

Title	A Comparison of the 1995 and 2001 Seigakuin University English Education Needs Analysis Questionnaire Results
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A Comparison of the 1995 and 2001 Seigakuin University English Education Needs Analysis Questionnaire Results

Evert D. Osburn

The importance of performing needs analyses in the curriculum development process is well-recognized. Genesee and Upshur (1996) emphasized the criticality of educators determining students' needs and abilities when establishing program goals, working on curriculum, developing syllabi and materials, and selecting teaching methodologies. Brown (1995, p. 35) asserts that "needs assessment is an integral part of systematic curriculum building" and that "needs analysis forms a rational basis for all other components of a systematic language curriculum."

One of the reasons for this is that the *context* in which the language will be taught must be assessed in order to create effective programs, as "the context in which we teach will modify any innovation: how it is introduced, implemented, and evaluated" (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992, p. 20). Two key components to be determined from the learners' context are their *language needs* and *situational needs*, viz., what linguistic material students should learn and what their nonlinguistic (e.g., financial, political, career-oriented) needs may be (Brown, 2001; Richards, 1990).

Recognizing the importance of assessing its students' language and situational needs, developers of the Seigakuin English Program (SEP), officially inaugurated on the Seigakuin University-Joshi Seigakuin Jr. College campus in April 1996, in the early stages of the process decided that a needs analysis must be done. Consequently, a questionnaire was developed and performed along the lines of Brown's (1995) definition of the term:

Needs analysis is the systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and

validate defensible curriculum purposes that satisfy the language learning requirements of students within the context of particular institutions that influence the learning and teaching situation. (p. 36)

The 1995 “Seigakuin Needs Analysis Questionnaire” (SNAQ) was completed by 1,145 of 2,119 Seigakuin University and Joshi Seigakuin Jr. College students (54.0% response rate) and the results assessed, which contributed directly to the development of the SEP curriculum that was implemented in 1996. (See Osburn, 1995, for the instrument used and an analysis of the results.)

Given the utility of this analysis and understanding the importance of on-going program evaluation (Lynch, 1996), particularly in a proficiency-oriented program such as the SEP (cf. Hadley, 2001), university administrators decided to conduct another needs analysis in October 2001. The assessment instrument was modified somewhat from the original version in order to update it to reflect the current situation (e.g., Question 24’s reference to the Internet and e-mail, which were not alluded to in the 1995 questionnaire), and to consolidate the number of possible responses on some items so that the available optical mark reader and corresponding mark sheets could be utilized (see Appendix for the “2001 Seigakuin University English Education Needs Analysis Questionnaire” [EENAQ] and the results).

The EENAQ was distributed in October 2001 among 1,451 students who were enrolled in English classes (36 SEP I/II, including repeaters, and 24 electives) on campus at the time. As indicated in Table 1, there were 1,054 respondents to the questionnaire (72.6% response rate) from all six departments in the university. [Note: P — Political Science and Economics; L — Local Community Policy; A — Euro-American Culture; J — Japanese Culture; C — Child Studies; and W — Human Welfare.] Extrapolated to the 2,879 students enrolled at the University (cf. Seigakuin University, 2001), a total of 36.6% of the student body was represented in the questionnaire.

These numbers represent 37.5% of the P (262/699); 61.3% of the L (149/243); 51.7% of the A (240/464); 37.5% of the J (170/453); 23.1% of the C (118/511); and 22.6% of the W (115/509) departments respectively. It may be

Table 1. Respondents to the 2001 EENAQ

	P	L	A	J	C	W	TOTAL
1997			2				2
1998	4		12	6			22
1999	78		34	42	4	5	163
2000	45	59	82	40	4	3	233
2001	135	90	110	82	110	107	634
TOTAL	262	149	240	170	118	115	1054

observed from this distribution that the number of Child Studies and Human Welfare students taking second-, third-, or fourth-year English electives is quite low and that the Local Community Policy Dept. was just started in 2000. This may explain why the majority of respondents were from the first-year required SEP classes, although a significant number of Political Science and Economics, Euro-American Culture, and Japanese Culture students apparently were enrolled in elective classes.

