What students really want to learn from the course? A case of students learning English for Academic Purposes

Watanabe Yoshinori

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present article is to share one of the findings that came from the process of developing the curriculum for a course in English for Academic Purposes. The course has already been implemented in the 2010 academic year as a university-wide course with the financial assistance of the Educational Innovation Program of Sophia University. The Academic English Program (or EAP) aims to cater to the needs of students who wish to pursue more than the general education foreign language requirements in English as a foreign language. In fact, to improve their academic English proficiency, a small number of these students choose to take courses offered in the Department of English Studies, the Department of English Literature, or the Faculty of Liberal Arts. However, the number of such students is very small, and moreover, it is not easy for non-English majors to take these courses because they were not originally designed for these students.

The EAP courses are intended to provide such students with academically oriented English courses beyond the courses presently overseen by the Center for the Teaching of Foreign Languages in General Education. These courses first train students in basic skills of the use of academic English (Academic English I), and, second, offer students content-based English courses that teach academic subjects in English (Academic English II). The former aim is met by offering the so-called EAP (English for Academic Purposes) courses, while the latter by offering the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) courses. By taking these two-tier courses, students are expected to

develop knowledge and skills to master academic English and to deepen their knowledge in the chosen content area of an academic discipline and topic.

It has long been felt that it is imperative to provide students as many opportunities as possible to take such courses; it was not necessarily clear as to the content and the type of courses that should be taught. The *needs* were relatively clear and agreed upon among the project members of this new language program, but the *wants* were not so clear. Given the purpose and the goals of each, it was necessary to know if there are students who wish to enroll in such courses if they were to be offered, and, if there is a substantial number of such students, what each course should offer. These are the purposes of carrying out the 'wants' questionnaire prior to carrying out a formal 'needs' analysis, which should employ a variety of forms, including: document analysis, observations, interviews, and so forth (e.g. Long, 2005; Nation and Malacaster, 2010).

The purpose of the research was simply to inquire rather than to generate hypotheses, not to mention to test any specific hypothesis. What the present paper will do is even less ambitious: that is, from the variety of information that was used to implement the academic English program, only that which will be useful for those readers who might be interested in what the students of our university expect to learn from the language program will be emphasized. Though the present paper focuses on teaching English for academic purposes, it is hoped that the content is serviceable to any faculty, as it will help inform instructors about what language skills students feel confident in, what sub-skills they expect to develop at university, and what topics they wish to focus on in the courses to be offered in the language program.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

In the search for respondents, an attempt was made to gather

as broad a sample as possible from a wide range of departments in all six Faculties. Nevertheless, it was decided not to include those students who major in English-related fields, including the students of the Department of English Studies, the Department of English Literature, and the Faculty of Liberal Arts, because it was deemed that the responses from those students would not provide us with an accurate picture of the opinions that the students of the university as a whole would hold. Excepting the above, ultimately, we decided to ask first-year students who enroll in English courses offered through the Center for Foreign Languages. Among those students, the students who were enrolled in Intermediate and Advanced Levels were chosen as respondents with the expectation that they would represent "typical" views about foreign language learning at Sophia University. As a result, a total of 540 students took part in the present research (377 Intermediate Level and 163 Advanced level). The figure represents approximately ten percent of the total number of first-year students.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire consisted of a total of 30 items. Eight items were intended to examine the level of respondents' confidence in major skills of English, including: overall proficiency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, reading, listening, writing and speaking. The second set of items also consisted of eight items which were prepared to elicit topics students would be interested in if topic-based courses were offered, such as CLIL. The topics and content that were included were chosen from those which could be usefully offered at the university, taking into account the availability of academic staff: that is, theology, literature, human science, law, economics, foreign studies, natural science and academic English in general. The third set of items concerned sub-skills, including: reading fluency, critical reading skills, note-taking skills, essay writing, discussion, presentation, debate, library search, web search, and practice in using a variety of

information technology. The remaining three items were designed to gather information about students' backgrounds as well as their general opinions about the academic courses that would be offered. The instrument was provided, along with a summary of the purpose of the courses we were preparing to offer, in the form of a diagram representing the overall structure of the course and a description, in words, about the purpose and the specification of the course, so the students might have clear ideas about the purpose of the questionnaire.

Students were asked to respond to each item by filling in the appropriate oval of the mark-sheet card from five options: 4 indicating 'almost always true of me', 3 'sometimes true of me', 2 'rarely true of me', and 1 'never true of me.' 0 was available as an option indicating 'I have no idea.'

Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed in early May 2009, approximately one month after the new academic year had started. The timing was purposely chosen: though we sought 'fresh' perceptions about the ideal course from students, an earlier distribution would disrupt courses, just as a later distribution would not suit our purposes. The questionnaire was administered during the first 20 minutes of a 90-minute regular session within the general English curriculum with the cooperation of individual teachers. In order to guarantee reliability and fairness, guidelines for administration were prepared and handed out to instructors, and clarifications were to be made before the administration, though there were no such cases. Respondents were asked to fill in the mark-sheet card, so the results could be processed by machine.

Data Analysis

After whole data sets were compiled, two research assistants were asked to transfer the data onto Microsoft EXCEL 2007. The open-

ended part of the questionnaire was also independently compiled with the cooperation of the two assistants on Microsoft Word 2007. For the present research, the numerical data will be dealt with. The numerical data were analyzed for each department, including basic statistics (the mean and the standard deviation). Subsequently, a simple inferential analysis (i.e., Kruskal-Wallis) was carried out by SPSS (version 17.0) to examine if there were any differences in responses between departments and faculties.

Results and Discussion

The entire results are provided in Tables 1 to 6. The present section presents and discusses the findings, in order, according to the tables, with subheadings prepared accordingly in order below. Note again that the purpose of the present section is not to argue, nor to report on the results of the hypothesis testing. But rather, it is meant to share findings that might be interesting to the Faculty of Foreign Studies.

Confidence Rating

The results of the analysis regarding the level of students' confidence in English skills are shown in Table 1. Table 2 shows the result of the statistical analysis, which was conducted to examine whether there were any significant differences in responses between different departments and faculties. Not surprisingly, the general tendencies were that students were geared towards 'true of me', with values above 3.00. However, there are two things that should be noted. First, the value of the confidence rating for 'reading' seems to be relatively lower than may be expected. It has been commonplace to claim that Japanese students are good at writing skills but not oral skills, or in receptive skills over productive skills. But the present result seems to indicate the contrary: that is, overall, students reported being more confident in listening (M = 3.375) than in reading (M = 2.891), and more confident in oral/aural skills, including speaking and listening (M = 3.590), than

Table 1.

Confidence rating about language skills reported by the respondents enrolled in general education language program

Faculty of Humanities		Proficiency	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunc.	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
Philosophy	M	3.375	3.500	2.857	3.500	2.625	3.714	3.000	3.750
(N = 8)	SD	0.518	0.535	1.069	0.756	0.744	0.488	0.756	0.707
History	M	3.542	3.375	3.167	3.478	2.958	3.625	3.375	3.652
(N = 24)	SD	0.588	0.770	0.816	0.665	0.751	0.495	0.647	0.573
Japanese	M	3.438	3.438	2.938	3.750	2.733	3.750	3.250	3.875
(N = 16)	SD	0.512	0.629	0.680	0.447	0.799	0.447	0.683	0.342
German	M	3.385	3.400	3.080	3.560	3.087	3.538	3.269	3.731
(N = 26)	SD	0.804	0.764	0.812	0.651	0.848	0.811	0.667	0.604
French	M	3.471	3.294	3.313	3.200	2.875	2.800	3.235	3.214
(N = 17)	SD	0.717	0.849	0.873	0.775	0.719	0.775	0.752	0.893
Journalism	M	3.167	3.250	3.000	3.167	2.913	3.045	2.958	3.458
(N = 25)	SD	0.963	0.676	0.953	0.761	0.793	1.046	0.690	0.721
Faculty	M	3.391	3.360	3.081	3.432	2.908	3.400	3.200	3.613
Total	SD	0.734	0.718	0.844	0.696	0.776	0.804	0.691	0.663
Faculty of Law									
Law	M	3.474	3.218	3.019	3.368	2.909	3.375	3.339	3.618
(N = 57)	SD	0.658	0.809	0.765	0.794	0.823	0.799	0.721	0.652
Int Legal	M	3.600	3.267	2.690	3.536	2.815	3.367	3.345	3.793
(N = 30)	SD	0.498	0.785	0.761	0.744	0.786	0.765	0.721	0.412
Glob. environmt	M	3.448	2.966	3.259	3.483	2.778	3.630	3.321	3.793
(N = 29)	SD	0.506	0.731	0.764	0.634	0.751	0.629	0.612	0.412
Faculty	M	3.500	3.167	2.991	3.439	2.853	3.434	3.336	3.708
Total	SD	0.582	0.786	0.784	0.741	0.791	0.754	0.689	0.546
Faculty of Economics									
Economics	M	3.388	3.163	2.822	3.200	2.795	3.273	3.083	3.447
(N = 49)	SD	0.671	0.657	0.716	0.894	0.734	0.788	0.739	0.829
Management	M	3.422	3.159	2.953	3.500	2.780	3.333	3.140	3.568
(N = 45)	SD	0.657	0.745	0.785	0.716	0.725	0.816	0.743	0.661
Faculty	M	3.404	3.161	2.886	3.341	2.788	3.302	3.110	3.505
Total	SD	0.661	0.696	0.749	0.825	0.725	0.798	0.737	0.751

