Citation

A Survey of Learner Expectations and Levels of Satisfaction with a University Intensive English Language Program

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> When learners and teachers meet for the first time, they may bring with them different expectations concerning not only the learning process in general, but also concerning what will be learned in a particular course and how it will be learned. (Brindley, 1984, p. 95)

Introduction

Differences between learner and teacher beliefs can often lead to a mismatch about what are considered useful classroom language learning activities. This exploratory classroom study stemmed from my desire to find out from the students themselves their preferred learning styles, reasons for joining the intensive English language program and, most importantly, to what extent the students felt their English had improved as a result of the course. The focus of my research begins with a needs analysis of students' classroom learning preferences and their expectations of the teaching methods for the course.

In this research project, I support the view that in any language program the learners are the key participants (Nunan, 1988, 1999, pp. 10-14; Richards, 2001, p. 101). Since learners have their own "agendas" in the classroom (Richards, 2001, p. 101), the "effectiveness of a language program will be dictated as much by the attitudes and expectations of the learners as by the specifications of the official curriculum" (Nunan, 1989, p. 176). For conducting an investigation into students' attitudes, beliefs, goals, and learning preferences, techniques of survey research seem ideally suited. According to Brown (2001), language surveys "gather data on the characteristics and views of informants about the nature of language or language learning through the use of oral interviews or written questionnaires" (p. 2).

My motivation for this study came after several years' experience of teaching and preparing materials for an Intensive English Program (IEP) at a university where I work. I often wondered how effective the classroom activities and materials were for this English program, and as a native English teacher, I was curious to find out about students' classroom learning preferences and expectations. Moving beyond this, I viewed the course as a whole, not as a syllabus designer, but as a teacher looking at the results obtained from this "fact-finding" investigation (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2001, pp. 191-200) may assist in shaping the content of future programs, tailoring them to the reported linguistic needs and stated goals of the students.

For several years, I have taken a communicative approach to my teaching with a preference for authentic language practice. The IEP referred to in this

study provides a communicative language teaching classroom environment taught by native speaker teachers using authentic video-based materials. Video has been recognized as a valuable resource for intensive language study because it can present a total communicative situation. A recent trend has been to use video materials to stimulate oral and written communication among students. Stempleski (1992) suggests that authentic video provides access to the target culture and is highly motivational as a living medium of communication (pp. 7-10).

The overall aim of this research project is to investigate the nature of language learning in this university IEP in relation to my own teaching practices, particularly to increase my understanding of learners' language needs in studying English. In this survey-based study, I first explore students' general feelings towards English and their preferred classroom language learning activities; then I present and report on their stated language needs and expectations of the IEP. Finally, I seek to statistically and qualitatively measure perceived levels of improvement and to what extent the course satisfied different learning expectations.

Review of Literature

Needs analysis is summarized by Richards (2001) as a process of collecting information that can be used to develop a profile of the language needs of a group of learners in order to make decisions about the goals and content of a language course (p. 52). Similarly, needs analysis as defined as defined by Brown (2001) is

"the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant professional information necessary to satisfy the language learning needs of the students within the context of the particular institutions involved in the learning/teaching situation"(p. 14). Needs analysis is an important component in program evaluation, which is usually conducted in the early stages of curriculum development and often depends on questionnaires, interviews, and linguistic analyses, as well as "conjecture, and a good deal of professional judgment" (Brown, 2001, p. 15).

An early form of needs analysis dates back to Tyler's (1949) work on curriculum development that outlined fundamental questions to be addressed in education. One key question in developing any curriculum was "How can we determine whether these [educational] purposes have been attained?" (p. 1). This question dealt with assessment and evaluation which could be measured by conducting learner needs analysis. The case for a learner-centered program is not a new one, as Tyler asserted, "If the school situations deal with matters of interest to the learner, [they] will actively participate in them and thus learn to deal effectively with the situation" (Tyler, 1949, p. 11). Tyler argued that educational objectives should describe learner behavior (not teachers), and should identify what changes come about in learners as a result of teaching.