Having established the composition of the student population which responded to the 2001 EENAQ, attention will now be focused on a brief description of selected similarities and differences found when comparing the results of the 1995 and 2001 questionnaires, followed by recommendations based upon the assessment.

Convergent Results of the 1995 and 2001 Needs Analyses

In response to the question, Why are you studying English? (EENAQ Question A.1.) the number one answer in both questionnaires was “to fulfill graduation requirements only” (1995: 25.9%; 2001: 45.2%). [Note: from this point forward, 1995 results will be in plain typeface and the 2001 results in italics.] “To speak to foreigners” ranked second (23.8%; 31.1%) in both cases

as well. Thus, it appears that a significant number of students are interested in using English in communicating with foreigners but that the central reason for taking it as a course of study is simply because it is required. This is especially true for the current student population. In fact, on EENAQ No. D.18., "I am only taking English at Seigakuin because it is required," not in the 1995 Questionnaire, almost 60% of the students in 2001 replied that this was the case! This reflects the fact that there was an English Literature Department in Joshi Seigakuin Jr. College in 1995 that ceased to exist when the College was merged with the University in 1998. With the subsequent addition of departments not directly related to English studies per se, it becomes more apparent as to why there is now a significantly higher number of students taking English only because it is required than was the case in 1995.

Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from the responses in both the 1995 and 2001 questionnaires concerning the reason for taking English is that *student motivation* inherently becomes an issue when classes are being registered for mainly because they are required. This will be returned to at a later point.

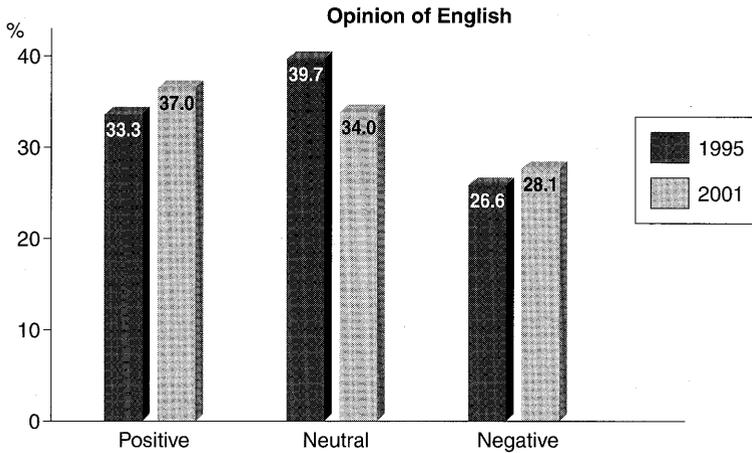
That there is a lack of motivation to learn English on the part of a significant number of Seigakuin University students is apparently due in part to the simple fact that they dislike it in the first place. Answering the question, Do you like or dislike English? (EENAQ Question F.25.), over one-fourth of the students had a negative response, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Evidently there has been little change in students' overall perceptions of English in any of the categories over the past six years, including the percentage who do not like it. Regarding this, however, it is important to note that the majority of students who expressed a dislike for English developed this attitude in either jr. high (237 students; 208 students) or high school (193; 87), before entering the university.

It is also significant as a side note that 93 students (8.1%) came to dislike English after matriculation at Seigakuin University in 1995, before the implementation of the SEP and Academic-Business-Culture track of English classes in 1996, whereas only 20 students (1.9%) indicated this afterwards in 2001. Thus, the new programs have apparently had an impact in this area.

