 | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Nurs (N=17) % of N | C&E (N=13) % of N | Econ (N=10) % of N | S&E (N=7) % of N | Ag (N=7) % of N |
| School/class-related | 18 | 15 | 20 | 57 | 0 |
| Test-related | 35 | 15 | 20 | 14 | 29 |
| Foreigner communication-related | 41 | 54 | 50 | 14 | 57 |
| No bad experience | 6 | 8 | 0 | 14 | 14 |

(Percentages do not necessarily add up to 100% because 1) some comments didn't fit any category and 2) percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number: 7.4% = 7%, 10.8% = 11%, etc.)

Several things stand out for me in this data. One is the reported "no bad experience" discrepancy between students studying science and technology and those in the more human- and social-service oriented studies (nursing, culture and education, and economics). Could this mean that the latter, by nature of their studies as well as their mental orientation are more sensitive to language than are most students in the physical sciences? Research on this might produce some interesting results.

Another is the negative test-related experience reported by the nursing students; it's more than double that of both C&E and S&E students. I would expect the C&E students to be less affected by testing, as their fields of study by their very nature are more communicatively oriented. However, does medicine rely more on testing related to English language than do science and engineering studies? Or do the students in medicine simply feel more stress or other negative feelings related to testing in English language than do the S&E students? This data raises more questions than it answers, I believe.

A third striking part of the data is that S&E students stand out in their negative

reaction to class-related English-language experience, while the other groups suffered far more frustration from personal communication with non-Japanese. In fact, the comments about negative experiences in communicating with foreigners among the other four groups registered rates about 3-4 times as high as those of the S&E students. Does this indicate that S&E students are not terribly concerned about personal communication problems, as a common stereotype suggests? Are more concerned about precision in their mental work?

Finally, I'm curious about why the Ag students reported no worst classroom experience in English even though most, if not all, study at least chemistry in English.

TABLE 9 Comments for Question 9

"Please describe the BEST experience you've had studying or using English."

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>AE 1</p> | <p>Nurs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *I could understand English-language music. *I haven't good memories. *I got official English approval at HS. *When I was HS student, I could solve the test. The test was best point for me. *When I went to Italy, I could speak to foreigner. *I could talk to non-Japanese people. *When I could talk with non-Japanese people. *I could help foreigner traveler in simpul English. *When I am listening to the English-language music, the content is understood. *When I went to New Zealand, I stayed local people's home. (home stay) In that time, I made friends girl who speaks only English. *I acquisitioned English official approval, when I was a HS student. *I don't remember. *I can't remember. *When I listen to English music, If I understand English sentence. *I went to Australia, I stayed with a family. I am (not?) a good English speaker, but I could speak with family in easy English. I was very happy. *Nothing. *When I gave the letter to hostmother, she said to me "I'm very happy!!" *I could get great score at English test. *I could read simple words on the TV, postor and so on. *I came up to the English official approval. *When I was a HS student, I could short talk with my friends. *I talked another country person. |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>AE 3</p> | <p>C&E</p> | <p>*Foreign musicians or actresses are interviewed on TV, I can understand a little.</p> <p>*When I was JHS student, I was interested in British music. when I could follow what they sang, I felt happiness.</p> <p>*I won the third prize in the English recitation contest when I was JHS student. I recited "I Have Dream". It was difficult to pronounce "th", but I tried hard. I was very happy when I knew that I won the third prize.</p> <p>*When I'm watching news about foreign country and English movie, sometimes I can understand what they are speaking.</p> <p>*When I went to Australia to d home stay, I tried to speak English again and again. I'm glad to be able to communicate with host family.</p> <p>*I wrote letters to a friend in USA in English.</p> <p>*I talked with ALT teacher as a test when I was a HS student. It was very difficult but very interesting to me.</p> <p>*I could communicate with person who speak English. I could tel lthe way to a post office, too. It makes me happy.</p> <p>*Now, I can understand English a little. So, I often listen to music. For example, Avril, Ashlee, Ne-yo and so on.</p> <p>*I could speak foreign people. It was my best experience.</p> <p>*Foreign people understand my speaking English.</p> <p>*I can read English newspapers and magazines.</p> |
| | <p>Econ</p> | <p>*When I was asked for the way, I was able to tell him the way exactly.</p> <p>*I was glad to talk to my teacher in English. And when I go the best score.</p> <p>*Maybe nothing</p> <p>*I got a best score in entrance exam for university. So, I decide to continue to study English.</p> <p>*I can talk with a foreigner living near my hous a little.</p> <p>*When I was asked to take a picture by the chinese in English. Because I could understand the words she spoke, I could help her. I was happy to help her and to use English.</p> <p>*I can become to understand English words in Japanese music. And I can become to understand English-language music a llittle.</p> <p>*I could communicate with foreign people when I went to Australia and I undertand English-language movies a little.</p> <p>*I don't often use English. However, at this class, I am not allowed to speak Japanes, I try to speak English. Telling things that I want to say is very hard. Everyone try to understand saying.</p> <p>*I went to Okinawa during the summer. I met one person that he was from Bragil. I could talk with him in a few minutes. I was very enjoy.</p> <p>*When I was studying English, I could learn not only English but also Inland and America.</p> <p>*My BEST experience is that I have two friends in America. They and I lived in Okinawa, and they lived in my next door (house). It was pittty for me that they went hometown in America. But, they sometimes visit Japan and see me.</p> <p>*I don't have a experience that I think is best. Before I enter univercity, I studied English for exams. However, I don't study English for exams now. So, I want to have a experience that I think is best.</p> |

