

【原著】

An Investigation into University Student Expectations of a Foreign Language Centre

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外国語学修施設における大学生の意識調査

アーサー・ラットソングリフィス

Introduction

The Bunkyo English Communication Centre (BECC) at Hiroshima Bunkyo University was established in 2008 and provides compulsory and elective communicative English classes for the approximately 1400 students in the university's five departments. The centre currently employs 12 full-time teaching staff who provide 126 hours of English class time per week. The centre also has a Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC) which provides a variety of materials and, among other services, a language advising service delivered by two learning advisors. As one of the largest tertiary foreign language centres in the region, the centre is also often involved in helping to attract prospective students to the university.

As part of a larger project at Hiroshima Bunkyo University to introduce a formal educational management system, the BECC plans to introduce a management system based on the International Standards Organisation requirements set out in ISO 21001:2018 Educational organisations: Management systems for educational organisations¹. Before attempting to implement a new management system, it is essential to understand the needs and expectations of relevant stakeholders, as set out in section 4.2. In the case of the BECC, the most relevant stakeholders are teaching and administrative staff of the BECC, top management of the university and students.

As no data were available on students' expectations of the BECC's educational offerings the survey described in this paper was conducted. It was carried out to collect preliminary data that can be used to refine future surveys and other data collection methods to produce more accurate measures of students' expectations.

Data collection method

The BECC conducts an end-of-semester course evaluation survey in the last teaching week of all

1 <https://www.iso.org/standard/66266.html>

classes. Six questions, four closed-ended and two open-ended, were added to this survey (see Appendix 1). The questions were formulated in English by the BECC Director and curriculum coordinators then translated into Japanese.

An overview of students who gave their consent to participate is given in Table 1. As of February 2021, the total number of registered students at the university is 1,423. The overall figure of 547 respondents is roughly 38% of the student body but most are in their first year of study.

All first-year students at the university take a compulsory course at the BECC, then have the option of taking a variety of elective courses in their following years. The exception to this is the Global Communication department, which has compulsory classes for 1st-3rd year students. This is the reason for the large number of first-year students and Global Communication department students in the sample.

Table 1: Survey participants by department and year of study

	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year	Total
Education (primary)	121	47	0	0	168
Education (secondary) ²	30	13	0	0	43
Welfare	58	2	0	0	60
Psychology	75	3	0	0	78
Nutrition	55	0	0	0	55
Global Communication	58	45	33	7	143
Total	397	110	33	7	547

Results

Affinity for English

From classroom experience, students at the BECC have differing levels of affinity for English and consequently differing levels of motivation and interest. This may also affect students' expectations

Table 2: Affinity for English by department (responses)

	High	Medium	Low
Education (primary)	25	119	23
Education (secondary)	16	23	3
Welfare	4	42	14
Psychology	11	49	18
Nutrition	6	37	11
Global Communication	58	81	2
Total	120	351	71

2 Students in the Education department are in the primary or secondary education course and their results are reported separately throughout the paper.

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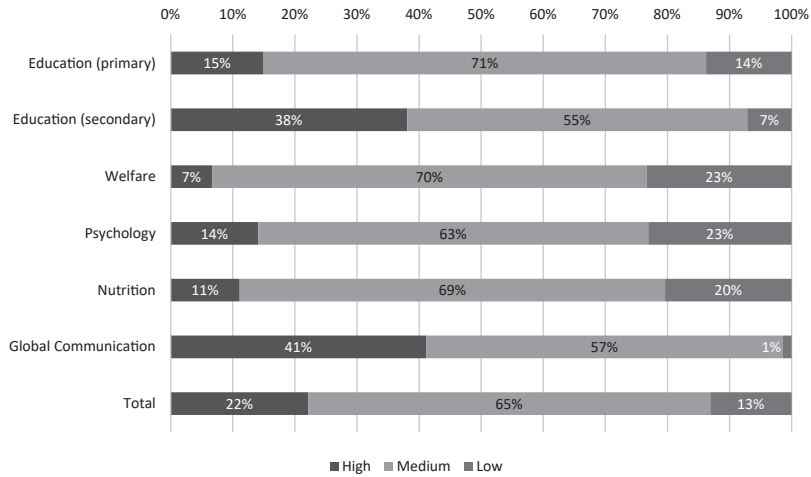


Figure 1: Affinity for English by department (percentages)

of the BECC. To compare expectations between students of differing English affinity, a multiple-choice question was included in the survey to group students into three categories: high, medium and low. Results are shown in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Global Communication students, for whom BECC classes are a large part of their class load, have the highest affinity for English, closely followed by students in the secondary education course in the Education Department, many of whom are aiming to become English teachers in future.