The answers to the question, Which of the following would you very

Figure 1. Student Like/Dislike of English



much like to do in English upon completion of the curriculum at Seigakuin? (EENAQ Question B.11.) are in alignment with the notion that students who are interested in English are most likely to be so either because of a desire to talk with foreigners and friends or to comprehend the words in foreign music, movies, etc. The top three responses were “to communicate with foreigners while traveling overseas” (53.5%; 45.5%), “communicate in informal situations” (36.8%; 38.5%) and “understand movies, television, and radio programs” (62.4%; 36.1%). Couple this with the fact that in both questionnaires “travel” was either the first or second answer to the question, In which of the following settings will you most likely need English the most? (EENAQ Question C.13.) (39.2%; 33.2%), and it becomes evident that the majority of students are intent on using conversational English in an informal and/or an overseas setting. They are obviously not interested in formal academic English.

As for which of the four skills are of primary focus (EENAQ Question B.10.), the clear choice was “speaking” (64.6%; 75.7%), followed by “listening” (15.9%; 39.8%), “reading” (16.5%; 20.0%) and, lastly, “writing” (2.7%; 9.9%). The responses to this and other related questions (EENAQ

Questions D.14, 15, 16; E.20, 24; F.31), make it quite evident that *the vast majority of Seigakuin University students want to learn informal conversational English for travel or entertainment purposes.*

Couple this with the motivational and attitudinal issues mentioned above and the fact that almost 80% of the current students only study English outside of class for an hour or less per week (EENAQ Question F.28.) (72.8%; 78.3%), and the conclusion is reached that the perceived desire and need to concentrate on conversational English must be met if interest is going to be piqued or increased and that expectations of production at the level of translation of text are almost certain to lead to disappointment. The data gathered from two entirely different student populations at Seigakuin University, separated by six years, entirely corroborates such a deduction.

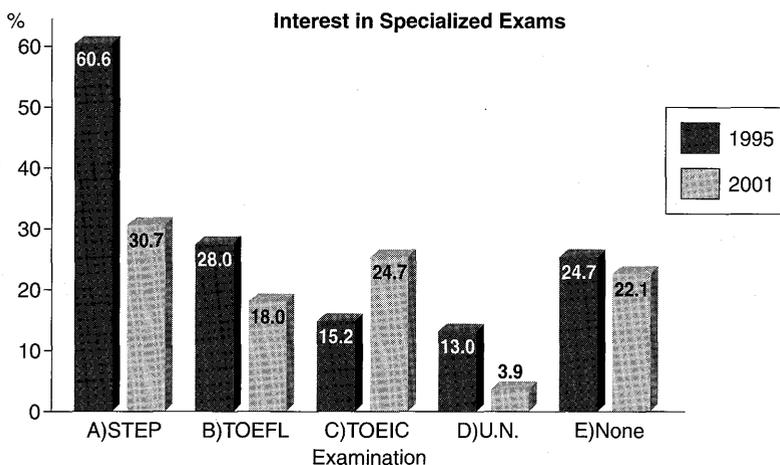
Divergent Results of the 1995 and 2001 Needs Analyses

While the majority of the results of the 1995 and 2001 needs analysis questionnaires were generally very similar, some questions revealed that there has been a shift in the characteristics of the student populations in some respects. One is in regard to the overall level of English ability as indicated by standardized examinations. While 57.5% of the respondents to the 1995 questionnaire had passed Level 3 or higher of the Society for the Testing of English Proficiency (STEP or “Eiken”) test, this can be said of only 37.5% of the 2001 EENAQ respondents.

This drop in overall English ability is also reflected in the Secondary Level English Proficiency (SLEP) test results. The average Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)-equivalency score for matriculating freshmen in April 1996 was 301.7, whereas it had fallen to 285.9 by April 2001 (Osburn, 1996, 2001).

