



Learning From Our Students : Student Opinion of Communication English

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Learning From Our Students: Student Opinion of Communication English

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**This work is presented as part of an on-going series of research and reportage of
University of Miyazaki's general education *Communication English* program**

Abstract

This study is part of a continuing effort to gather and analyze data from University of Miyazaki's first-year general education Communication English program. Specifically, this portion of the on-going study is designed to provide a baseline for comparison with the planned second semester survey of student opinion. The current study examines student perception of the usefulness of the Communication English program, the level of difficulty of the textbook used throughout the Communication English program and the level of student satisfaction. In addition, the survey asks students to specify their reasons for responses given to questions about their perception of the usefulness of the Communication English program and their level of satisfaction with program staff. An analysis of the collected data shows an overall positive response from students in all areas surveyed. Specific recommendations are withheld pending an analysis and comparison of data from the anticipated 2nd semester survey.

Introduction

To ensure series continuity and clarity, this introduction has been excerpted and modified from the 2003-2004 2nd semester analysis of student opinion.

In order to better serve the needs of the student population, it is essential for institutions to conscientiously monitor the quality of coursework. Effective monitoring requires a coalescence of both the objective and subjective components of the monitored program. The objective component includes physical course materials, comprising both textbook and supplementary materials, and evaluative instruments such as quizzes and other examinations. The subjective component includes surveys of opinion and perception, interviews, both formal and informal, unsolicited student input as well as consultative feedback and advice from faculty and staff. Effective monitoring allows program administrators to quantify the effectiveness of the program, establish benchmarks and maintain standards, gauge the strengths and weaknesses of faculty and staff, identify program merits and problem areas, and create an efficient and effective mechanism for continuous program improvement.

Continuing our focus upon the subjective component of the program, this paper provides data and analysis from the 2004-2005 first semester Communication English survey of student opinion.

The Study

911 students provided responses to a nineteen-question survey of opinion (see appendix 1) designed to identify student perception of several facets of the Communication English program. The survey under consideration is based upon the eleven-question 2003-2004 2nd semester survey (see appendix 2), modified to include questions concerning student use and student perception of the usefulness of the CD attached to the most recent standardized textbook, the use and usefulness of the unit essay translation prints utilized by several program teaching staff members and the amount of time devoted to Communication English outside class. The current survey also sought short written explanations for student responses to questions concerning student perception of the usefulness of the Communication English program and student level of satisfaction with program teaching staff. In order to increase clarity and maintain focus, this study examines five of the nineteen response items: student perception of the usefulness of the Communication English Program and their written explanations for their responses, student perception of the level of difficulty of the Communication English textbook used throughout the program, and student level of satisfaction with program staff and their written explanations for their responses.

As with the 2003-2004 2nd semester survey of student opinion, authors of the current survey took into consideration relevant research (Reid, 1990; Brown, 1997) by piloting versions of the survey and making adjustments prior to administration in a bid to increase reliability and by being cognizant of potential cross-cultural offense by eliciting comment from Japanese nationals, both educators and private sector individuals, regarding language or content that respondents might consider inappropriate, offensive or potentially confusing. In addition, satisfactory results on the 2003-2004 2nd semester survey supported the continued employment of a 4-point response scale to avoid the possibility of a neutral response (Brown, 2000) as well as a randomized survey question sequence to reduce the potential of respondents anticipating direction of survey and to discourage respondents from providing answers that they thought survey authors wanted to hear.

Results and Discussion

(1) The Usefulness of Communication English

According to the 2004-2005 1st semester data, the overall percentage of students who feel Communication English is useful is 71% (graph 1a). Total figures for students studying under Japanese national instructors (TJ) and foreign national instructors (TF) are 54% and 74%, respectively (graph 1a). Opinion about the usefulness of the program among students with TF is 85% in the Faculty of Education and Culture (graph 1b), 69% in the Faculty of Engineering (graph 1b) and 68% in the Faculty of Agriculture (graph 1b) expressing the opinion that the program is useful. Opinion among students with TJ shows 53% in the Faculty of Engineering (graph 1b) and 60% in the Faculty of Agriculture expressing the opinion that the program is useful (graph 1b).

Allowing 60% to represent the lower limit of acceptability, it is clear that the majority of students are of the opinion that Communication English is useful. The 53% figure for Faculty of Engineering students studying under TJ who judge the program useful warrants attention.

The number of students studying under Japanese national instructors providing a written response explaining their reasons for finding Communication English not to be useful is 61 out of 160, or 38%. Of these responses, 57%, by far the greatest number, indicated a reason related to a lack of speaking in class (see appendix 4). A look at the number of TJ students finding Communication English not to be useful separate from written explanations shows that 45 out of 56, a full 80%, indicated a preference for practical English. In addition, 24 out of 56, or 43% of TJ students, judging Communication English not useful indicated that instructors had not provided the opportunity to speak in class. Interestingly, of the 56 TJ students who indicated that Communication English was not useful, 31, or 55%, indicated a dislike of English. Clearly, then, the degree to which classes provide students with the opportunity to develop practical skills, largely oral, and student attitude toward the study of English influence student perception of usefulness. The potential might also exist that student attitude toward the study of English may be influenced by class content. Therefore, subsequent surveys should attempt to distinguish whether respondents enter the program with a dislike of English or develop it during the course of the term.

