



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

Department of English
Centre for English Language Studies

Open Distance Learning MA TEFL/TESL/Applied Linguistics/ Translation Studies

Name	<i>Alex Small</i>
Student id number	<i>821917</i>
Country where registered	<i>Japan</i>
Dissertation title	<i>An Analysis of the Subjective Needs of Japanese High School Learners</i>
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Name of supervisor	Gregory Hadley

DECLARATION

I declare:

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- c) that all quotations from published or unpublished work are acknowledged with quotation marks and references to the work in question.
- d) that this dissertation consists of approximately 13,000 words, excluding footnotes, references, figures, tables and appendices.

Name: Joseph Alexis Small

Date: 20 March 2012

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE SUBJECTIVE NEEDS
OF JAPANESE HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS**

by

ALEX SMALL

A dissertation submitted to the
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Centre for English Language
Studies
College of Arts & Law
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT
United Kingdom
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to improve the design of an EFL Oral Communication course syllabus using needs analysis. Though the concept of needs analysis was introduced into TESOL syllabus design over 30 years ago, it remains underutilized in General English contexts such as the one in this study: a Japanese senior high school. A limited needs analysis of learners' subjective needs (defined as beliefs, preferences, and goals) was proposed as the basis for syllabus design suggestions. Limitations to the model were explored, as the participants were adolescents with limited experience with communicative English. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four students enrolled in Oral Communication II in the 2011-12 academic year. The results found that students expressed their needs primarily in terms of enjoyment. Learners were also found to have a number of beliefs about language learning and that their goals for language use were mainly personal as opposed to career-oriented. Finally, syllabus design changes were proposed that meet the subjective needs of learners in this context. While needs analysis can only make limited contributions when learners are the only source consulted, the syllabus can nevertheless be made more relevant and motivating through careful, critical investigation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate what learners at a senior high school in Japan believe, what they want, and the goals they pursue in elective Oral Communication (OC) classes. A wealth of research has been done on how and why communicative language teaching (CLT) has failed to gain traction in Japanese secondary education despite the top-down efforts by the Ministry of Education (MEXT). Less common, however, are studies that apply syllabus design procedures in order to develop context specific, bottom-up solutions (a notable exception being Watanabe 2006).

This study was an attempt to apply needs analysis procedures to better inform the design of a specific high school course syllabus. OC was chosen due to its position outside the orbit of examination-prep oriented required English classes, for the relative leeway available for teachers of OC to experiment with alternative methodologies, and for OC's status as a course created specifically by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) for communicative purposes.

1.1 Statement of problem

English language education in Japan's secondary schools, in which grammar translation is the dominant method (Gorsuch 2001, Porcaro 2006, Kikuchi 2009), has been widely criticized. The grammar translation method, which is linked to preparation for the entrance examinations of Japanese universities (Gorsuch 2000, 2001, McVeigh 2002, Kikuchi 2009), is a "one size fits all" approach that fails to take student needs into account (Murphey et. al. 2008:2), has demotivated students (Murphey, Falout, Elwood, & Hood 2008, Kikuchi 2009), and has not lead to significant proficiency gains (Reesor 2003:57-58).

As part of a larger effort to address the problems with grammar translation, OC classes were introduced to Japanese senior high schools through the 1989 *Course of Study* developed by MEXT. OC was made mandatory for students at all schools in 1994 (Taguchi 2002). For a variety of reasons, MEXT's communicative goals have not been widely realized. Porcaro (2006:157) observed many OC classes and described them as a "charade" because teachers focused exclusively on difficult topics outside the experience of young students, and on language form instead of meaningful communication. Taguchi (2005) observed OC at two schools and concluded that the class style was identical to traditional grammar translation. Research suggests that the top-down introduction of OC has been largely rejected by teachers due to the continued importance of university entrance examinations, conflict with teacher beliefs, lack of training in communicative methodologies, and concerns about classroom management (Gorsuch 2000, 2001, Taguchi 2002, Reesor 2003, and Nishino 2011). Due to resistance from teachers at the local level, MEXT quietly dropped the requirement that OC be mandatory for all students nationwide (Small 2009:5).

One neglected factor in the research is that MEXT does not outline a complete syllabus for OC. In the 2003 *Course of Study* (MEXT 2003), a wide range of language functions and forms are available, but little guidance for selection of language content (see Appendix 1). Notably, there is no mention of student evaluation, course evaluation, course goals, or other essential parts of a language syllabus, which are presumably left to individual schools. Since textbooks typically *are* the syllabus in high schools (Porcaro 2006:156), and none of the textbooks approved by MEXT meet the Ministry's stated communicative goals (Browne & Wada 1998:105, Reesor 2003:61, McGroarty & Taguchi 2005 (in Taguchi 2005), Ogura 2008), the lack of attention to sound syllabus design at the national or local level for OC stands out as a problem.

1.2 Purpose of paper and research aims

This study is part of a larger effort by the author to apply course evaluation and needs analysis toward suggestions which will lead to incremental improvement of currently existing OC syllabi (Small 2009, 2010, 2011b). For this study in particular, I was

interested in the frequently occurring notion of incorporating students' subjective needs—their personal wants, desires, and expectations (Brindley 1984:31, in Nunan 1988:44)—into the syllabus. Murphey, through data collected from university-aged students (e.g. Murphey et al. 2009), has suggested the lack of a student voice in Japanese secondary schools as a key factor in lack of student motivation to learn English, and lack of success in learning.

However, I frequently observed in informally conducted questionnaires in my years of teaching at high schools that students had trouble giving specific requests for what they wanted to do in class. They would often request games, movies, or, most commonly, write “I want to be able to speak English better.”

