

ONE THING THAT I WOULD CHANGE ABOUT ENGLISH EDUCATION AT YNU

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YNUの英語教育—向上のヒント

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要旨

この報告書は学生たちからの意見を募り分析することで、横浜国立大学の英語教育向上のヒントとなることを目的としている。学生に対する質問はすべて自由記述であり、記述回答をカテゴリー分けすることで分析を試みました。結論を言えば、学生たちは、英語関連の授業が量的にも種類の面でももっと多くあることを望み、より実践的でより取組がよいある国際性のあることを望んでいる。こういった望みはコンテンツ・ベースの授業を増やすことで解決できないであろうか。

Abstract

This paper examines student suggestions for improving English education at Yokohama National University. Students were asked to complete the open-ended question, "One Thing that I would Change about English Education at YNU is..." This report is the writers attempt to categorize and analyze these suggestions. English students at YNU want more classes, more choice, more practical education, more challenge, and more international interaction. I argue that these wishes can be met effectively by increasing the number of content courses taught in English at Yokohama National University.

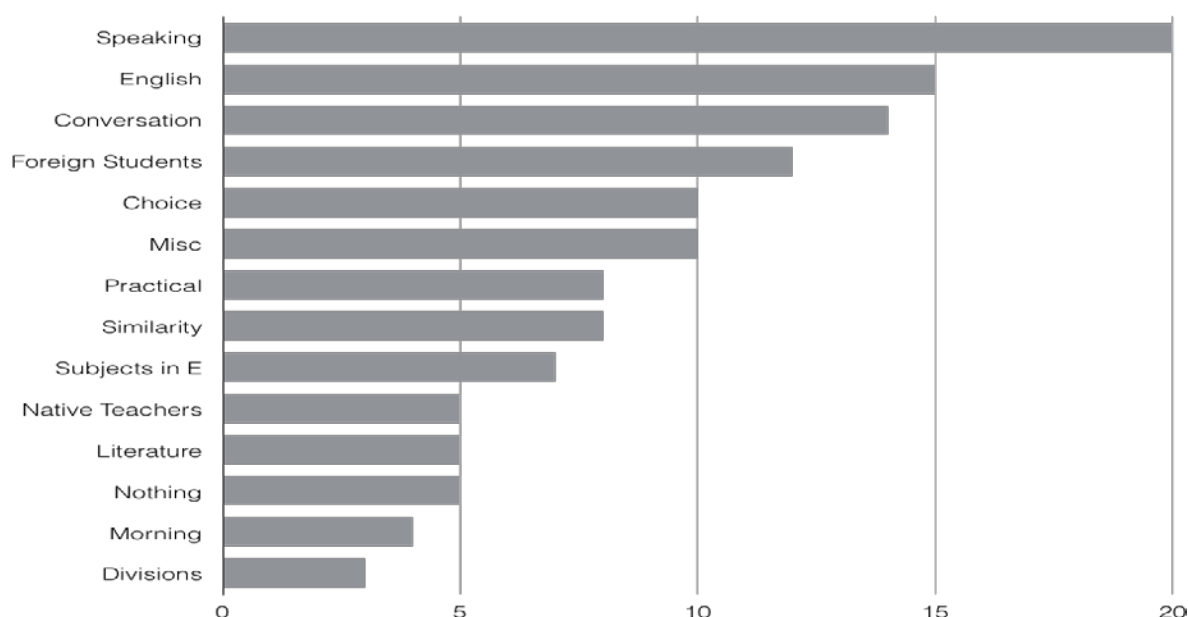
**One Thing that I Would Change about English Education at YNU is...**

In September of 2012 I asked 126 of my English students at Yokohama National University to answer the question that is the title of this paper. The question, "What do the students want?" had been discussed in a faculty meeting earlier in 2012. I decided to ask the students themselves. The following paper is a brief summary and analysis of their answers. Based on this data, and my experiences teaching for YNU's Joy Program, I will argue that YNU students would benefit from an expansion of the English program in general and an increase in the number of content courses taught in English in particular.