Needs analysis procedures in language teaching grew out of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Munby, 1978; Robinson, 1991; Wilkins, 1976). In developing ESP programs, Richterich (1972) and Richterich and Chancerel (1978) argued that learners, teachers and employers need to be involved in assessing learner needs, which is used as the initial process

for specifying behavioral objectives. They suggested that needs analysis should be ongoing throughout a program. Information should be collected about the different kinds of activities, functions and situations in which learners are engaged in. Richterich and Chancerel's (1980) suggested procedures for conducting needs analysis should include questionnaires, surveys and interviews.

Extensive work on needs analysis was conducted in the mid-1980s. Brindley (1984, 1990) developed the distinction drawn by Richterich and Chancerel (1972, 1978) between "objective" and "subjective" needs. From his research he found that:

> The "objective needs" are those which can be diagnosed by teachers on the basis of the analysis of personal data about learners along with information about their language proficiency and patterns of language use. Whereas the "subjective" needs (which are often "wants," "desires," "expectations" or other psychological manifestations) cannot be diagnosed as easily, or in many cases, even stated by learners themselves. (Brindley, 1984, p. 31)

Objective needs analyses result in content derived from an analysis of the target communicative situations in which learners engage, as well as an analysis of the kinds of spoken and written discourse they need to comprehend and produce. Such analyses were crucial tools in developing ESP syllabuses, but objective needs, being derived from an analysis of the target language situation, can be carried out in the *absence* of the learner. Subjective needs, however, take

into account the communicative needs, desires and "objectives" of the learner (Berwick, 1989). Collaboration between learners and teachers to establish what are considered needs is a matter for "agreement and judgement not discovery" (Lawson, cited in Brindley, 1989, p. 65).

There has been a tendency in needs analysis research to equate objective needs with curriculum/course content, and subjective needs with methods (Richards, 1984, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 1986, pp. 64-70), but the two can be viewed as sometimes overlapping parts along a continuum. Nunan (1988) argues that:

> While objective needs analysis and content are commonly linked, as are subjective needs and methodology,…it is, in fact, also possible to have a content/subjective needs dimension (learners deciding what they want to learn) and a methodology/objective needs dimension (teacher deciding how content might best be learned). (p. 44)

Learners' objective needs have received a great deal of attention since the communicative era of the 1970s (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Munby, 1978), whereas subjective needs have been neglected, considered to be "unpredictable, therefore indefinable" (Brindley, 1984, pp. 31-32).

Brindley (1989) posits three different approaches to needs analysis: a language proficiency orientation, a psychological/humanistic orientation and a specific purpose orientation (pp. 67-68). The three approaches are differentiated according to their educational rationale, the type of information collected, the

method of data collection and the purposes for which data are collected. In the psychological/humanistic orientation, the rationale is that students learn more effectively if involved in the learning process, and the methods of data collection involve observation, interviews and surveys, with the purpose to help learners become involved in decision-making about their learning. Brindley (1984) lists objective needs as patterns of language use, personal resources (including time) in order for learners to be grouped according to needs and interests. Subjective needs include activity preferences, affective needs, pace of learning, and attitude towards correction, so that teachers may adapt activities to learner preferences and individual needs. In his work on adult English as a Second Language (ESL) learning styles, Willing (1988) groups learners according to: (1) language proficiency profile, (2) learning strategy profile, and (3) learning purpose. His strategy profile of classroom learning preferences includes four types of learners: concrete; analytical; communicative; and authority.

Nunan (1999, pp. 149-155) extends Brindley's (1984) distinction between objective and subjective needs to include content and process needs. Content needs include the selection and sequencing of topics, grammar, function and notions–traditionally syllabus design–while process needs refers to the selection and sequencing of learning tasks and experiences–traditionally methodology. Nunan (1999, pp. 147-151) further distinguishes between initial and ongoing needs analysis. Initial needs analysis is carried out *before* a course begins by curriculum designers (often beyond the control of the teacher)–while ongoing needs analysis can be conducted quite informally by teachers during the course of

a program. Brown (2001) recommends that for program evaluation projects, needs assessment should be an ongoing process of data gathering and analysis (p. 15). In terms of course content, ongoing data collection about learners can assist teachers in selecting materials and activities which accord with the needs and interests of the learners.