Note. 4 = most confident, 1 = least confident, 0 = can't decide

in written skills, including reading and writing (M = 3.242). However, it was also found that there seemed to be differences in the confidence rating of speaking and listening between departments: Table 2 shows that there were statistically significant differences in listening (χ^2= 46.258; p = .003), and in speaking (χ^2= 42.105; p = .009), whereas there were no significant differences in reading (χ^2=15.767; p = .865) or in writing (χ^2= 32.009; p = .100).

Table 1. (continued)

Confidence rating about language skills reported by the students enrolled in general education language program

		Proficiency	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunc.	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
Faculty of Foreign Studies									
German	M	3.833	3.667	3.333	3.727	3.182	3.636	3.500	3.583
(N = 12)	SD	0.389	0.492	0.651	0.467	0.751	0.674	0.798	0.669
French	M	3.438	3.438	2.875	3.083	2.929	2.929	2.625	3.063
(N = 16)	SD	0.512	0.727	0.806	0.793	0.616	0.730	0.806	0.680
Hispanic	M	3.667	3.267	2.929	3.500	2.786	3.133	3.400	3.600
(N = 15)	SD	0.488	0.704	0.616	0.650	0.802	0.834	0.737	0.632
Russian	M	3.875	3.375	3.000	3.500	3.286	3.750	3.667	3.750
(N = 8)	SD	0.354	0.744	0.894	0.756	0.756	0.707	0.516	0.707
Luso-Brazilian	M	3.563	3.500	3.438	3.000	3.200	3.133	3.250	3.125
(N = 16)	SD	0.512	0.516	0.629	0.679	0.676	0.640	0.577	0.719
Faculty	M	3.642	3.448	3.125	3.339	3.049	3.254	3.215	3.373
Total	SD	0.483	0.634	0.724	0.710	0.717	0.761	0.780	0.714
Faculty of Science & Technology									
Material & life scis	M	3.211	3.105	3.053	3.222	2.688	3.357	3.158	3.500
(N = 19)	SD	0.713	0.809	0.848	0.808	0.946	0.745	0.765	0.618
Engineering	M	3.350	3.381	3.238	3.053	2.800	3.111	2.950	3.632
(N = 21)	SD	0.671	0.669	0.768	0.780	0.834	0.832	0.826	0.597
Information	M	3.474	3.297	3.108	3.500	2.886	3.441	3.286	3.629
(N = 38)	SD	0.557	0.702	0.774	0.697	0.796	0.705	0.825	0.547
Faculty	M	3.377	3.273	3.130	3.315	2.817	3.333	3.162	3.597
Total	SD	0.629	0.719	0.784	0.762	0.833	0.751	0.811	0.573
Faculty of Human Sciences									
Education	M	3.647	3.706	3.412	3.500	2.882	3.813	3.471	3.647
(N = 17)	SD	0.493	0.470	0.712	0.730	1.054	0.544	0.717	0.702
Psychology	M	3.556	3.556	3.000	3.375	2.875	3.333	3.222	3.556
(N = 11)	SD	0.527	0.527	0.756	0.916	0.641	0.707	0.667	0.726
Sociology	M	3.455	3.391	3.130	3.348	3.045	3.174	3.318	3.478
(N = 9)	SD	0.596	0.722	0.869	0.775	0.844	0.834	0.646	0.593
Social Welfare	M	3.583	3.636	3.417	3.167	3.000	3.417	3.417	3.833
(N = 23)	SD	0.515	0.505	0.669	0.835	0.775	0.793	0.793	0.389
Faculty	M	3.559	3.483	3.224	3.431	2.897	3.424	3.362	3.567
Total	SD	0.534	0.651	0.796	0.752	0.872	0.747	0.667	0.647
Faculty of Theology									
Theology	M	3.583	3.636	3.417	3.167	3.000	3.417	3.417	3.833
(N = 12)	SD	0.515	0.505	0.669	0.835	0.775	0.793	0.793	0.389

Note. 4 = most confident, 1 = least confident, 0 = can't decide

Table 2.