Need for English

Table 3 shows the results for students' strength of agreement with the phrase 'I need English in my future' by affinity for English. This question was included to establish whether there is a link between students' attitudes towards English and whether they feel it is necessary for them in the future. On the slider scale used in this question, 0% is strong disagreement and 100% is strong agreement.

Table 3: Responses and average agreement with the phrase 'I need English in my future'

	High	Medium	Low	Total
Responses	121	355	73	549
Average	88.7%	77.5%	59.3%	77.6%

There is a particularly large drop in the average response from the medium to low groups; those with low affinity for English and a low expectation that they will need English in their future may have different expectations of the BECC than students in the other two groups.

Current and future BECC services

To investigate student expectations regarding current educational services provided, current

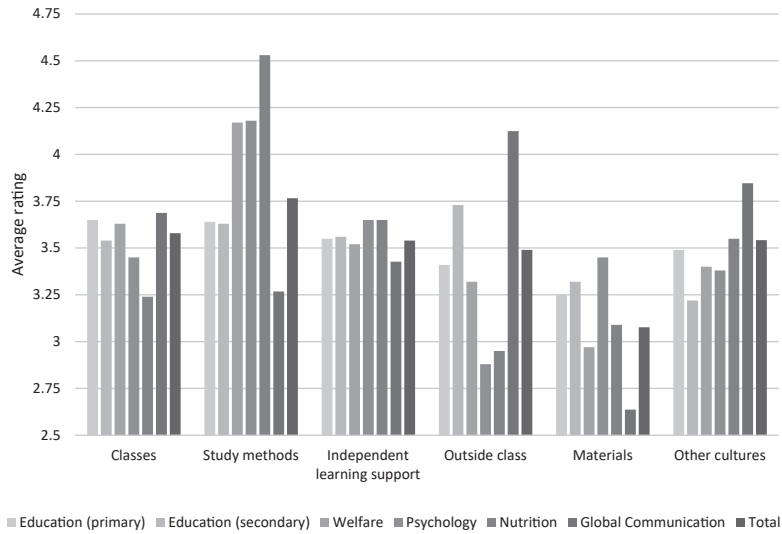


Figure 2: Average rating for six current educational services by department

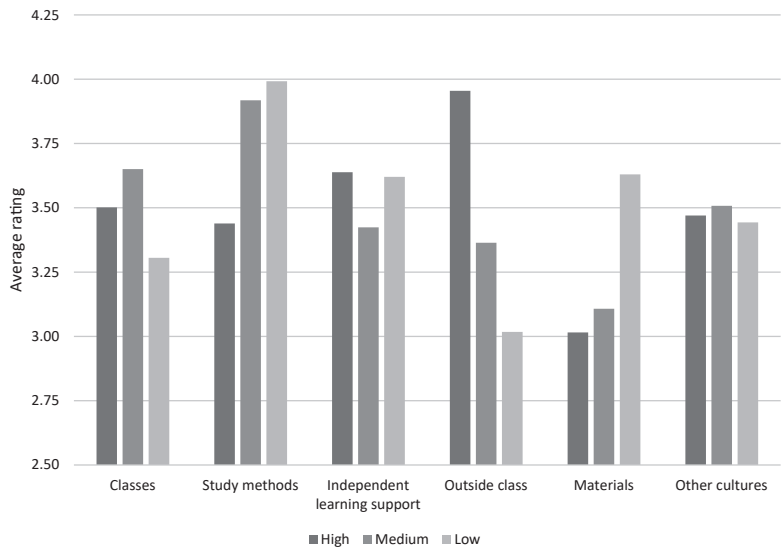


Figure 3: Average rating for six current educational services by English affinity

offerings were listed by staff and presented to students as a forced ranking question. The highest possible average score (i.e., if all students ranked an item as their first choice) is 6, and the lowest is 1. The results are presented by department (Figure 2) and by English affinity (Figure 3).

The service that students most want the BECC to provide is information on how to study. Although such information is available in the SALC, specific guidance on study methods and habits is not typically provided in BECC classes and is worth investigating further in future surveys. This is also the highest-ranked service by students with low English affinity, possibly suggesting that their lack of affinity for English could be associated with poor study skills and low

confidence. It can also be seen that students in the Global Communication department and those with high English affinity are most interested in the BECC providing opportunities to study English outside class and, perhaps having confidence in their study skills, are less interested in receiving information about how to study effectively.