(2) Level of difficulty of the Communication English textbook

Student response for textbook level of difficulty indicates that a majority of program participants find the textbook acceptable and manageable. Program totals show that 8% find the textbook to be easy, 59% believe the textbook to be just right, 28% feel the text is difficult but appropriate and that 4% judge the text to be too difficult (graph 2a). Figures for students studying under TJ show 19% judging the text to be easy, 61% finding the text just right, 17% believing the text to be difficult but appropriate and 2% indicating that the text is too difficult (graph 2a). Program participants studying under TF included 6% who deemed the text easy, 58% who found the text to be just right, 31% who saw the text as difficult but appropriate and 4% who felt the text to be too difficult (graph 2a).

Faculty specific figures reveal consistent data with 13% of TJ students in the Faculty of Engineering reporting the text to be easy, 61% just right, 22% difficult but appropriate and 3% too difficult (graph 2b). TF figures show 4% reporting the text to be easy, 54% just right, 34% difficult but appropriate and 7% too difficult (graph 2b). Among Faculty of Agriculture students studying under TJ (AJ), 38% indicate that the text is easy, 60% just right, 3% difficult but appropriate and 0% too difficult (graph 2c). 9% of Faculty of Agriculture students studying under TF (AF) found the text to be easy, 61% just right, 26% difficult but appropriate and 2% too difficult (graph 2c). Faculty of Education and Culture students studying under TF (EDF) indicate that 5% found the text to be easy, 60% just right, 31% difficult but appropriate and 3% too difficult (graph 2d).

While all figures fall within the acceptable range, it is of interest that students studying under TJ exhibit a tendency toward the easy and just right categories.

(3) Satisfaction with the Communication English teaching staff

Data totals for student level of satisfaction with the Communication English staff show that 78% of program participants are satisfied with their instructors (graph 3a). In addition, 66% of students

studying under TJ and 81% of students studying under TF report that they are satisfied with their Communication English instructors (graph 3a). Faculty specific data reveals that 63% of TJ and 79% of TF students in the Faculty of Engineering are satisfied with their instructors (graph 3b). Faculty of Agriculture data shows a 73% satisfaction rate among AJ students and 74% among AF students (graph 3b). EDF students report an 89% satisfaction rate (graph 3d).

Recommendations

As indicated above, study authors intend to reserve specific recommendations pending second semester survey analysis. This is to assure a more accurate interpretation of comparison data. Data obtained from the 2004-2005 1st semester survey of student opinion does, however, seem to suggest that student perception of program usefulness is influenced by the degree to which instructors provide the opportunity for students to develop practical language skills. Also suggested is the need to more carefully determine whether student attitude toward English study is influenced by class content.

Appendix 1

2004-2005 First Semester

Communication English Survey of Student Opinion

コミュニケーション英語アンケート

よろしく！

1. 男性 (male) 女性 (female)
2. A. 1年生 (1st yr.) B. 2年生 (2nd yr.) C. 3年生 (3rd yr.) D. 4年生 (4th yr.) E. 他 (other)
3. 前期のコミュニケーション英語の担当講師は (My 2nd semester Communication English Instructor was a)
 - A. 日本人 (Japanese national) B. 外国人 (foreign national)
4. 外国に滞在体験 (Experience abroad)
 - A. ない (No) B. 有る (Yes) (1ヶ月以内 < 1 mo. 6ヶ月以内 < 6 mos. 12ヶ月以内 < 12 mos.)
5. 英語が (Feeling about English)
 - A. 好き (like) B. 好きでもない嫌いでもない (neither like nor dislike) C. 嫌い (dislike)
6. コミュニケーション英語は役に立つと: (Is Communication English useful?)
 - A. 思う (Yes) B. 思わない (No)
7. 上の6を選んだ理由を簡単に書いて下さい. (reason for response to item 6)
8. 個人で英会話学校で勉強することが (Have you studied English conversation privately?)
 - A. ある (Yes) B. ない (No)
9. コミュニケーション英語担当講師に (I would like my Communication English teacher to)
 - A. 文法の説明や本文を翻訳してほしい (translate and provide grammar explanations)
 - B. 英語を実際に使うことが出来るようにさせてほしい (help me develop my practical English ability)
10. 前期に使ったコミュニケーション英語統一教科書のレベルは (I feel that the level of the textbook was)
 - A. わりと簡単だったと思う (分からなかった所は少なかった) (easy)
 - B. ちょうどいいと思う (ちゃんと勉強すればできると思う) (just right)
 - C. 難しいけど大学の教科書として適当だと思う (difficult but appropriate as a university level textbook)
 - D. 難し過ぎると思う (一生懸命頑張ってもぜんぜんできない) (too difficult)
11. A. 教育文化学部 (Faculty of Education and Culture)
 B. 工学部 (Faculty of Engineering)
 C. 農学部 (Faculty of Agriculture)
12. 前期のコミュニケーション英語担当講師 (I was satisfied with my Communication English instructor.)
 - A. 満足 (Yes) B. 不満足 (No)
13. 上の12を選んだ理由を簡単に書いて下さい. (reason for response to item 12.)
14. 授業中に担当講師が英語で話す機会を (Did your teacher give you the chance to speak English in class?)
 - A. 持たせてくれた (Yes) B. 持たせてくれなかった (No)
15. 教科書に付いていたCDは役に立つと (Is the textbook CD useful?)
 - A. 思う (Yes) B. 思わない (No)
16. CDを聞く頻度は (How are you using the CD?)
 - A. 繰り返し聞いた (again and again)
 - B. 全ユニットを一通り聞いた (each unit once)
 - C. 半分くらい聞いた (about half)
 - D. 全然聞かなかった (didn't use it at all)
17. 本文の翻訳プリントは役に立つと (Were the translation prints useful?)
 - A. 思う (Yes) B. 思わない (No)