Non-parametric analyses testing the differences in confidence rating between departments and faculties in total

		Proficiency	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunc.	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
Total	M	3.477	3.311	3.073	3.394	2.891	3.375	3.242	3.590
	SD	0.654	0.744	0.805	0.774	0.815	0.787	0.758	0.678
Kruskal-Wallis	χ^2	21.952	29.074	32.013	29.970	15.767	46.258	32.009	42.105
By department	*p*	.523	.178	.100	.150	.865	.003	.100	.009
Kruskal-Wallis	χ^2	10.868	19.952	13.593	3.851	5.757	4.752	9.210	14.178
By faculty	*p*	.093	.003	.035	.697	.451	.576	.162	.028

Note. df = 23 for department. df = 6 for faculty.

The second tendency that should be pointed out is that there were statistically significant differences in Vocabulary (M = 3.311, SD = 0.654, χ^2=29.074; p = .003) and Grammar (M = 3.073, SD = .0.805, χ^2=32.013; p = .035). In the absence of any other hard data, it is not possible to explore or even speculate on the reason for this result. Nevertheless, it may be important to remind ourselves that students from different departments may need different types of instruction to usefully learn to overcome weaknesses.

Subject Areas Students Reported Being Interested in

The results of the questionnaire exploring the issue of what subject areas students would be interested in are given in Tables 3 and 4. Perhaps it is most notable in examining the tables, particularly Table 4, that, in most of the areas, there were significant differences between departments and faculties as well. This finding may not be so surprising, because students of different Departments and different Faculties opted to enroll in those areas according to their own interests, which logically differ. However, it may be surprising when examining Table 3 closely that the departments and the subject areas do not necessarily match. For example, students of Science & Technology did not necessarily rate highly in the area of 'natural science' (M = 2.179; SD = 1.016). But, instead, the students of this Faculty overall reported

being interested in 'theology' the most (M = 3.539; SD = 0.916). On the contrary, students of the Faculty of Theology were reportedly interested in learning Natural Science in English the most (M = 3.167; SD = 1.642). It may be interesting to recognize that this type of incongruence between the students' major fields of study and the subject areas they reported wishing to learn in English is a rule rather than exception. This result may indicate that the university should take into account the content and topics that students are interested in, without taking it for granted that there is a correspondence between Faculty/Department and academic English topics of interest.

Table 3.

Content and topics the students reported being interested in for Academic English courses

Humanities		Theology	Literature	Human Science	Law	Economics	Foreign Studies	Natural Science	Academic English
Philosophy	M	3.000	2.000	2.667	2.875	2.375	2.375	3.000	2.125
(N = 8)	SD	1.512	1.265	1.506	1.553	1.506	1.506	1.414	0.991
History	M	3.696	2.267	2.800	3.333	3.083	2.750	3.500	2.250
(N = 24)	SD	0.559	0.961	1.281	0.963	1.213	1.189	0.978	1.113
Japanese	M	3.313	2.615	2.500	3.625	3.500	3.375	3.500	2.625
(N = 16)	SD	0.793	0.870	1.095	0.500	0.816	0.719	0.730	0.719
German	M	3.583	2.650	2.955	2.923	2.885	2.769	3.577	2.192
(N = 26)	SD	0.717	0.813	0.844	0.977	1.033	1.107	0.643	1.096
French	M	3.286	2.364	2.846	3.294	3.412	2.059	3.706	1.941
(N = 17)	SD	0.914	0.674	0.899	0.849	1.121	0.966	0.772	0.966
Journalism	M	2.750	1.722	2.087	2.360	2.440	2.200	3.120	1.840
(N = 25)	SD	1.622	1.406	1.474	1.497	1.557	1.555	1.453	1.313
Faculty	M	3.303	2.289	2.620	3.034	2.957	2.595	3.431	2.147
Total	SD	1.093	1.054	1.204	1.149	1.261	1.251	1.023	1.090
Law									
Law	M	3.339	3.000	2.927	2.140	2.825	2.614	3.439	2.018
(N = 57)	SD	0.920	1.099	0.997	1.172	1.104	1.161	0.964	1.026
Int Legal	M	3.517	3.250	3.138	2.167	2.467	2.900	3.533	2.167
(N = 30)	SD	1.122	1.076	1.026	1.262	1.306	1.125	1.196	1.053
Glob. Env.	M	3.250	3.000	2.778	2.207	2.448	2.483	3.241	2.103
(N = 29)	SD	1.175	1.216	1.188	1.082	1.183	1.243	1.185	0.939
Faculty	M	3.363	3.066	2.946	2.164	2.638	2.655	3.414	2.078
Total	SD	1.036	1.115	1.052	1.164	1.182	1.173	1.080	1.006
Economics									
Economics	M	3.574	3.298	3.182	2.771	1.714	2.510	3.367	2.082
(N = 49)	SD	0.927	0.976	1.084	1.134	0.913	1.227	1.035	0.975
Management	M	3.442	3.238	2.952	2.711	1.978	2.800	3.311	2.200
(N = 45)	SD	1.119	1.144	1.188	1.308	1.138	1.290	1.184	1.036
Faculty	M	3.511	3.270	3.070	2.742	1.840	2.649	3.340	2.138
Total	SD	1.019	1.053	1.135	1.215	1.030	1.259	1.103	1.001