Brindley and Bagshaw (1984) conducted a major needs analysis with the purpose of investigating the "awareness of learners and the extent to which they are able to articulate their language learning needs." The main findings of the study were that learners were able to express long-term goals as well as instrumental reasons for taking language classes. Many had clear ideas about how to learn language and what were legitimate classroom activities. The study concluded that teachers and learners hold "differing views of needs," and also that learners vary widely in their ability to express course objectives.

Robinson (1991) provides a list of needs analysis techniques to obtain information from learners, and focus on the learners' target situations of language use. She argues that questionnaires and interviews are best conducted sequentially, the questionnaire providing basic information that can then be discussed in more depth in a one-to-one interview with the teacher. Another data elicitation technique Robinson refers to is "participatory needs analysis"(pp. 14-15), where learners engage in open-ended discussion of the needs and goals of their course of study, either one-to-one with the teacher or as part of a group discussion.

In New Zealand, a needs analysis of problems felt by ESL students attending university lectures found that students reported most difficulties with

speaking and listening skills (Gravett, Richards, & Lewis, 1997, pp. 64-65). The most common difficulties in English language use ranked in the following order: (1) large group discussion, (2) class discussion, and (3) interaction with native speakers. However, this ranking does not offer much information about the problems learners experienced with each activity. After conducting a needs analysis, Johns and Johns (1977) provided a list of problems students had with discussion. The most frequently reported difficulties involved (1) comprehension of spoken language, (2) the need to contribute quickly, and (3) shyness about making mistakes.

A criticism often made of needs-based courses is that they are often somewhat irrelevant in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings where learners have little immediate need to communicate orally. In the EFL setting of Japan, subjective needs relating to classroom learning preferences and language study goals would seem to be more relevant than objective needs. Widdowson (1978, 1984, pp. 10-11) has been the leading critic of needs-based courses which specify ends above learning processes. He argues that a narrow ESP approach tends to result in formulaic "phrase book" English because learners merely fulfill a language training function and do not develop communicative competence. Widdowson advocates general-purpose syllabuses which are process oriented and lead to greater general competence.

A needs-based philosophy clearly underpins the TESOL Commission on Accreditation (TCA) Standards for Intensive English Programs (Angelis et al., 1998). The TESOL report was commissioned to give clear guidance on

developing and evaluating IEPs in an ESL setting in the United States, with "the goal of the standards to help IEPs provide a quality educational experience for their students" (p. 7). A recurring theme throughout the TCA Standards is to provide a "quality educational experience," and to "meet the assessed needs of the students through a continuity of learning experiences" (p. 16). The TCA report advises that an IEP curriculum should use materials and methodologies "appropriate for teaching language skills to students of different backgrounds, abilities, ages, learning styles, goals, communicative needs and levels of achievement or proficiency" (p. 17).

The TCA Standards recommends periodic review (p. 39) to evaluate the effectiveness of an IEP making use of qualitative and quantitative measures from a variety of data sources such as observing classroom activities and levels of student participation, samples of students' assignments, classroom records and teachers' field notes. The TCA report is a framework for IEP designers and teachers on how to raise standards and provide a "quality educational experience" for learners. Although meeting learner needs is at the heart of the report, no advice is offered on how to conduct a learner needs analysis. Although in the ESL context of the United States, needs-based intensive English programs are quite common, they are still a rarity in EFL at Japanese universities.

Research into objective needs has focused on general parameters of language programs– obtaining background data on who the learners are and their general level of proficiency. Subjective needs analysis acknowledges that learner goals and expectations vary (Richterich, 1972; Brindley, 1984), and these

differences need to be taken into account in determining course content, methods, and materials. Perhaps one reason why researchers have neglected subjective needs is that information relating to methods, classroom learning style preferences and materials can generally be collected only once a learning arrangement or program has already started (Nunan, 1988, p. 43).

Moving away from objective needs, my study concerns learner needs as they relate to classroom teaching methods and materials. This project is the first subjective needs analysis of learner expectations and attempt to evaluate the program (through reported levels of learner satisfaction) in English at the university where I teach. Through collecting and analyzing learner data, I examine students' self-perceptions of prior language learning experiences and preferred learning styles. In this study, I asked students to self-monitor and assess their own perceived levels of improvement during and as a result of an intensive English language program. The methods and results of this needs analysis have been carefully recorded and presented so that they may be replicated and reviewed by future researchers interested in conducting learner needs analysis in an EFL setting.