Regarding students’ opinions concerning standardized tests themselves, there has been a shift away from interest in the STEP and an increased awareness of the utility of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), as indicated in Figure 2. It is notable that 60.6% of the respondents in 1995 expressed interest in the STEP, whereas only half as many students (30.7%) were of the same opinion in 2001. On the other hand,

Figure 2. Student Perceptions of Standardized Examinations

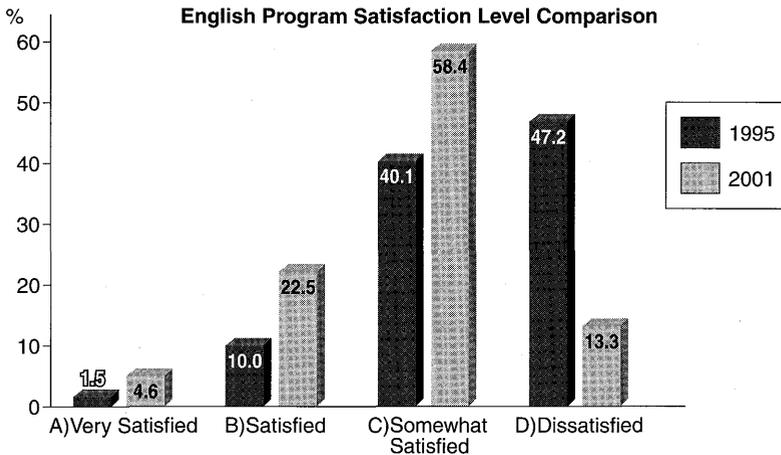


the percentage of potential TOEIC examinees rose from 15.2% to 24.7%.

Like the STEP, the popularity of the TOEFL among Seigakuin University students also dropped significantly, from 28.0% in 1995 to 18.0% in 2001, as did that of the United Nations English Language Certificate Examination, which decreased to less than one-third of the level it was in 1995 (13.0%; 3.9%). This may be due to the academic nature and purpose of these exams. According to Ueda (cited in Suzuki, 2002), for example, at least a 5,000-word vocabulary is necessary to study abroad, with some of the vocabulary necessarily being specialized in 13 key academic fields (cf. Nation, 2001, for an excellent analysis of the role of vocabulary in language learning at various stages).

What may be reasonably concluded from the shift described above is that fewer students in general are interested in academically oriented tests and are becoming more focused on those which have more practical value in the job market. There appears to be an increasing awareness that over 2,000 corporations or government institutions in Japan now utilize the TOEIC for some purpose, such as determining overseas assignments (cf. The Institute of International Business Communication, 1999).

Figure 3. Student Satisfaction Levels in Relation to the University English Program



Of course, the fact that there is expressed interest in standardized exams at all is somewhat contradictory given the students' overwhelmingly favoring informal, conversational English and speaking and listening skills rather than the type of English and skills necessary to succeed on tests like the TOEIC, as indicated earlier. It may well be that students are aware that the type of English they may actually need in the workplace differs from what they are truly interested in.

Turning to what this writer believes may be the single most significant difference between the students in 1995 and 2001, it is notable that there has been a dramatic change in the satisfaction levels of students regarding the overall English program (SEP, LL, Reading, and all electives) (see Figure 3). Almost half of the respondents in 1995 (47.2%) expressed dissatisfaction with the program in place at that time, with just 11.5% being "satisfied" or "very satisfied."

In contrast, only 13.3% of the students in 2001 were "dissatisfied" with the English program, a level roughly one-fourth what it was six years earlier. Furthermore, 27.1% were "satisfied" or "very satisfied," more than double the 1995 figure. Of course, the goal is to continue to increase the satisfaction

level so that the majority of students would be “very satisfied,” indicating that there is still work to be done in this area. Nevertheless, it is evident that the advent of the SEP and the Academic-Business-Culture track of electives in 1996 had a major impact on the satisfaction levels of Seigakuin University’s students.

This becomes even clearer when one is reminded that 26.2% of all respondents in 2001 disliked English *before* they matriculated at Seigakuin in April 2001 (EENQA Questions F.25, 26, 27), yet only half of that number expressed dissatisfaction with the overall program at the time of the EENQA in October. This is a positive indicator that the program now in place is helping significant numbers of students to come to accept or even like studying English as a second language.

In view of this and the other similarities and differences between the 1995 and 2001 student populations in regard to English at Seigakuin University, a number of suggestions may be made as to how to best proceed from this point forward. It is to these that attention is now focused.