Note. 4 = most interesting, 1 = least interesting, 0 = can't decide

Table 3. (continued)

Content and topics the students reported being interested in for Academic English courses

Foreign Studies		Theology	Literature	Human Science	Law	Economic	Foreign Studies	Natural Science	Academ. English
German	M	2.917	2.250	2.545	2.500	2.500	1.750	2.833	2.250
(N = 12)	SD	1.443	1.055	1.293	1.382	1.446	1.215	1.267	0.965
French	M	3.438	3.000	2.846	2.688	2.688	1.938	3.500	1.938
(N = 16)	SD	0.727	0.784	0.801	0.873	1.014	0.929	0.632	1.124
Hispanic	M	3.067	2.467	2.214	3.000	2.600	1.867	3.533	1.800
(N = 15)	SD	1.223	0.915	0.893	1.195	0.986	0.640	1.060	0.941
Russian	M	3.375	3.714	2.667	3.000	2.250	2.625	3.375	1.625
(N = 8)	SD	1.408	0.756	1.633	0.926	1.389	1.598	1.408	1.188
Luso-Brazilian	M	3.333	2.800	2.867	3.000	3.000	1.813	3.375	1.750
(N = 16)	SD	1.175	1.207	1.187	1.211	1.211	0.911	1.088	1.125
Faculty	M	3.227	2.762	2.627	2.836	2.657	1.940	3.343	1.881
Total	SD	1.161	1.043	1.113	1.123	1.175	1.028	1.067	1.052
Science & Technology									
Material & life scis	M	3.632	3.500	3.474	3.421	3.158	2.947	2.158	2.421
(N = 19)	SD	0.684	0.786	0.772	0.902	1.015	1.129	0.958	0.961
Engineering	M	3.476	3.316	3.381	3.190	3.000	2.762	2.095	2.286
(N = 21)	SD	0.981	1.057	0.921	1.123	1.183	1.136	1.136	1.056
Information	M	3.528	3.286	3.382	3.162	2.579	2.974	2.237	2.605
(N = 38)	SD	1.000	1.073	1.074	1.191	1.130	1.150	0.998	1.001
Faculty	M	3.539	3.347	3.405	3.234	2.833	2.910	2.179	2.474
Total	SD	0.916	0.995	0.950	1.099	1.133	1.130	1.016	1.003
Human Sciences									
Education	M	3.235	2.938	2.250	3.235	3.176	2.765	3.706	1.765
(N = 17)	SD	1.200	0.854	1.055	0.970	1.015	0.903	0.686	1.200
Psychology	M	3.636	3.100	2.833	3.182	3.364	3.545	3.364	1.818
(N = 11)	SD	0.505	0.876	0.983	0.751	0.809	0.688	0.924	0.982
Sociology	M	3.750	3.000	2.667	2.556	2.667	2.778	3.667	1.667
(N = 9)	SD	0.463	1.000	1.155	1.236	1.225	0.833	0.707	0.866
Social Welfare	M	3.286	2.842	2.176	3.130	3.348	3.087	3.696	2.043
(N = 23)	SD	1.007	1.015	0.393	1.014	0.832	0.949	0.470	0.825
Faculty	M	3.404	2.942	2.342	3.083	3.200	3.033	3.633	1.867
Total	SD	0.942	0.916	0.815	0.996	0.953	0.901	0.663	0.965
Theology									
Theology	M	2.636	1.900	2.333	2.583	2.917	2.583	3.167	2.333
(N = 12)	SD	0.809	1.197	1.435	1.676	1.443	1.505	1.642	1.155

Note. 4 = most interesting, 1 = least interesting, 0 = can't decide

Table 4.