Methods

Setting and the Participants

The setting for my study was a short Intensive English Program (IEP) at a major private university where I teach in Tokyo. This course ran for two weeks during the summer vacation in September and was primarily designed to promote

communicative English skills. Non-English major students at Japanese universities have, on average, one 90-minute communicative English class per week over an academic year of typically 28 weeks, which totals a mere 42 hours of class time. In this IEP, students received 60 hours of class time from native speakers (NS) of English. There were 109 participating students (49 men, 60 women) and all were non-English majors who ranged from freshmen to graduate students. On successful completion of the course, students received 2 graduation credits. Initial level placement was determined by students' scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) institutional test (grammar and listening sections), the average score being 440; the highest was 448, and the lowest 368. Students were divided into 8 classes ranging from Intermediate A, B, C, D to Elementary A, B, C, D. Teaching was done by 8 native speakers. I taught the Intermediate B and Intermediate C classes and the focus of my more qualitative research (classroom observation, learner diaries, interviews) was on these students.

The rationale for the course and the official expectations were that students would practice their speaking and listening skills and by the end of the course would have developed more willingness and greater confidence to communicate in English. In view of these broad official goals, final assessment was largely attendance and effort-based rather than dependant on passing achievement tests.

Survey Instruments

In conducting the learner needs analysis, I administered survey research instruments to elicit and gather data from the students. All 109 students who joined the IEP formed the target population for the initial and final questionnaires in the survey. In addition to the questionnaires, data for this study included copies of students' diaries and e-mail assignments; audiotape-recorded interviews; and video recordings of some of my morning and afternoon classes. The students' presentations/performances in the final class sessions were also videotaped. In addition, I kept a detailed set of my classroom field notes; attendance records; and audiotape-recorded all my classes. This "triangulation" of data sources (Allwright & Bailey, 1991, p. 73) was an important part in collecting an accurately rounded and detailed picture of my two classes. Survey research techniques in the form of questionnaires and interviews were used at the very start, middle and end of the program as I wanted to "tap into the knowledge, opinions, ideas and experiences of [the] learners" (Wallace, 1998, p. 124).

Data Collection and Analysis

In this project, I support the view expressed in Merriam (1988) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) who contend that data collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process in qualitative research (Creswell, 1994, pp. 166-167). From the framing of the research questions, data collection and analysis is an ongoing process of classifying, coding, and categorizing raw data in order to look for tendencies and patterns.

In this study I used a combination of quantitative and qualitative data gathering and measurement techniques. Surveys and statistics go hand in hand, but given the individual, personal nature of this exploratory study, I needed to employ interpretative measures which are central to qualitative approaches to data analysis. Hubbard and Power (1993) describe careful data analysis as a way of "seeing and then seeing again. It is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the data, to discover what is underneath the surface of the classroom" (p. 65).

Initial Questionnaire

I gave out the initial questionnaire to all of the students just before the first class. I asked them to become participants in this research in order to make the current and future programs better in terms of being more responsive to students' needs and preferences, and improving the overall quality of the intensive course being provided by the university. I asked each teacher to briefly explain to the students how to complete the questionnaire in English. The students were given 40 minutes to complete and return it. The semantic level of the questionnaire (Behling & Law, 2000, p. 8) was fairly basic and clear so that all of the participants could understand the questions, and all 109 of the respondents completed the sections in English.

I chose to make the survey questionnaires identifiable by having students provide personal bio-data at the top. I felt that the students would answer more truthfully this way and by having identifiable questionnaires would allow for

selected follow-up interviews and analysis of learner diaries. As well as focusing students' attention on their learning processes and goals, the initial questionnaire also served to provide the IEP teachers with learner profiles of the students. I coded each student from #1 to #109 in order to facilitate accurate data analysis.

The closed-response questions were organized into three categories using a five-point Likert scale to elicit: 1) students' general attitudes towards studying English; 2) students' preferred classroom learning activities; and 3) students' expectations of the teachers, based on their previous language learning experiences. Responses ranged from (1) *not much* to (5) *very much* with the option of (3) *neutral*. To facilitate descriptive statistical analysis, I coded the closed responses to the questions and used the EXCEL spreadsheet to organize the results.