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>AE 1</p> | <p>S&E</p> | <p>*Nothing. *I understood "katakana" that I don't know means. *When I listening English-language music and I understand it. *I can speak American in English because I got confidence by this class. *I could translate English to Japanese in movies English speaking myselfs. I'm very happy to be able to translate that things. *When I met American, I could speak English. *I'm working Izakaya. Many American came to my Izakaya several days ago. I spoke (a?) little English. I'm very happy. *There is the BEST experience. When I talk to an native American, I can send a message to man. *When I stayed Australia, I talk with Astralian and my homestay is all right. *I could read newspaper in English</p> |
| | <p>Ag</p> | <p>*When I was JHS student, I could talk to foreign teacher. *Playing games by using English made me enjoy. Listening to English musics and writing the missing words was difficult but I could study various sounds. *When I went to Canada, I was bery glad that many people in Canada understood my English. *I can read English. When I watched the English-language movie and understood the easy English words, I felt very fun. *In HS, I got the best mark in English test in classmate. *I could be interested in English language music. I was interested in it before, but I enjoyed understanding English of music. I can understand English of music that owe to studying English. *I often listen foreign music. Sometimes I become to know lyrics of music. I thought that I got little happiness. *There were many foreign people in my home(town?), so I had a lot of chance to talk to them, and one day, I was speaked to by foreigner. He didn't know the way to station, so I told him the way in English, and he could understand. I felt very happy. *I could tell foreigner how to go to the station 2 years ago. But, I couldn't tell only English language.</p> |

(Not all students commented. Also, some comments were too vague or their meaning unclear, so those are not shown here.)

(All comments are typed exactly as the students wrote them with grammar, word, and punctuation errors uncorrected. However, where I think the student means something a little different than what he/she wrote, I placed that in parentheses with "?".)

Table 9-1 Student Comments Related to Categories, Question 9

| Categories | AE 1 | AE 3 | | AE 1 | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Nurs (N=22) % of N | C&E (N=12) % of N | Econ (N=13) % of N | S&E (N=10) % of N | Ag (N=9) % of N |
| School/class-related | 5 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 11 |
| Test-related | 23 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 11 |
| Foreigner communication-related | 44 | 50 | 54 | 50 | 44 |
| No best experience | 18 | 0 | 15 | 10 | 0 |
| Other | 18 (music/movie-related, 14%) | 42 (music/movie-related, 33%) | 23 (music/movie-related, 15%) | 30 (music/movie-related, 20%) | 44 (music/movie-related, 33%) |

(Percentages do not necessarily add up to 100% because 1) some comments didn't fit any category, 2) some students' comments fit more than one category, and 3) percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number: 7.4% = 7%, 10.8% = 11%, etc.)

Several aspects of the students' comments for this question are quite sad, I think. The most important one in my thinking is that so very few students in any of the five groups reported best experiences related to class or school--10% or fewer, to be exact. Is this a sad comment on how foreign language is typically taught?

Further, a substantially larger percentage of students in two of the groups reported *no* best experience at all, and that is the saddest statistic to me. How can a student be motivated to acquire another language if he/she has never had a good experience studying or using that language?

One would expect to have few if any good experiences with tests, of course, as they are stressful and unpleasant by their very nature, yet a rather strange 23% of nursing students--who also reported the highest rate of worst experiences with tests--reported their best experiences with them. Do those data indicate some sort of preoccupation with testing rather than with simply learning or using English?

Another point that is conspicuous in students' responses to this question is that the biggest source of pleasure in English use for all of them was reported to be successful communication with non-Japanese speakers. Combining this data with the high rates of worst experiences reported when such communication failed and with the overriding

desire of most students to travel abroad makes it clear that the main purpose for studying for a large majority of students in the SE classes is real communication. This factor may also explain in part the fact that so few students reported positive experiences with school and classes. If they are only listening to lectures, studying grammar, or doing translation, they are not learning to use the language to communicate and may be disappointed or frustrated with that deficiency.