18. 本文の翻訳プリントをどのように活用しているか?(複数回答可) (How did you use the translation print?)
- A. 本文が理解出来ない時, 確認する (to check when I didn't understand something)
 - B. 本文の代わりに翻訳プリントしか読まない (I used the translation so I didn't read the textbook)
 - C. 本文が理解できているか確認する (to verify my understanding of the text)
 - D. 本文を読む前に予備知識として読む (to prepare for reading the text)
 - E. 全く活用していない (I didn't use it at all)
19. 授業外でコミュニケーション英語予習・復習をしますか. (Outside class study time)
- A. 0分 (none)
 - B. 30分 (30 mins.)
 - C. 1時間 (1 hr.)
 - D. 1時間半 (1 1 / 2 hrs.)
 - E. 2時間 (2 hrs.)

Appendix2

2003-2004 2nd Semester

Communication English Student Survey Results

コミュニケーション英語アンケート

1. 男性(Male) 女性(Female) (Unspecified)
2. A. 1年生(1st year) B. 2年生(2nd year) C. 3年生(3rd year) D. 4年生(4th year) E. 他(Other)
3. 後期のコミュニケーション英語の担当講師は My 2nd semester Communication English Instructor was a
 - A. 日本の方(Japanese National)
 - B. 外国の方(Foreign National)
4. 外国に滞在体験 Experience abroad
 - A. ない(None)
 - B. 有る(1ヶ月以内Less than 1 month)
(6ヶ月以内Less than 6 months)
(12ヶ月以内Less than 12 months)
5. 英語が(Attitude toward English)
 - A. 好き(like)
 - B. 好きでもない嫌いでもない(Neither like nor dislike)
 - C. 嫌い(Dislike)
6. コミュニケーション英語は役に立つと(Is Communication English useful?)
 - A. 思います(I think so)
 - B. 思いません(I don't think so)
7. 個人で英会話を勉強することが(Have you studied English conversation privately?)
 - A. あります(Yes, I have.)
 - B. ありません(No, I have not.)
8. コミュニケーション英語担当講師に(I would like my Communication English teacher to)
 - A. 文法の説明や本文を翻訳してほしい(Provide a translation and grammar explanation of the textbook.)
 - B. 英語を実際に使えるようにさせて欲しい(Help me to improve my ability to actually use English.)
9. 前期後期に使ったコミュニケーション英語統一教科書のレバールは
I feel that the level of the textbook used during the 1st and 2nd semesters was
 - A. わりと簡単だったと思う (分からなかった所は少ないでした)
Easy (There were only a few things that I couldn't understand.)
 - B. ちょうどいいと思う (ちゃんと勉強するとできると思う)
Just right (If you study, you can master it.)
 - C. 難しいけど大学の教科書として敵当たと思う
Difficult, but appropriate as a university textbook.
 - D. 難しい過ぎると思う (一生懸命頑張ってもぜんぜんできない)
Too difficult. (Even if I really try hard, it's too much for me.)
10.
 - A. 教育文化学部(Faculty of Education)
 - B. 工学部(Faculty of Engineering)
 - C. 農学部(Faculty of Agriculture)
11. 後期のコミュニケーション英語担当講師は
I was satisfied with my 2nd semester Communication English instructor.
 - A. 満足です(Yes)
 - B. 不満足です(No)