The nine closed-response questions were followed by open-ended questions to elicit statements about course goals, language learning needs and expectations of the course, as well as preferences for classroom activities. Open-ended responses are "not particularly amenable to statistical analysis" (Brown, 2001, p. 11) so I kept written records of the responses. To "clean up" (Rea & Parker, 1997, pp. 13-14) and manage the raw questionnaire data, I first summarized   students' responses, then listed clear categories and tallied the answers to measure frequency. I made notes and kept tallies by hand, then ranked the most commonly occurring answers such as students' reported need to "improve listening skills" and "conversation skills," in order to look for patterns in the range of open-ended responses.

Learner Diaries/E-mail

In the first class period, students were provided with a notebook and asked to keep a personal diary of their language learning experiences for each day of the course. The first task for students was to write their individual learning goals and expectations for the course in the diaries. The rationale was twofold: to have learners think about their immediate language goals, and to get the learners to reflect on their learning–to think metacognitively about their own learning styles (Oxford, cited in Reid, 1995, p. 219). Bailey (1990) argues that a language learning diary should be a personal account which can be analyzed "for recurring patterns or salient events" (p. 215). I obtained diary data from Intermediate C and my Intermediate B class. In the diaries from these two classes, most students stated that they expected to improve their overall English skills, while several expressed the desire to speak more English in class.

Reflecting the major theme of the selected movie *You've Got Mail*, I encouraged students to do short e-mail assignments in English involving self-introductions and movie scene summaries, which they e-mailed to their classmates and me so I could monitor their work and provide feedback. These language e-mail activities were a novelty for most of the students who seemed excited at trying this mode of communication in English. This successful first-time experience using e-mail in English greatly developed the learners' levels of confidence during the course. Some Intermediate C students sent diary entries by e-mail to me, and I replied to each one individually, while I received post-course e-mail as learners' feedback from some of my Intermediate B

students:

I experienced a very good time in this summer course. Because I thought

and spoke many things in English. (Student #22)

Speaking English and discussing in English were very difficult for me.

Sometimes I was very confused. But I think they are precious experiences.

(Student #27)

Interviews

After collecting and reading all the initial questionnaires at the end of the first day,

I arranged an interview schedule with a sample of students. Since I was teaching

the Intermediate B and C groups, these students formed a "convenience sample"

(Weiss, 1994) for interviews and allowed me to move from quantitative to

qualitative personal data collection and analysis. Given that I intended to conduct

interviews in English, I gave the students the four structured interview questions

two days prior to their scheduled interview. This allowed them time to think

about their progress and consider how to articulate their responses in English in

the interview situation. The interviews gave students an opportunity to talk about

their learning as well as providing oral data to supplement the initial written

questionnaire. The responses to the open-ended and follow-up interview

questions yielded varied data about students' feelings and reactions to the course

content and activities. I audiotaped each five-minute interview so that I could

transcribe the responses (Seidman, 1998). In survey research interviews are often

conducted sequentially after administering a questionnaire and can act as a "validity check" on the responses to questionnaire items (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 64). My purpose, however, was to use interviews as a follow-up instrument to give students an opportunity to freely answer specific questions about their own perceived progress and levels of satisfaction with the course. During these one-to-one structured interviews, I observed body language and facial expressions in reaction to some of the questions that accompanied their verbal responses. An essential characteristic of a good interview is "not good conversation but good data" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 81), which is why I stuck very closely to the following questions:

1. Is the movie *You've Got Mail* helping you learn English? In what ways?

2. What parts of this course are you enjoying the most?

3. What parts of this course don't you like?

4. Would you like to change anything about the course? If so, which parts?

In contrast to the questionnaires, the range of interview responses was not easily amenable to clear categorization. I listened to the audiotaped recordings, transcribed the variety of answers, and then organized them into a qualitative matrix to highlight the range of individual answers elicited in a structured interview situation.