For this study I decided to use an open-ended question, rather than multiple choice. This type of question allows students greater freedom in communicating their thoughts. My background in Anthropology has taught me that this method produces more meaningful qualitative data. Unfortunately it also leads to at least two drawbacks, 1) the problem of subjectivity in categorization and 2) the weakening of statistical analysis. Nevertheless, many of the student responses I analyzed were very similar and fell neatly into the categories that emerged. In

several cases students would write more than one suggestion, which complicated the categorization process. I have tried to be as objective as possible in my categorization and in the course of the paper I will point out where categories appear to overlap or are otherwise connected. While exploratory in nature, and limited in scope, I hope the paper will be seen as a valuable opportunity for student suggestions to be taken seriously.

The student quotes I have included below struck me as the clearest examples of each category. I have generally retained the English mistakes made by the students. The corrections I have made are for the sake of clarity. The complete set of student responses is available upon request. I have numbered each student response, rather than use the student's name, and these numbers are indicated in parentheses after each quote. All of the student quotes are italicized. My students are 1S and 2SW English students in Engineering, Business and Economics.



### More Speaking Classes (16%)

The one thing that most of my students would change about their English education at YNU is to have more speaking classes. The student quoted below points out that students can improve some aspects of their English ability on their own. Speaking skills require communication partners such as those found in class.

*Now we take the speaking class but the second semester, we only have writing class. So we don't have any chance to speak English. We can learn how to write English alone, but we can't learn how to speak English. So, I want to continue speaking classes not only the first semester but also the second semester. (109)*

### More English in General (12%)

Another large proportion of my students simply wishes for more opportunities to improve their English. They suggest having classes every day, intensive courses, or English courses options all four years. This wish for more English learning opportunities could be seen as conflicting with the need for students to complete course work in their majors. As I will discuss below, content courses taught in English would avoid this conflict.

*Continuing English class after the first year at YNU. I heard we take English class only in the first year at YNU. But, continuing is the important factor to improve our English skills. (5)*

*I think we should get communication skill in English at college. If I get it, I must take class concentrately. For example, 10 days in summer vacation, we study only English, because vacation is too long and I heard language is good to study concentrately. (31)*

*To continue English lessons until fourth grade. We will work in English after we graduate, so we should study English until just before entering a company. (89)*

*I want to receive English lesson every day. I think I need some time to think in English every day and talk with foreigners. (77)*

This last student's desire to communicate with foreigners would be satisfied if more content courses were taught in English at YNU. In 2011 and 2012 I taught courses for the Joy program. The courses I taught were Japanese Popular Culture and Documentary Film and Ethnography. Many of my former English students attended these classes and had ample opportunity to interact with international students and improve their English ability.

### **Conversation and Debate (11%)**

This category overlaps with the *Speaking* category above and I debated whether or not to combine them. The emphasis here is on two-way communication. To accomplish this both speaking and listening skills are necessary, not to mention communication partners. While these responses may not have included the word *practical*, which I made into a separate category, the goal here seems to be the same. Students want to use English as a tool for real-world communication in preparation for their future. Conversation with people who hold different viewpoints (debate) may be even more valuable for students raised in a culture in which harmony and agreement are emphasized.

*Increasing conversational class. Now, companies want the people who can speak English well because they need that their business with international companies do smoothly. So, we need that our English ability is improved in college. (118)*

*I think we need a debating class. We students studied English hard to enter this college. So next we should learn how useful it is ... (16)*

### **Foreign Student Interaction (10%)**

I would have suggested greater interaction with foreign students, and the increase of content courses taught in English even if these students had not echoed my thoughts. For some students, other languages (e.g. Chinese, Korean) may be more useful than English, but the point remains the same. International communication ability will only become more necessary over time. International students and Japanese students will both benefit from greater interaction.

*I know that many international students are studying at YNU. But we have no chance that we can communicate with them, especially the department of science and engineering like us. They are many chances that we can use English. So, YNU should make many chances that we can communicate with the international students (12)*

### **Choice of Teacher or Class (8%)**

This category seems connected to the *Course Similarity & Fairness* category listed below. Every teacher, and every student, has his or her own strengths and weaknesses. The wish here is clear; students want the freedom to choose the course and teacher that best suits them.

*I want to learn English by teachers I choose. (10)*

*To allow students to select which English classes to take. Since teachers at YNU are characteristic, classes are also characteristic. I think it's loss of students that we can't take English class which each student think the best freely. (52)*

### **Miscellaneous (8%)**

Students suggested making English courses worth two credits rather than one, changing the image of English learning, and not changing anything at all. Several students had suggestions that didn't fit well into the other categories. These responses were, for me, useful reminders that students are unique individuals that should not be lumped together. This in turn begs the complicated question, "how can educators best support and nurture the unique abilities of individual students?" I don't have an easy answer to that question, but would argue that listening to the students is one part of the solution.