Appendix3

2004-2005 First Semester

Communication English Survey of Student Opinion

コミュニケーション英語アンケート

よろしく！

1. 男性 614 女性 297 Unspecified 1 (Total 912)
2. A. 1年生875 B. 2年生 17 C. 3年生 8 D. 4年生 8 E.他 4 (Total 912)
3. 前期のコミュニケーション英語の担当講師は A.日本人160 B.外国人745 Unspecified 7 (Total 912)
4. 外国に滞在体験
A.ない788 B.有る (1ヶ月以内92 6ヶ月以内3 12ヶ月以内1 Unspec. 22) Unspecified 6
(Total 912)
5. 英語が A.好き197 B.好きでもない嫌いでもない423 C.嫌い286 Unspecified 6 (Total 912)
6. コミュニケーション英語は役に立つと: A.思う645 B.思わない260 Unspecified 7 (Total 912)
7. 上の6を選んだ理由を簡単に書いて下さい。 _____
-
8. 個人で英会話学校で勉強することが A.ある24 B.ない887 Unspecified 1 (Total 912)
9. コミュニケーション英語担当講師に
A. 文法の説明や本文を翻訳してほしい 115
B. 英語を実際に使うことが出来るようにさせてほしい 763 A&B 7 Unspecified 27 (Total 912)
10. 前期に使ったコミュニケーション英語統一教科書のレベルは
A.わりと簡単だったと思う (分からなかった所は少なかった) 76
B. ちょうどいいと思う (ちゃんと勉強すればできると思う) 536
C. 難しいけど大学の教科書として適当だと思う257 ab 1 bc 1 cd 2
D. 難し過ぎると思う (一生懸命頑張ってもぜんぜんできない) 34 Unspecified 5 (Total 912)
11. A. 教育文化学部247 B. 工学部 390 C. 農学部268 Unspecified 7 (Total 912)
12. 前期のコミュニケーション英語担当講師は A.満足714 B. 不満足190 Unspecified 8 (Total 912)
13. 上の12を選んだ理由を簡単に書いて下さい。 _____
-
14. 授業中に担当講師が英語で話す機会を
A. 持たせてくれた657 B. 持たせてくれなかった236 Unspecified 19 (Total 912)
15. 教科書に付いていたCDは役に立つと A.思う492 B.思わない400 Unspecified 20 (Total 912)
16. CDを聞く頻度は A.繰り返し聞いた33 AC 2 ACD 19 AD 51 BC 1 BCD 1 BD 1 BE 1 CD6
B. 全ユニットを一通り聞いた86
C. 半分くらい聞いた 282
D. 全然聞かなかった503 Unspecified 6 (Total 912)
17. 文の翻訳プリントは役に立つと A.思う835 B.思わない54 Unspecified 23 (Total 912)
18. 本文の翻訳プリントをどのように活用しているか?(複数回答可)
A. 本文が理解出来ない時、確認する 354
B. 本文の代わりに翻訳プリントしか読まない 41
C. 本文が理解できているか確認する 147
D. 本文を読む前に予備知識として読む 72

E. 全く活用していない57

AB 1

ABC 1

ABD 1

AC 134

ACD 19

AD 51

BC 1

BCD 1

BD 1

BE 1

CD 6

Unspecified 24 (Total 912)

19. 授業外でコミュニケーション英語予習・復習をしますか.

A. 0分 239 B. 30分 420 C. 1時間 190 D. 1時間半 39 E. 2時間 16 Unspecified 8 (Total 912)

Appendix 4

Communication English is Useful

(A) <Japanese lecturers>

Total Responses 76

- * English is important for the future 31
- * It's good listening practice 14
- * It's a good chance to hear native English 9
- * It's a useful step toward exchange 6
- * Because English is the international language 6
- * I can learn useful expressions 4
- * It improves writing ability 2
- * It's good TOEIC practice 2
- * It improves reading ability 2

(B) <Foreign lecturers>

Total Responses 526

- * I'm exposed to native English speakers 99
- * English will be important in the future for work and life . . . 99
- * It's practical English, we learn expressions 64
- * It's a useful step toward exchange 56
- * It's a good chance to hear native English 44
- * English is the international language 37
- * It's English only, so it's a good chance to use English . 35
- * It's good listening practice 29
- * Because English is important 16
- * We actually get to use English in class 15
- * It was enjoyable 8
- * We learn correct pronunciation 6
- * Just because! 6
- * We get foreign culture along with our English lesson 5
- * It improves listening ability 2
- * It helps prepare us for tests 2
- * We learn new words 1
- * It's cool 1
- * It's good for using the Internet 1

I'm Satisfied with my Teacher

(A) <Japanese lecturers>

Total Responses 100

- * Easy to understand 19
- * Good personality, gentle 15
- * Class content was just right 14
- * Just because 11
- * The teacher taught well 10

- * The teacher was motivated 6
- * The teacher let us watch videos . . . 6
- * The teacher let us listen to songs . . . 4
- * The teacher was interesting 4
- * We were given listening advice 4
- * The class was enjoyable 3
- * The pace was good 3
- * It was easy to catch the words 1

(B) < Foreign lecturers >

Total Responses 493

- * The teacher was interesting 143
- * Easy to understand 71
- * The class was enjoyable 34
- * The teacher was nice, caring. 31
- * Because the teacher used only English, I could improve my listening ability . . . 30
- * Just because 26
- * I could hear native English 22
- * The teacher taught well 21
- * The teacher taught very well 20
- * The teacher was motivated 18
- * The pace was good 16
- * I could improve my conversational ability 16
- * The teacher included movies and games in the class . . . 13
- * We could listen to songs 11
- * The teacher explained the word well 6
- * The teacher sometimes used Japanese 6
- * The teacher taught us pronunciation 4
- * I could improve my listening ability 3
- * We learned about culture 1
- * We were given translations of the textbook essays 1