TABLE 10 Comments for Question 10

"Do you have anything special you want to say about learning or studying English?"

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>AE 1</p> | <p>Nurs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *I want to know English-language music. And I want to sing!! *Please! No home work. *Please no homework. *I want to have joyfull class because English is difficult for me. *I want you to teach it easy because it is not good at English. *I can't do homework. So, please no or less homework. *I can't do a lot of homework. So please do not give us homework. *It's difficult for me to study English, because I don't like English. *Please decrease homework in English! *I have not English vocabulary. But I don't dislike English. So I will do my best! *I am not good at English. But I try to study English from now on. *I'm not good at English, but I try to study English so much. *I want to watch the English movie. I can listen to English voice a little. *Please decese our homework. *I wish little homework. *I am poor at English very much. I'm sorry. So if Mr. South give a lot of homeworks to us, I will not follow this class. |
| <p>AE 3</p> | <p>C&E</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *It is hard for me to pronounce "B" and "V" *There are a lot of people who can write, hear or read English in Japan. But these people often can't speak English and they think they can't speak because they haven't. I think we have think in English to speak English but there is no education to train to speak so it may be a problem in Japanese education. *I will talk in English when I go abroad. I will focus a lot of foreign movies without subtitles. *Active English III Class is interesting. *I want to understand what to (they?) say when I hear foreign songs. *I want to talk foreign people but I have no courge. *I want to learn by listening to English CD. |

| | | |
|-------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Econ | <p>*I recently start studying for TOEIC. So, I must study English so much</p> <p>*I want to speak English more well but I can't speak English very well. I want to be good English speaker. I don't know how to be good English speaker. What do I do for being good English speaker.</p> <p>*Nothing. But, I'm looking for this class everyweek. Because, this class is so fun for me.</p> <p>*I have a question. Is speaking or writing English necessary for a job that I will do in the future. I want to work in bank or be a Zeirishi. I don't know what it says in English. (税理士=tax accountant)</p> |
| AE 1 | S&E | <p>*When I read English context, first, I try to read it very fast. That's things is very important myselfs to understand context. I do this things everytime in exam.</p> <p>*No, but I want to be a good speaker in English.</p> <p>*Yes, I do. I can speak and read English a little</p> |
| | Ag | <p>*I want to speak English correct pronunciation.</p> <p>*It is difficult for me to listen English. So I want to learn the way of listening.</p> <p>*Yes, I don't memory many words. So, I want to memory many words.</p> <p>*I want to make foreign friends in Japan and travel overseas together. I want to watch the movie non (not? without?) the Japanese subtitles.</p> <p>*Methods of learning depend on person. I think my best way is using English everyday even if it is not studying. For example memo, log and conversation.</p> <p>*Yes, I do. I think that studying English is useful to be interested in something. I also think that (unfinished)</p> <p>*If to study English gave me (a?) little happiness, I will be so pleased.</p> |

(Not many students commented. Also, some comments were too vague or their meaning unclear, so those are not shown here.)

(All comments are type exactly as the students wrote them with grammar, word, and punctuation errors uncorrected. However, where I think the student means something a little different than what he/she wrote, I placed that in parentheses with "?".)

For question 10, there two main points I think worth drawing to the reader's attention. The first is that only the nursing students commented about homework; a full 55% of them begged for *no* homework, while not one student among the other four groups did so! This is also consistent with the class evaluations at Nabeshima, where both the doctor's course students and nursing students complain (often quite strongly) about being assigned homework. The complaint is always the same--they don't have time to do our homework. This could be a function of the heavy load they carry in their core medical classes or of the fact that they are not choosing to take their English course, or--most likely--both.

The second element I found interesting is the number of comments about understanding music and movies in English. Thirteen percent of the nursing students, forty-three percent of the C&E students, and fourteen percent of the Ag students made

free comments related to this. In view of the fact that so many students also reported being able to understand English in music and/or movies yet none reported a negative experience with either, it would seem to lend support to my comments after Tables 2 & 3, that use of music and movies in English is a readily available, practical, and viable source of practice for students. Most enjoy both music and movies in any language, most really want to understand what's being said, and--maybe most importantly--they report no negative experiences with either music or movies.

Conclusion

Although there was no statistical analysis done on this data, the information gleaned is still useful in guiding the my classroom practices and materials choices. It's clear that many students have some rather clear objectives in taking the AE classes, and it is our jobs as their teachers to try to serve those needs. While this is a university program and students therefore should be exposed to some formal English (as the responses to question 1 show, many students hope their acquisition of English skills will help them in securing a job and in business), the overriding picture that i see in the data is that the majority want to improve their English skills to 1) be able to communicate with non-Japanese people and 2) be able to enjoy foreign cultural things such as movies and music.