Final Questionnaire

At the end of the course, I gave out the final questionnaire and students were given 40 minutes to complete and return it. The fact that 101 students completed the final survey meant that eight students had dropped out of the program. The closed-responses to Q1 on both questionnaires were collected, and then presented (see Figure 1). Likert scale questions Q2 to Q8 invited students to evaluate their levels of satisfaction with the course content and class activities. I categorized the responses to the ten open-ended questions to show the most commonly occurring answers. This questionnaire formed the final part of the data collection procedures and there were five open-ended questions which were designed to be paired with the initial questionnaire to qualitatively measure how much each student felt they had improved, and how effective the IEP was from the students' various language learning perspectives.

Results and Discussion

By conducting this survey, I found that students had differing learning styles, different learning expectations and different language goals in the IEP. At the start of the course, most students had high expectations of learning communicative English through movie-based materials. By the end of the course, however, this number had fallen. Half of the IEP students stated that they wanted to improve *speaking* skills and felt they had been successful by the end of the course. In the final questionnaire, 80% of the students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the program. Reasons for this high satisfaction rating were that

(1) 89 students (out of 101) said they liked learning by listening to the NS teachers talk; (2) the number of students who felt their listening skills had improved rose dramatically from 22 to 43; and (3) group discussions (75 students) and class discussions (67 students) were both rated highly by the end of the course. Speaking, discussions, role-plays, and listening were all highly valued activities which support the communicative nature of the program. The course movie *You've Got Mail* introduced students to the e-mail medium in English, and the results of the final survey show a dramatic increase from 21 to 79 students expressing an interest in using e-mail in English.

Students' responses on a scale from (1) not much to (5) very much to the general questions of how much they enjoy/enjoyed studying English *before* and *after* the course are presented in Figure 1. There is a dramatic rise on the positive end of the scale (5), with almost 80% of the students surveyed expressing strong positive feelings towards learning English at the end of the course. In the final questionnaire and interviews, many students said they "enjoyed" movie related activities in class. Other valued activities were role-plays, group and class discussions, and "conversation with classmates," thus supporting the view that communicative teaching methods for the IEP were successful.
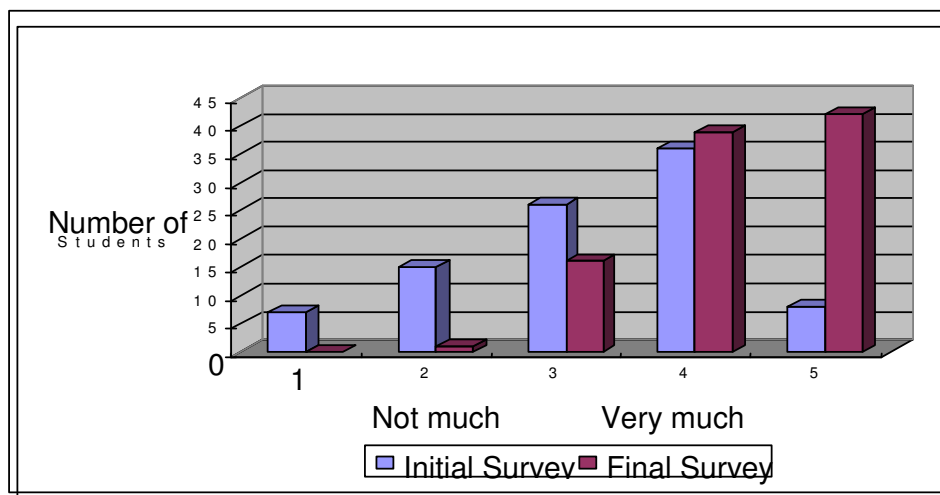
Figure1: *Feelings towards English*

Table 1 focuses on the students' learning preferences based on previous language learning experiences. This video-based course was at first pedagogically appropriate as 43 students said they liked learning by watching video movies in class. An early surprise for me as a teacher-researcher was that 83 out of 109 students answered that they liked to study by listening to the teachers talk. This response arguably reveals students' preference for a passive style of learning by listening to spoken models of English provided by their teachers in high school and university classes.

Table 1*: Classroom Learning Preferences before IEP*

Do you like to study English in class by…?