Negative Reaction

Not useful

(A) < Japanese lecturers >

Total Responses 61

- * He/She doesn't give us communication practice 13
- * No improvement in communicating ability 4
- * I don't have any chance of using English 4
- * Not so practical 4
- * Everyday conversation isn't taught 3
- * No English conversation and composition 3
- * No difference from regular English classes 3
- * No difference from high school English classes 3

- * I can't understand English 3
- * For no particular reason 3
- * Only reading English passages in class 2
- * Little speaking activities in class 2
- * This study doesn't seem to be useful 2
- * Because the lecturers are Japanese 2
- * Lack of grammatical explanation 2
- * Sleepy during class. Not interesting 1
- * The level is lower than that of high school 1
- * Not useful at all with this class system 1
- * Unnecessary (we will be manage to communicate anyway) 1
- * I'm not certain that what we've learned here is useful 1
- * I don't like English 1
- * I have no interest in speaking with foreigners 1
- * I don't think that this class is significant 1

(B) <Foreign lecturers>

Total Responses 163

- * Little chance of communication (not so many chances of speaking English) 30
- * Couldn't understand what the lecturer was speaking 17
- * Not practical 14
- * Unnecessary because I don't have any chance of speaking with foreigners 12
- * I want to learn more everyday English conversation 11
- * I don't think I've got the ability of English communication 9
- * We just studied the passages in the textbook 9
- * No difference from regular English classes 9
- * Too little time for acquiring communication abilities 7
- * No difference from high school English classes 4
- * I don't think this class is significant 4
- * Unnecessary because I have no plan of going abroad 4
- * I couldn't understand the purpose of this class 4
- * No chance of speaking English 3
- * This class didn't motivate students to study hard 3
- * I myself lack the drive to study English 3
- * I don't like English 3
- * Too many students in one class 2
- * Textbook was too difficult 2
- * No particular reason 2
- * Only the lecturer speaks. We are passive 2
- * I don't know which sentence constructions we can use in what context 2
- * Insufficient explanation 1
- * The content of the class work wasn't good 1
- * I felt difficult to acquire English 1
- * The foreign lecturer spoke in Japanese (meaningless) 1
- * No repetition practice 1

- * Writing practice only 1
- * Too easy 1

Dissatisfaction with Lecturers

(A) < Japanese lecturers >

Total Responses 42

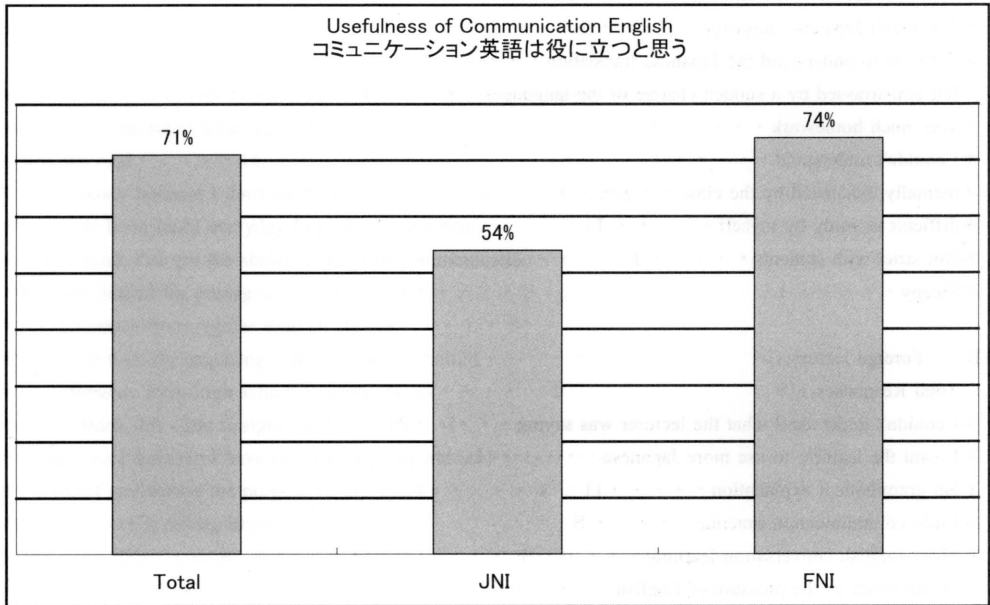
- * small voice 12
- * No communication practice 4
- * No fun 4
- * Too slow 4
- * I wanted to be taught by a foreign lecturer 2
- * No difference from high school English class 2
- * The lecturer didn't use the textbook 2
- * Not practical 1
- * I don't think I've learned anything 1
- * Self-satisfaction of the lecturer 1
- * Too much Japanese language 1
- * Difficult to understand the Japanese translation 1
- * felt embarrassed by a sudden change of the languages 1
- * Too much homework 1
- * I couldn't understand 1
- * mentally exhausted by the class 1
- * difficult to study by myself 1
- * Not strict with students 1
- * Sleepy 1