Students were also asked directly if there are any services that they want the BECC to provide that it currently does not. 544 (99%) responded no and 5 (1%) responded yes, with these students commenting that they would like online materials that they can use to study at home and more events. More useful data may be gained in future iterations of this survey by listing ideas for services that the BECC can provide (but does not) and asking students for their level of interest.

Qualities of BECC classes

The two open-ended questions included in this survey were intended to gather opinions on what students expect of BECC classes and what they would recommend about the BECC to a prospective student. The reason for using an open-ended format was to gather data that can be used to create complementary closed-ended questions, such as forced ranking, in future surveys.

Responses were broken down into words, or tokens, then a count made of the number of times each token appeared in all the responses. The most common terms that appeared to be relevant were grouped into the categories shown in Table 4. For example, the Japanese terms 会話 (conversation) and 話す (talk) were both considered as 'speak'.

Table 4: Count of tokens in open-ended items

What do you think BECC classes should be like? (511 responses)		What would you recommend about the BECC to a high school student? (505 responses)	
Term	Count	Term	Count
English	199	English	195
Fun	94	Teacher	129
Learn	72	Speak	102
Speak	60	Can do	73
Use	56	Learn	72
Can do	45	Ability	50
Communication	30	Fun	38
Ability	28	Class	31
Teacher	20	Use	29
Support	14	Native speaker	22
Japanese	11	Communication	20

This simple count is by no means a detailed analysis but does provide some possible topics to explore further in future. It appears that students expect BECC classes to be fun and to afford opportunities to speak and use the target language. They would recommend taking the chance to

speak, especially with teachers, to potential future students.

Comments

The results presented in this paper represent the first step in a much larger project. Future versions of this survey may include questions designed to elicit more information, such as laddering questions³, and the use of other data collection methods, such as interviews or focus groups, which can build on the data gathered here to help the BECC decide where best to direct its resources to help as many students as possible.

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3 See <https://www.uxmatters.com/mt/archives/2009/07/laddering-a-research-interview-technique-for-uncovering-core-values.php>

Appendix 1: Survey items

Format	Question text: English	Question text: Japanese
Forced ranking	<p>What do you want the BECC to provide?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > English classes > Information on how to study > Support to become an independent learner > Opportunities to practise English outside class > Materials > Opportunities to learn about other cultures 	<p>BECCに何を提供してほしいですか。</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 英語の授業 > 勉強方法についての情報 > 自律学修ができるようになるサポート > 授業外で英語の練習をする機会 > 教材 > 他の文化を学ぶ機会
Comment box	<p>What do you think BECC classes should be like?</p>	<p>BECC授業はこうあるべきだと思うことを書いてください。</p>
Comment box	<p>What would you recommend about the BECC to a high school student?</p>	<p>BECCについて高校生に何をおすすめしますか。</p>
Multiple choice with comment box	<p>Are there any services the BECC does <u>not</u> provide but you would like us to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > No > Yes (please write) 	<p>あなたはBECCに提供してほしいが、BECCで提供して<u>いない</u>ものがありますか。</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > ない > ある (具体的に)
Multiple choice	<p>Which best describes you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > I really like English/other cultures. Even if the BECC doesn't offer any special events, campaigns or programs I want to go to the BECC/SALC. I want to study in the SALC. I want to take elective classes. > I don't mind English. I usually don't want to go to the BECC/SALC but I would go if there are some special events, campaigns or programs I am interested in. I might take an elective class if I have time. > I don't like English. Even if the BECC offers special events, campaigns or programs I don't want to go to the BECC/SALC. I don't want to take any elective classes. 	<p>あなたに一番当てはまるのはどれですか。</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 私は英語や他の文化が大好きです。BECCの特別なイベント、キャンペーンやプログラムがなくてもBECCやSALCに行きたいです。SALCで勉強したいです。BECCの選択授業を受けたいです。 > 私は英語は嫌いではありません。普段はBECCやSALCに行きたくないですが、興味のある特別なイベント、キャンペーンやプログラムがあれば行きたいです。時間があればBECCの選択授業を受けるかもしれません。 > 英語は好きではありません。BECCで特別なイベント、キャンペーンやプログラムがあってもBECCやSALCにはいきたくありません。BECCの選択授業は受けたくありません。
Slider	<p>I think English is necessary for me in the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Strongly disagree (0) > Strongly agree (100) 	<p>英語は将来私に必要だと思います。</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 全くそう思わない (0) > 強くそう思います (100)