	1	2	3	4	5	mean	sd
Watching video movies	3	7	20	35	43	4	1.05
Group and class discussions	4	16	34	38	17	3.4	1.04
Role-play activities	4	17	36	35	17	3.4	1.04
Listening to teachers talk	1	3	22	48	35	4	0.85

Notes: n = 109

1)Not much   3)Neutral   5)Very much

Table 2 was designed to be paired with Table 1 for analysis. As revealed in some of the interviews (Appendix E), some students grew tired of the same movie each day, and perhaps movie related activities were repetitious which explains why the mean score for watching video movies in class fell slightly to 3.7 for *You've Got Mail*. Some of the students interviewed simply did not like the plot of *You've Got Mail*. Group and class discussions about the movie were clearly enjoyed by students. Pair work activities such as Q&A, information exchanges, quizzes had a high mean score of 4, which means these were considered enjoyable language practice exercises. My analysis reveals an interesting contradiction: even though group and class discussions were rated highly in the responses to the final questionnaire, 89 students still answered that they liked listening to the teachers talk, indicating a preference for a passive classroom learning style.

Table 2: *Classroom Learning Preferences after IEP*

Did you like studying English in class by…?

	1		2	3	4	5	mean	sd
Watching *You've Got Mail*	2		12	25	36	26	3.7	1.04
Group discussions	0	0	1	24	37	38	4.1	0.8
Class discussions	0	0	2	30	36	31	4	0.83
Worksheets about movie	8		17	39	25	12	3.2	1.09
Pair work activities	0		5	25	32	39	4	0.91
Role-play activities	2		3	30	30	35	3.9	0.97
Listening to teachers talk	0		2	10	36	53	4.4	0.74

Notes: n = 101

In Table 3, 45 students gave a neutral response to the need for the teachers to *explain grammar*. In this language program, students expected to be taught by native speakers following a communicative approach rather than a traditional grammar-based method. A high number of students (87) said they wanted their teachers to *correct* [their] *pronunciation*, which indicates that students felt they really needed to improve their speaking skills.

Table 3: *Learner Needs and Expectations*

I would like my teachers to…

	1	2	3	4	5	mean	Sd
Correct my pronunciation	0	4	18	44	43	4.2	0.83
Explain grammar	3	13	45	26	22	3.5	1.03
Game-style activities	2	7	28	37	38	3.9	0.99
Talk freely to students	4	7	35	32	31	3.7	1.06

Notes: n = 109

1)Not much   3)Neutral   5)Very much

Table 4 shows different skills students felt they had improved as a result of the IEP. Most of the students stated that they joined the program to improve their *speaking* and *listening* skills, which matches the university's official expectations. Also, 53 out of 101 students felt satisfied that their speaking ability had improved by the end of the course. At the beginning of the course, 22 students reported they wanted to improve their listening, and 43 students said they felt they had, which was a significant increase. This perceived improvement in listening can be attributed to the intensive nature of the course, which exposed students to communicative English methods by native speaker teachers (speaking only English) using authentic video materials. Feelings of improvement in *grammar* usage and *understanding* did not feature prominently in the responses to the final

survey.

Table 4:

What English skills do you need to improve the most?		What English skills do you think you improved the most?	
Speaking	55	Speaking	53
Listening	22	Listening	43
Pronunciation	13	Pronunciation	5
Vocabulary	10	Vocabulary	2
Grammar	6		
Understanding	5		
Overall skills	5	Overall skills	3

The survey results presented in Table 5 show that students' main expectation was to practice *speaking* in class. To improve listening was the expectation of 15 students, 12 students expected to enjoy English, while 11 expected to develop their English in general. However, by the end of the course, there was a clearer understanding among learners of language areas that they felt they had improved. Therefore, 30 students felt they had adequately learned speaking skills. A high number of 33 students said they enjoyed English during the program, which was a significant increase from 12 students at the start. In the final questionnaire, 14 students felt they had developed more confidence in using English. *English all day* was valued by 7 students, who felt they had benefited

from intensive English practice for 6 hours a day. Only 30 students (out of 101) in the final survey felt they had adequately practiced speaking during the course. A number of explanations for this were revealed to me in the interviews: "Project work. We speak Japanese most of the time" (Student #30), and "Change project work. I don't like the group work" (Student #36). Some students said they wanted smaller classes, and others expressed a desire for more situational and conversational style activities.