Non-parametric analyses testing the differences in the degree of interest in content and topics between departments and faculties in total

		Theology	Literature	Human Science	Law	Economics	Foreign Studies	Natural Science	Academic English
Total	M	3.382	2.939	2.875	2.806	2.676	2.640	3.246	2.129
	SD	1.055	1.118	1.135	1.223	1.237	1.216	1.141	1.068
Kruskal-Wallis	χ^2	31.221	84.288	63.688	72.901	91.125	60.109	104.937	31.996
By department	*p*	.117	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.100
Kruskal-Wallis	χ^2	17.521	67.521	49.394	55.445	68.432	34.999	94.229	17.726
By faculty	*p*	.008	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.007

Note. df = 23 for department. df = 6 for faculty.

Sub-Skills Students Wish to Develop

The types of sub-skills students wish to develop through Academic English courses are found in Tables 5 and 6. It should be noted that the values shown in Table 5 are relatively low compared to those in the previous tables. This may be because the students, who had studied only one month after entering the university, might not have understood in concrete terms what each category means. Or they might not have strongly felt it necessary to learn to develop skills such as reading fluently, critical reading, essay writing, and other sub-skills, even though these sub-skills are very important for them to develop to survive the upcoming academic years. Among those skills, the rate was relatively high in library search skills (M =3.064; SD = 1.050), not being statistically significant or different (χ^2= 19.096; p = .696 for department; χ^2= 4.663; p = .588 for faculty). This option, in fact, has already been implemented in the university program by the library for first-year students. The present result reconfirms the importance of that program.

Table 5.

Sub-skills students wish to develop in Academic English courses

Humanities		Reading fluency	Critical reading	Note-taking	Essay	Discuss.	Present.	Debate	Library search	Web search	Infor. tech
Philosophy	M	1.750	2.125	2.125	2.250	1.875	2.000	1.875	2.750	2.500	2.875
(N = 8)	SD	0.886	0.835	0.835	1.035	0.641	1.069	0.835	1.035	0.926	0.835
History	M	2.000	2.083	2.500	2.417	2.000	1.958	2.083	2.750	2.542	2.375
(N = 24)	SD	1.142	1.060	1.180	1.139	1.103	1.083	1.100	1.152	1.179	1.173
Japanese	M	2.500	2.875	2.500	2.875	3.063	3.000	3.125	3.000	2.938	2.933
(N = 16)	SD	0.730	0.719	0.966	0.957	0.854	0.816	0.806	0.816	0.929	0.884
German	M	2.346	2.538	2.923	2.308	2.385	2.385	2.423	3.231	3.038	2.870
(N = 26)	SD	1.056	0.989	0.796	1.087	1.098	1.134	1.102	0.908	0.958	1.100
French	M	2.588	2.412	2.294	2.059	2.059	2.059	2.412	3.000	2.353	2.294
(N = 17)	SD	1.121	1.176	1.213	1.144	1.144	1.088	0.870	1.000	1.057	1.160
Journalism	M	1.920	2.160	2.480	2.208	2.200	2.240	2.200	2.720	2.440	2.250
(N = 25)	SD	1.222	1.405	1.327	1.285	1.414	1.422	1.500	1.487	1.474	1.452
Faculty	M	2.198	2.362	2.534	2.348	2.276	2.276	2.362	2.922	2.655	2.550
total	SD	1.089	1.106	1.099	1.132	1.162	1.169	1.153	1.112	1.150	1.181
Law											
Law	M	1.895	2.070	2.474	2.158	2.035	2.000	2.123	2.982	2.839	2.600
(N = 57)	SD	0.880	0.961	0.947	0.996	0.999	1.000	1.119	1.094	1.108	1.011
Int Legal	M	2.100	2.433	2.533	2.167	1.967	1.900	2.067	3.433	2.833	2.759
(N = 30)	SD	0.923	0.971	1.106	0.986	1.066	1.062	1.112	0.858	1.053	1.123
Glob. environmt	M	1.897	2.483	2.724	2.621	2.138	2.172	2.172	3.276	3.034	2.828
(N = 29)	SD	0.900	0.911	0.882	0.979	0.833	0.928	1.002	0.996	0.944	1.002
Faculty	M	1.948	2.267	2.552	2.276	2.043	2.017	2.121	3.172	2.887	2.699
total	SD	0.893	0.963	0.972	1.001	0.973	0.995	1.081	1.024	1.049	1.034
Economics											
Economics	M	1.816	1.980	2.408	2.163	2.000	2.041	2.122	3.102	2.796	2.551
(N = 49)	SD	1.014	1.010	1.079	1.048	1.000	1.079	1.013	0.984	1.118	1.156
Manage	M	1.956	2.378	2.400	2.156	2.067	1.978	2.289	3.067	2.822	2.533
(N = 45)	SD	0.928	1.093	1.074	1.065	1.053	0.988	1.058	1.074	1.114	1.236
Faculty	M	1.883	2.170	2.404	2.160	2.032	2.011	2.202	3.085	2.809	2.543
total	SD	0.971	1.064	1.071	1.050	1.021	1.032	1.033	1.023	1.110	1.188