Suggestions for Improving the Current Program

Comparing the results of the 1995 and 2001 questionnaires yields evidence that there has been a drop in students’ interest, motivation, and ability levels in regard to English over the past six years. It thereby becomes all the more imperative for administrators and teachers involved in the English program at Seigakuin to reassess the curriculum and give thought to potential improvements in order to most adequately meet current students’ needs. Though certainly not exhaustive, a list of suggestions for such improvements follows:

1. Continue to emphasize the skills of speaking and listening while focusing on informal, conversational English.
2. Coordinate as closely as possible the existing English courses in order to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.
3. Focus on teaching methodologies and materials development intent on increasing student interest levels while maintaining

viability.

4. Continue to emphasize the short-term study abroad programs that are available on campus.
5. Offer an elective class specifically targeted on travel English.
6. Offer an elective class for TOEIC that is open to all departments.
7. Consider Content-Based Instruction (CBI) for select courses currently being taught only in Japanese (e.g., Introduction to Christianity).

Though all of these suggestions may be beneficial, the latter in particular could open up exciting vistas for the English program on campus. Writing on the benefits of CBI, Dupuy (2000) writes,

research findings indicate that adult students (beginning, intermediate, and advanced students alike) in short-term, non-intensive, content-based courses make language gains equal or superior to those of students in traditional language classrooms, and at a much faster pace. They also learn large amounts of subject matter. Moreover, students in content-based courses develop more positive attitudes toward the target language, show increased self-confidence in their ability to use the target language, and express an interest in pursuing its study. Finally, CBI empowers students so that they can become autonomous learners. (p. 219)

Though most students at Seigakuin University are at the beginning level of English ability upon matriculation, Dupuy's research indicates that CBI, if properly planned and implemented, may nevertheless prove to be effective. At the very least, this writer suggests that a pilot CBI course be designed for a currently required class and run for one year with top students from the Euro-American Culture, Child Studies, or Human Welfare Departments and the SLEP test results compared with those of previous years. The outcome may well lead the school to consider expansion of CBI along the lines of the "theme-based" (TB) model.

Conclusion

This brief comparison of the 1995 and 2001 English program needs analysis questionnaires is by no means comprehensive. Indeed, the writer is acutely aware of the limitations of the study. This notwithstanding, it is nonetheless desired that the reader give thought to the results reported and suggestions made, with the goal being to continue to improve the English program at Seigakuin University so that it will fully meet the expressed needs of its valued students.

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Appendix

2001 Seigakuin University English Education Needs Analysis Questionnaire Results

Number of Respondents: 1,054 (660 in first-year courses [SEP, LL, & Reading], 394 in second- through fourth-year classes [primarily Academic, Business, and Culture English]. Overall response rate was 72.6% [1054/1451]).

*** Method of reporting data below: number of students/percentage of 1,054**

A. Why are you studying English?

1. What is your primary purpose for studying English?
 - 476/45.2% A) to fulfill graduation requirements only
 - 169/16.0% B) to improve job prospects
 - 38/03.6% C) to travel abroad
 - 328/31.1% D) to speak to foreigners
 - 43/04.1% E) to have a sense of personal achievement

2. In which of the following job categories are you most interested?
 - 230/21.8% A) business/clerical
 - 313/29.7% B) travel
 - 330/31.3% C) arts/media (music, movie production, etc.)
 - 109/10.3% D) education
 - 69/06.5% E) government (diplomacy, non-government organizations [NGOs], etc.)

3. Which specialized English exam are you most interested in?
324/30.7% A) STEP (Eiken)
190/18.0% B) TOEFL
260/24.7% C) TOEIC
41/03.9% D) United Nations English Language Certificate Examination
233/22.1% E) I am not interested in any specialized English exams.

Either Question 4 or Question 5 below, whichever was appropriate, was to be answered.