Table 5: *General Expectations and Overall Satisfaction*

What do you expect to learn from this summer course?		What did you learn from this summer course?	
Speaking	62	Speaking	30
Listening	15	Listening	19
Enjoy English	12	Enjoy English	33
English in general	11	English in general	10
Communication	5	Communication	2
Grammar	4	Confidence	14
Pronunciation	3	English all day	7
Making friends	3	Making friends	5

Table 6 shows students' use of e-mail. In the initial questionnaire, students were asked "How often do you use English for e-mail?" Only 21 students said they were regularly using e-mail in English, and 85 students said they were not

using e-mail in English at the start of the course. The final questionnaire asked students, "As a result of this course, are you interested in using e-mail in English?" There was a high positive response as 79 out of 101 students said they were interested, compared with 22 students who said they were not. The decision to use the authentic video material *You've Got Mail* and related e-mail activities clearly changed learners' attitudes and sparked an interest in using this medium in English.

Table 6: *Use of E-mail in English*

E-mail 1		E-mail 2	
Initial		Final	
Using	21	Interested	79
Not		Not	
using	85	interested	22

Conclusion and Implications for Further Research

In this research project, I sought to examine the students' attitudes, previous learning experiences, and expectations of their university's Intensive English Program (IEP). Nunan (1990) argues that the effectiveness of a program depends on the expectations of the learners, and if their language needs and perceptions of the learning process are not taken into account, there can be a "mismatch" of ideas between teachers and learners. By conducting this survey, I was able to monitor and then report on students' attitudes towards learning English, their

expectations, goals and linguistic performance. This study has shown that it is possible to conduct a meaningful survey in the target language without relying on translation, at variance with Nunan's (1989, p. 62; 1996, pp. 23-25) long-held view that questionnaires in surveys should be in the participants' native language.

Administering survey instruments in English from the very start of the course gave the learners the opportunity to think about their learning and to focus themselves in English, thereby raising learners' metacognitive awareness. Finding out students' needs and expectations, then conducting interviews and the final questionnaire provided me as a teacher-researcher with rich data to measure, through summative evaluation techniques, how effectively this particular IEP satisfied learner expectations. One of the main goals of this study was to measure and interpret levels of student satisfaction by combining statistical and qualitative approaches. An understanding of learners' beliefs about their learning is needed not just by teachers but by learners themselves. As Wenden (1986) puts it: "It is important that the students themselves be given opportunities to think about their learning process, so that they can become aware of their own beliefs and how these beliefs can influence what they do to learn" (pp. 3-19). By first conducting an ongoing subjective learner needs analysis and then a final questionnaire to elicit "effectiveness data" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, pp. 163-164), this survey gave all the IEP students ample opportunities to self-evaluate their own learning process, and then to finally evaluate and measure the success of the language program.

Brindley (1984) suggests that if programs are to be truly learner-centered,

teachers "need to canvass learners' expectations [even if they conflict with the wishes of the teacher] and be able to interpret their statements of need" (p. 95). An important outcome of involving learners in ongoing course development is that it increases the likelihood that the course will be perceived as relevant, and learners will gain a heightened awareness of their own linguistic preferences, strengths, and weaknesses. They will become more aware of what it is to be a learner and develop skills in "learning how to learn" (Nunan, 1988, p. 53).

With implications for future course design, the initial and final questionnaires present convenient means of focusing students' attention on their learning process as part of their overall language learning experience from the beginning to the end of the course. An initial needs analysis provides teachers with learner profiles, giving them information about learners' preferences which teachers can try to accommodate when selecting materials and classroom activities. Questionnaires and interviews also give program teachers feedback on students' progress and whether changes in classroom activities and course content need to be made. Therefore, the intensive English program's *process* and *product* should be viewed along a continuum as integrated parts of an educational whole.

This study has shown that in the absence of final achievement tests, measuring the effectiveness of a language program from the clients' perspectives can lie in summative evaluation, comparing students' comments in the initial and final questionnaires as to how they participated in it, their perceptions of it, and what they felt they learned most from the program (Weir and Roberts, 1994, p. 5 cited in Richards, 2001, p. 287). Clearly a variety of objective and subjective

factors overlap in designing and teaching an educational program. The results of

this exploratory survey offer evidence to support the belief that "learning is

enhanced when students are actively involved in selecting content, learning tasks,

and evaluation" (Heath, 1992, pp. 40-55).

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