Note. 4 = want to develop the most, 1 = want to develop the least, 0 = can't decide

Table 5. (continued)

Sub-skills students wish to develop in Academic English courses

Foreign Studies		Reading fluency	Critical reading	Note-taking	Essay	Discuss.	Present.	Debate	Library search	Web search	Infor. tech
German	M	2.250	2.500	2.583	2.083	2.500	2.583	2.500	2.917	2.667	2.333
(N = 12)	SD	0.965	0.905	0.900	0.996	0.905	0.900	0.905	1.311	1.435	1.371
French	M	1.750	2.000	2.250	1.875	1.875	1.750	1.938	2.688	2.688	2.188
(N = 16)	SD	1.065	0.966	1.065	1.088	1.088	0.931	1.063	0.946	1.014	0.911
Hispanic	M	2.200	2.333	2.533	1.800	2.000	1.867	2.133	3.200	2.933	2.800
(N = 15)	SD	0.862	0.976	0.990	0.676	1.000	0.915	1.060	0.862	0.884	0.775
Russian	M	2.500	2.750	2.875	2.750	2.000	2.125	2.000	3.375	3.125	2.750
(N = 8)	SD	1.069	1.165	1.126	1.282	1.195	1.126	1.195	0.744	0.991	1.165
Luso-Brazil.	M	2.250	2.438	2.813	2.188	1.875	1.875	1.875	3.000	2.500	2.357
(N = 16)	SD	1.183	0.814	1.047	0.834	1.025	1.025	1.088	1.095	1.366	1.151
Faculty	M	2.149	2.358	2.582	2.075	2.030	2.000	2.075	3.000	2.746	2.462
total	SD	1.034	0.949	1.017	0.974	1.029	0.985	1.049	1.015	1.146	1.062

Science & Technology											
Material & life scis	M	2.158	2.421	2.611	2.474	2.211	2.158	2.263	3.053	3.053	3.105
(N = 19)	SD	0.958	1.017	1.145	1.124	1.032	0.898	0.933	0.911	1.026	0.994
Engineering	M	1.857	2.333	2.238	2.190	1.952	1.905	2.095	2.905	2.619	2.524
(N = 21)	SD	0.910	1.065	1.136	1.250	0.973	0.995	0.944	1.091	1.117	1.078
Information	M	2.289	2.579	2.395	2.526	2.368	2.184	2.421	3.053	2.684	2.342
(N = 38)	SD	0.984	0.976	1.054	1.033	0.883	0.955	0.858	1.114	1.068	0.994
Faculty	M	2.141	2.474	2.403	2.423	2.218	2.103	2.295	3.013	2.756	2.577
total	SD	0.963	1.003	1.091	1.111	0.949	0.948	0.899	1.051	1.071	1.051
Human Sciences											
Education	M	2.176	2.412	2.412	1.882	1.765	1.824	2.118	3.353	2.824	2.600
(N = 17)	SD	0.809	0.939	1.176	1.054	0.903	1.015	0.928	0.931	1.131	0.986
Psychology	M	2.091	2.455	2.636	2.182	2.091	2.000	2.636	3.182	3.000	2.636
(N = 11)	SD	1.136	1.036	1.120	0.874	1.136	0.894	1.206	0.874	1.095	1.206
Sociology	M	1.778	1.556	2.444	1.778	1.667	1.667	1.556	3.333	3.222	3.000
(N = 9)	SD	0.833	0.726	1.130	0.833	0.866	0.866	0.726	1.000	1.093	1.000
Social Welfare	M	2.130	2.435	2.522	2.217	1.913	2.000	2.087	2.913	2.609	2.609
(N = 23)	SD	0.815	0.896	1.039	0.850	0.793	0.798	0.848	0.900	1.118	0.891
Faculty	M	2.083	2.300	2.500	2.050	1.867	1.900	2.117	3.150	2.833	2.672
total	SD	0.869	0.944	1.081	0.910	0.892	0.877	0.958	0.917	1.107	0.980
Theology											
Theology	M	2.417	2.750	2.333	2.333	2.917	2.583	2.917	3.083	2.417	2.583
(N = 12)	SD	1.084	0.965	1.073	0.888	1.084	1.084	0.996	0.793	0.669	0.996