4. Which level of the STEP (*Eiken*) test have you passed?
10/00.9% A) Level 1
5/00.5% B) Pre-level 1
11/01.0% C) Level 2
89/08.4% D) Pre-level 2
5. Which level of the STEP (*Eiken*) test have you passed?
281/26.7% A) Level 3
206/19.5% B) Level 4
76/07.2% C) Level 5
330/31.3% D) I have never taken the STEP test.

Students who have passed the STEP were to answer either Question 6 or 7 below. Students who have not passed or have never taken it were supposed to go on to Question 8.

6. In which year of school did you last pass the STEP?
6/00.6% A) second year of university
11/01.1% B) first year of university
90/08.5% C) third year of high school
128/12.1% D) second year of high school
90/08.5% E) first year of high school
7. In which year of school did you last pass the STEP?
146/13.9% A) third year of jr. high school
165/15.7% B) second year of jr. high school

- 48/04.6% C) first year of jr. high school
8/00.8% D) sixth year of elementary school
5/00.5% E) fifth year of elementary school

8. Have you ever taken the TOEIC test?

- 34/03.2% A) Yes.
971/92.1% B) No.

If "Yes," Question 9 was answered. If "No," students went on to Question 10.

9. Which range does your best score on the TOEIC fall within?

- 3/00.3% A) 860-990 (Level A)
1/00.1% B) 730-855 (Level B)
21/02.0% C) 470-725 (Level C)
24/02.3% D) 220-465 (Level D)
10/0.9% E) 10-215 (Level E)

B. How will you use English after you finish the program at Seigakuin?

10. Choose the English skills which you are most interested in improving. **(TWO marked.)**

- 211/20.0% A) reading
104/09.9% B) writing
798/75.7% C) speaking
420/39.8% D) listening

11. Which of the following would you very much like to do in English upon completion of the curriculum at Seigakuin? **(TWO marked.)**

- 206/19.5% A) read newspapers, magazines, and books
406/38.5% B) communicate in informal situations (talk with friends etc.)
480/45.5% C) communicate with foreigners while traveling overseas
381/36.1% D) understand movies, television, and radio programs
119/11.3% E) use the Internet (read web pages, communicate via e-mail, etc.)

C. Where will English be used?

12. Where do you anticipate you will use English the most?

- 448/42.5% A) in Japan
- 342/32.4% B) in North America (Canada or the United States)
- 71/06.7% C) in Asia
- 133/12.6% D) in Europe
- 55/05.2% E) in Australia

13. In which of the following settings will you likely need English the most?

- 422/40.0% A) work
- 103/09.8% B) school
- 350/33.2% C) travel
- 176/16.7% D) leisure (listening to music, watching movies, surfing the Internet, etc.)

D. Why are you taking English classes at Seigakuin?

Students rated the importance of the following according to the scale below.

A = very important

B = important

C = somewhat important

D = unimportant

14. understanding native speakers and their cultures

- 336/31.9% A)
- 546/51.8% B)
- 133/12.6% C)
- 35/03.3% D)

15. communicating in everyday situations

- 624/59.2% A)
- 355/33.7% B)
- 56/05.3% C)
- 15/01.4% D)

16. speaking fluently
372/35.3% A)
471/44.7% B)
182/17.3% C)
27/02.6% D)
17. preparing for a future job
309/29.3% A)
468/44.4% B)
226/21.4% C)
51/04.8% D)
18. I am only taking English at Seigakuin because it is required.
613/58.2% A) Yes.
430/40.8% B) No.

E. How do you learn English best?

19. I prefer to learn . . .
130/12.3% A) in one large group.
663/62.9% B) in small groups.
103/09.8% C) in pairs.
152/14.4% D) individually.
20. I prefer spending most of the class time . . .
141/13.4% A) listening to the teacher and taking notes.
383/36.3% B) having conversations.
160/15.2% C) doing listening exercises.
296/28.1% D) doing language activities.
67/06.4% E) working on assignments (translating, worksheets, etc.).
21. I prefer a class which is . . .
173/16.4% A) highly structured and teacher centered.
693/65.7% B) fairly structured but with some teacher-student interaction.

187/17.7% C) loosely structured and student centered.