(B) < Foreign lecturers >

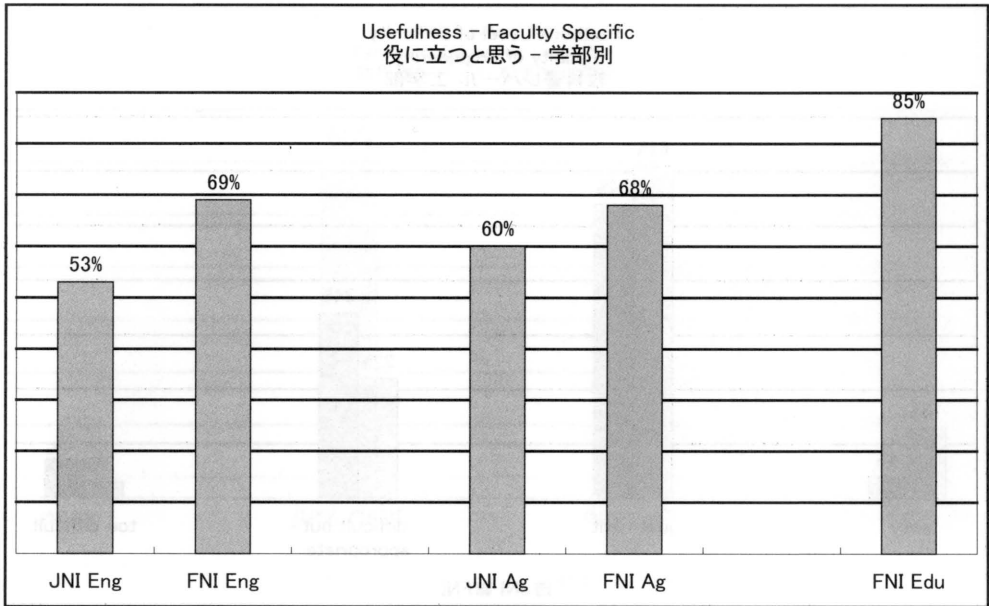
Total Responses 118

- * I couldn't understand what the lecturer was saying 29
- * I want the lecturer to use more Japanese 11
- * No grammatical explanation 11
- * Little communication practice 8
- * More English conversation learning 8
- * Please teach us the pleasure of English 5
- * Let the students practice 5
- * The lecturer was scary 4
- * Dissatisfied with the class work 4
- * Much waste of time 3
- * Not practical 3
- * Not good at teaching 2
- * Only reading passages and answering the questions 2
- * Too slow 2
- * The lecturer needs to see how well students understand what they've learned 2
- * The lecturer put too much attention on words 2
- * Difficult 2

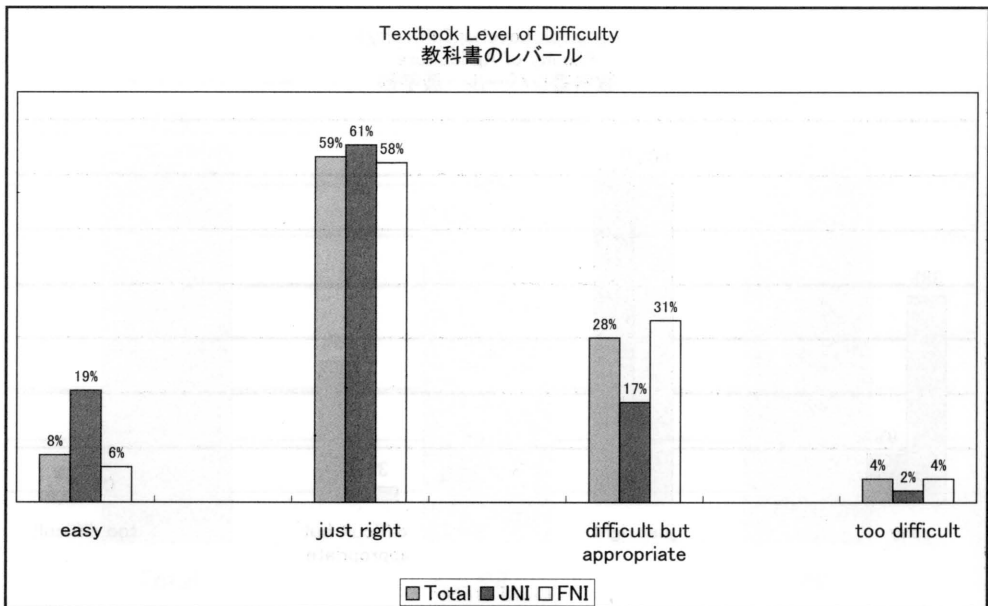
- * No motivation to study English 2
- * The lecturer didn't have the drive to motivate students 1
- * No explanation on what was written in textbook 1
- * Unfair (?) 1
- * The lecturer was too quiet 1
- * Small voice 1
- * No fun 1
- * No translation 1
- * Didn't know what to study 1
- * Too boring because it's too elementary 1
- * Too many students in one class 1
- * I wanted the lecturer to use audio-visual aids more often 1
- * I don't think this class is significant 1
- * I didn't get along with the lecturer 1