Note. 4 = want to develop the most, 1 = want to develop the least, 0 = can't decide

Table 6.

Non-parametric analyses testing the differences in the degree of priority on the academic sub-skills to develop between departments and faculties in total

		Reading fluency	Critical reading	Note-tak	Essay	Discuss.	Presen.	Debate	Library search	Web search	Infor. tech
Total	M	2.079	2.336	2.505	2.254	2.125	2.092	2.233	3.064	2.781	2.598
	SD	1.015	1.044	1.076	1.070	1.061	1.058	1.078	1.050	1.118	1.115
Kruskal-Wallis	χ^2	28.896	32.740	13.850	27.321	37.061	32.094	35.237	19.096	18.013	21.745
By department	*p*	.184	.086	.931	.243	.032	.098	.049	.696	.757	.536
Kruskal-Wallis	χ^2	9.487	6.790	2.425	8.360	14.482	9.409	11.402	4.663	5.220	2.931
By faculty	*p*	.148	.341	.877	.213	.025	.152	.077	.588	.516	.817

Note. df = 23 for department. df = 6 for faculty.

Another finding that may merit discussion is that there were differences between departments and faculties in the degree of interest in oral skills, including discussion (M = 2.125, SD = 1.061, χ^2= 37.061; p = .032) department; (χ^2= 14.482; p = .025), and debate (M = 2.233, SD = 1.0784, χ^2= 35.237; p = .049). Despite these findings, overall, it may remain important to give students the opportunity to understand the

importance of developing sub-skills, or metacognitive skills.

CONCLUSION

The present paper reported on the by-products of a type of needs analysis, which was conducted among the students of Sophia University, in order to gather information to develop a curriculum for Academic English. The data were analyzed to examine overall tendencies, with the expectation to gather information that is useful for any language instructor. As a result of the analysis, the following findings were made. First, students seem to be confident in their oral/aural skills rather than written skills; particularly, they seem to be less confident in reading. Second, student interest in topics varies greatly: interestingly, there is not any close relationship between their major fields of study on the one hand and their expressed interest. Third, students seem to be less interested in developing sub-skills, such as speed reading, note-taking, and so forth, which are definitely important skills for them to develop. All these findings seem to offer a number of important suggestions for curriculum developers, in general, and those of academic language courses, in particular. Among many options, it is important to carefully design a curriculum and individual syllabi by taking into account what students would like to study in university courses. However, this does not mean that the university should readily accept whatever students request at face value. But rather, it may mean that the university should find out where student weaknesses lie and discuss how to support their making improvements in order for students to spend their subsequent years at university usefully.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My special thanks are due to Professor Shinichi Izumi (Faculty of English Studies), Professor Makoto Ikeda (Faculty of English Literature) and Mr. Toshiharu Endo (Office of General Affairs). In fact, the entire course was develped, organized and run by these

colleagues, along with the present author. My thanks should also go to the following people: Miss Tomoyo Okuda and Miss Ying Hua Eva Cheng, who devoted so much time to compile a large amount of data, Professor Al Lehner (Akita International University), for his comments on the original manuscript, and the teaching staff of the Center for Foreign Languages, particularly those who assisted in conducting the questionnaire.

REFERENCES

Nation, I. S. P., & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language curriculum design*. New York: Routledge.

Long, M. H. (2005). Methodological issues in learner needs analysis. In M. H. Long (Ed.) *Second language needs analysis*. (pp. 19 – 76). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.