22. I prefer to have a textbook for each English class.

382/36.2% A) Yes.

665/63.1% B) No.

23. I prefer to learn grammar because it is necessary to master English.

591/56.1% A) Yes.

452/42.9% B) No.

24. I prefer to learn English by . . . (**TWO marked.**)

456/43.3% A) listening to tapes and radio programs, watching television or videos, etc.

218/20.7% B) working on the Internet, using e-mail, etc.

338/32.1% C) reading and translating.

549/52.1% D) practicing conversations in class.

322/30.6% E) playing language games.

F. Who are you as a student of English?

25. Do you like or dislike English?

106/10.1% A) I love it.

283/26.9% B) I like it.

358/34.0% C) It's O.K.

194/18.4% D) I don't like it very much.

102/9.7% E) I hate it.

Only if students disliked English (answers D or E on Question 25) were Questions 26 and 27 to be answered. Otherwise, they were supposed to go on to Question 28.

26. I dislike English because . . .

46/04.4% A) I don't think I'll ever use it.

214/20.3% B) it's too difficult.

42/04.0% C) I don't like the way it is taught.

18/01.7% D) I have too many other subjects to study.

- 20/01.9% E) I have no interest in foreigners or foreign cultures.
27. When did you first come to dislike English?
20/01.9% A) at Seigakuin University
87/08.3% B) in high school
208/19.7% C) in junior high school
9/00.9% D) in elementary school
28. How much time do you spend studying English outside of class per week?
825/78.3% A) 0-1 hour
183/17.4% B) 2-3 hours
25/02.4% C) 4-5 hours
10/00.9% D) more than five hours
29. Are you currently attending an extra-curricular English class at a language school?
28/02.7% A) Yes.
1004/95.3% B) No.
30. Are you aware that Seigakuin Language Institute (S.L.I.) is on this campus?
255/24.2% A) Yes.
776/73.6% B) No.
31. What might make extra-curricular English classes at S.L.I. more appealing to you?
209/19.8% A) non-structured free conversation
237/22.5% B) cheaper fees
124/11.8% C) specialized classes for standardized tests, such as STEP, TOEIC, or TOEFL
222/21.1% D) specialized classes on travel English
249/23.6% E) more convenient schedule

Students rated their English ability in the following areas according to the scale below.

A = very good

B = good

C = fair

D = poor

32. reading

23/02.2% A)

271/25.7% B)

552/52.4% C)

198/18.8% D)

33. writing

18/01.7% A)

130/12.3% B)

545/51.7% C)

345/32.7% D)

34. speaking

22/02.1% A)

127/12.0% B)

569/54.0% C)

321/30.5% D)

35. listening

34/03.2% A)

184/17.5% B)

539/51.1% C)

281/26.7% D)

36. How satisfied are you with your English classes in general?

48/04.6% A) very satisfied

237/22.5% B) satisfied

616/58.4% C) somewhat satisfied

140/13.3% D) dissatisfied

37. Which first-year class is/was the most satisfying for you?
209/19.8% A) English Reading I/II
283/26.9% B) English LL I/II
524/49.7% C) SEP (Kiso Eigo I/II)

Question 38 was only for second- through fourth-year students who have taken elective English classes. All other students went on to Question 39.

38. Which elective English class is/was the most satisfying for you?
136/12.9% A) Academic English I/II
40/03.8% B) Business English I/II
140/13.3% C) Culture English I/II
108/10.2% D) No electives were satisfying.
39. How can Seigakuin improve its English program overall?
97/09.2% A) Emphasize reading and writing more.
419/39.8% B) Emphasize speaking and listening more.
181/17.2% C) Have more English classes with native-speaking teachers.
53/05.0% D) Have more English classes with Japanese teachers.
149/14.1% E) Coordinate the entire English curriculum (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).
40. If you were to grade the overall English program at Seigakuin, what grade would you give it?
56/05.3% A) very good
294/27.9% B) good
452/42.9% C) fair
90/08.5% D) poor