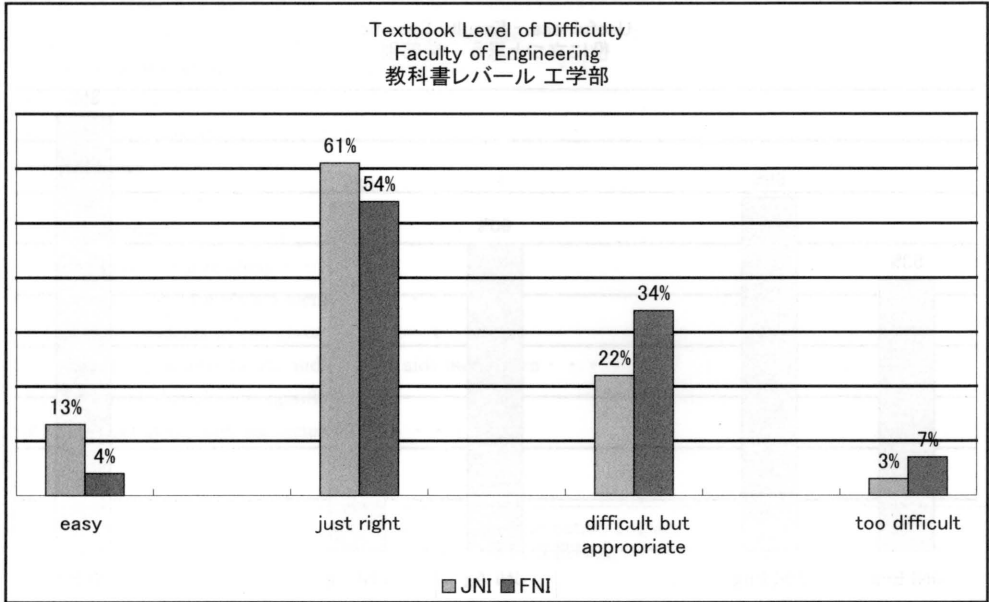
graph 1a



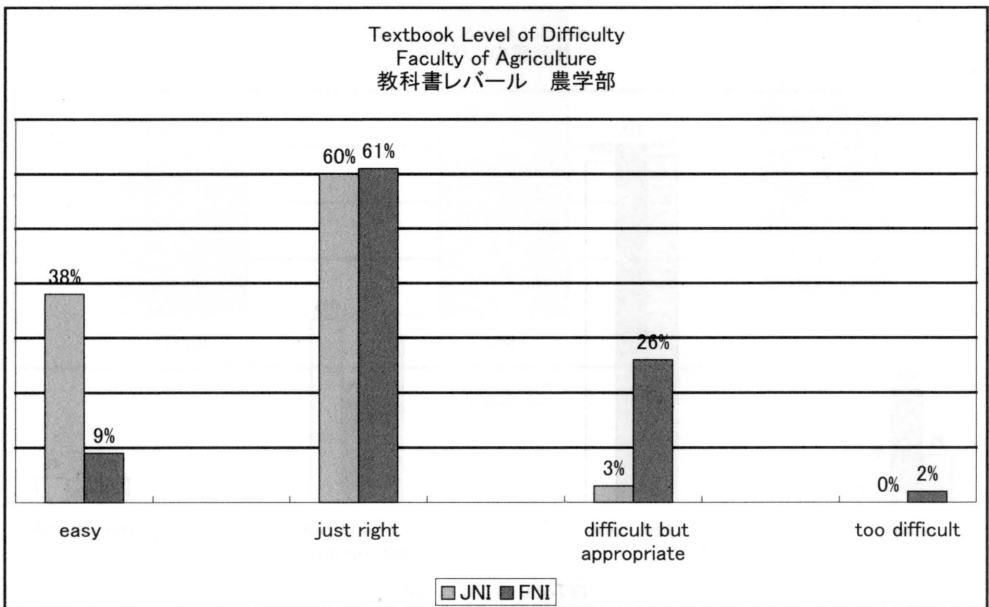
graph 1b



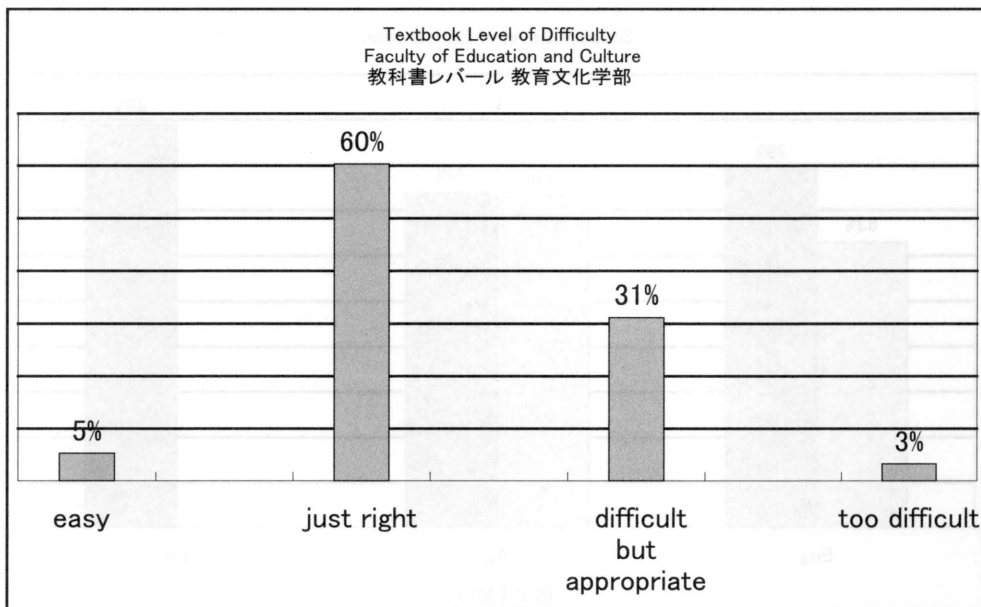
graph 2a