*I want to change the perspective of English. Many students think English class needs many preparations, or it is troublesome. But I want them to enjoy English class. (43)*

*If I could change one thing about English education at YNU, I wouldn't distinguish between one credit class and two credit class. Because there are few differences between those classes. (105)*

### **Practical (6%)**

As touched on above (*conversation and debate*) a significant number of students want to move towards the real-life application of English and away from the textbook/exam model of English learning. Certainly good TOEIC and TOEFL scores are necessary for many students, and in that sense are very practical. Content courses taught in English would, to my thinking, go hand in hand with these courses. They

would be practical not just in the sense of opening doors to work or educational opportunities but in enabling the students to thrive in those environments.

*I wanted to learn more practical English. In the other English class in this term, we tried TOEIC but it was easy for me. And we studied to score on TOEIC, not to use English practically. I think I'm tired of study for test or exam. (But I liked this class). (7)*

#### **Course Similarity & Fairness (6%)**

If students were given the freedom to choose their teachers and classes, perhaps perceptions of unfairness and the desire for course similarity would disappear. What is clear is that students want their educational experience and evaluation to be fair.

*There is many English teachers at YNU. We each learn English by the different teacher. What we do in each class is different. Some students has a lot of home works but some students doesn't. It's not equal so I would change it. (57)*

*To integrate how to teach English. Teaching form is very different by teachers. It is unfair for students. (101) \*writing class too much homework*

#### **Subject Courses Taught in English (6%)**

While the percentage of students with this response is relatively low, it should be noted that this option would accomplish what many of the categories above are calling for, such as speaking, communication, foreign student interaction, and practical applicability. It would also address the category of native speaker interaction as I will address below.

*Learn something (math, physics, foreign culture, chemistry etc) in English more, addition to learn about English. To get used to using English in daily life. (48)*

*We should have learn our special subject in English. In our case I mean learning science in English. I want to learn how to use English not grammar. We should have international classes (learn in Chinese or so on, whatever we like) I think. (11)*

#### **Native English Teachers (4%)**

This category overlaps with the category above and the international student category as well. For some Japanese students study abroad programs may be the best option, for others, greater international opportunities at YNU seem desirable.

*Make foreign friends is good to develop our own English skill. But I don't have any chance to do it in ordinary school life. I want YNU to engage more international students and foreign English teachers. (21)*

*I wish native speakers of English gave English classes, for example 英語実習 ILR listening and reading. (53)*

### **Literature, Challenging Reading Rather Textbooks (4%)**

Standard English textbook learning seems to be something students have tired of. It has been argued that students themselves do not know what is best for their own education, but their desire for something different and perhaps more challenging is evident in these responses.

*I attend a reading class. In that class, all students only read textbook. It is important to read textbook but such way of study is the same as that in High school. (56)*

*Reading ... Level up! textbook. I think solving textbook is important, but courage students can read more real English book or English report. I want to be able to read difficult reports written by foreign teacher. And I want to be able to read English newspapers. Speaking ... I want to be able to talk about my will to foreigners and enjoy talking with foreigners, and I know many cultures and feelings of many people. (112)*

### **No Morning Classes (3%)**

These students argue that a later class time would improve attendance and performance.

*The time of lesson. I'm poor at getting up in the morning. If the time of classing is late, I could have finished this lesson one year ago. (78)*

*I think many students are absent from the English class because it is held in the first period. So YNU should change the period of English class, and then I think the percentage of attendance rises. (94)*

### **Student Division and Ranking (2%)**

Finally these students feel that the way students are divided into classes could be improved. The first student would like classes composed of a variety of skill levels. The second would like a more accurate measure of English ability.

*The system of class division. I think it is more interesting to study English with people who has various English level. (1)*

*To divide the university students into some classes by scores in Center-Shiken. I think Center-Shiken's score don't show a true power of English. (3)*

### **Conclusion**

English students at YNU want more classes, more choice, more practical education, more challenge, and more international interaction. Not one of my students responded that they didn't want or need an education in English. If anything these students want more than they are being offered. I suggest that content courses taught in English will compliment the current English education program and allow motivated students to enhance their English education while remaining at YNU.