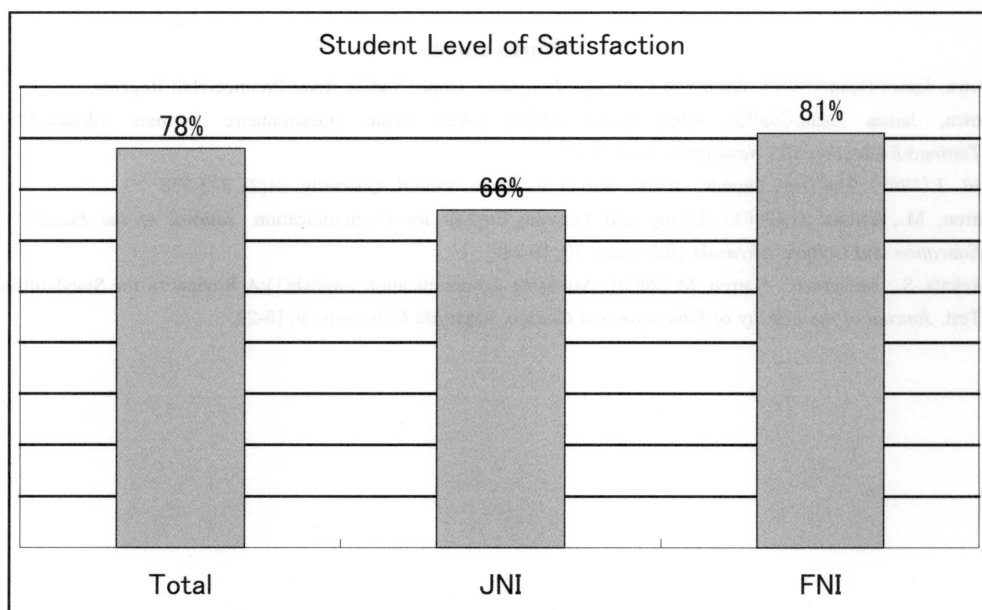
graph 2b



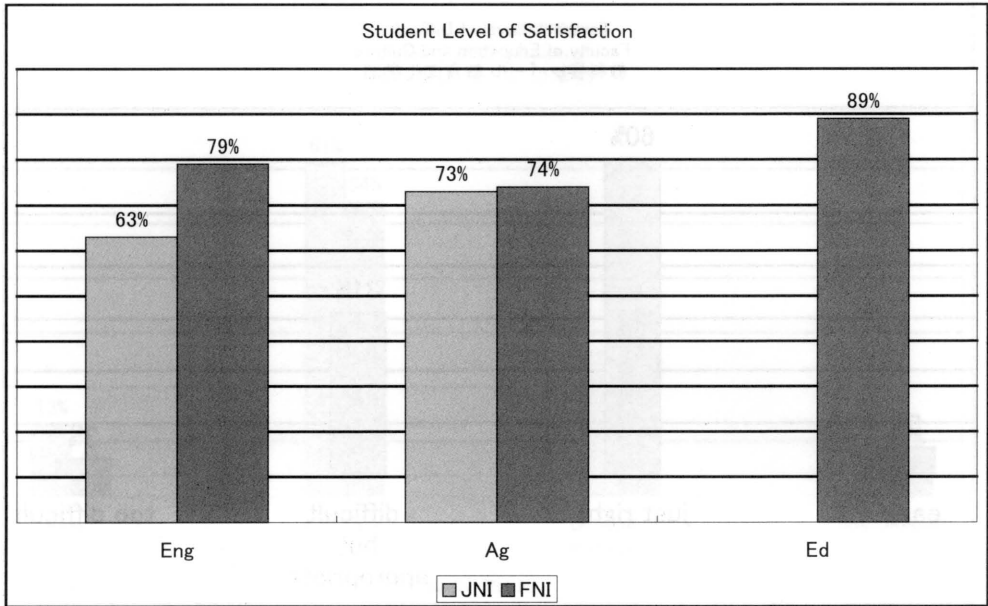
graph 2c



graph 2d



graph 3a



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