In a related, typical situation, a colleague—perhaps inspired by my talk of needs analysis—spent a class hour during the 2011-12 school year asking his students to brainstorm speaking activities. All activities were games, some of them requiring no language use (i.e. touch rugby, blackjack). The games involving language focused on simple vocabulary such as colors and did not include meaningful communication.

Though we may wish to incorporate our students' wants into the class, trying to elicit and find a clear way of integrating these, while also preserving the core aim of encouraging language acquisition, can be a frustrating experience. Concerned that my methods had only scratched the surface, I was inspired by the following:

Questionnaires might tell us that students hate drills, that they find them ‘boring’ or ‘pointless,’ and their (recorded) behavior in class might confirm this, but only interviews can probe the beliefs and experiences that might explain their responses. In a profession like teaching, such understanding can be invaluable.

(Richards 2009:187)

The goal of this dissertation was, through interviews, to give OC students the opportunity to voice their needs in their own terms, and in doing so to contribute something constructive to the design of the syllabus.

The aims of this research were to:

- (A) Determine the subjective needs of students taking OC – their language learning beliefs, classroom preferences, and learning goals – using semi-structured interviews.
- (B) Examine the feasibility of accommodating students' subjective needs according to the evidence available in TESOL literature.
- (C) Suggest specific ways in which students' subjective needs could be incorporated into OC syllabus design.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

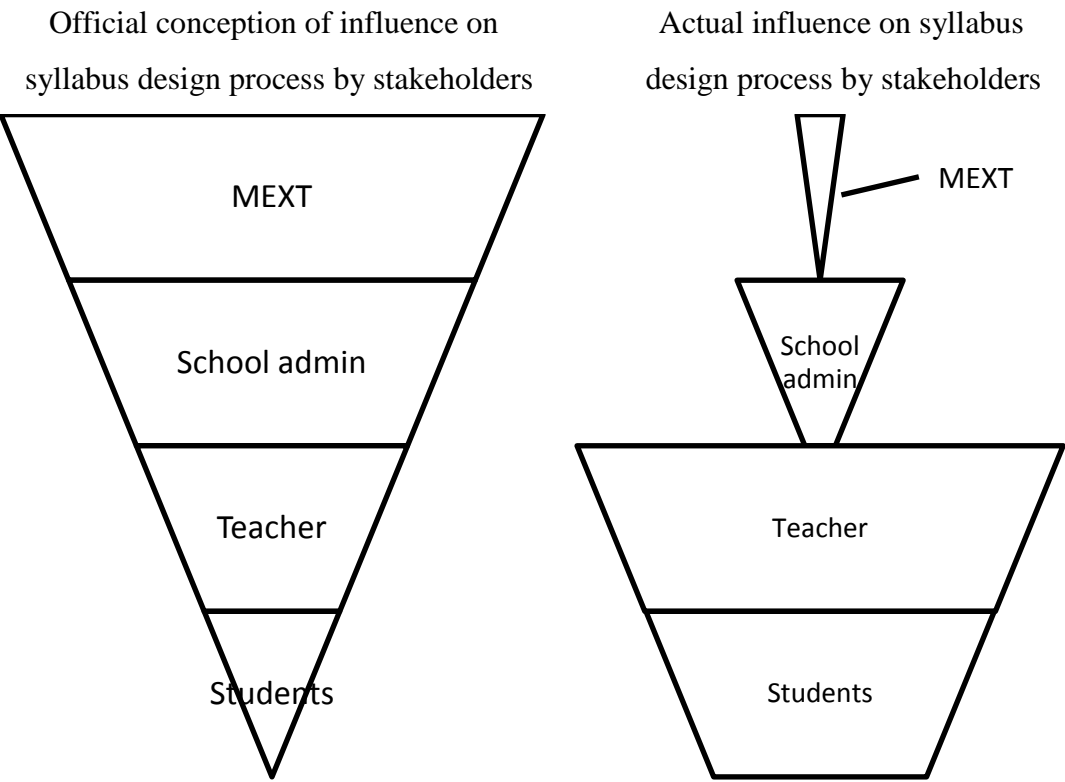
This section will first describe the context of this study. Next, the model of needs analysis used in this paper will be defined and defended through a review of the literature on need analysis and student subjective needs. Additionally, the limitations of examining learner subjective needs in the context of this study will be explored. Finally, the framework used in subsequent chapters of this paper will be outlined.

2.1 Research context

This section describes the specific context of this study. The high school where this research took place is a private school in the Tokyo area, and is part of a larger K-12 and university institution. According to the school's *hensachi* ranking (a measure of the school's academic level in relation to a national mean), the high school is slightly above the national average academically. Additionally, the student body is approximately 60% female.

While the school's overall English program is similar to that of public schools in terms of textbooks and course syllabi, the situation with the OC course is different. While OC at public schools is normally taught by a Japanese teacher of English (JTE) together with a 'native speaker' assistant (ALT), OC is taught alone by one 'native speaker' teacher. In addition, while in theory MEXT sets the national education agenda through its *Course of Study*, which is then implemented by school administrators who give direction to their teachers, the situation is different at the school in this study (see Figure 2.1). The teachers of OC are, in practice, given considerable leeway to design, teach, and grade the course independent of the *Course of Study* and of other teachers' syllabi. Teacher beliefs appear to have the greatest influence on the syllabus, while student acceptance or rejection of classroom activities also heavily influence what goes on in the classroom.

Figure 2.1 – Theoretical and actual influence of stakeholders on syllabus design



OC is available to all students at the school as an elective, with no prerequisite for either OCI or OCII. Students taking OC are not streamed into proficiency levels, nor are they grouped by any particular criteria. See Table 2.1 for details about the course and numbers of students, and Table 2.2 for data on all students enrolled in OC for the 2011-12 year, collected from school records and a survey given at the beginning of the year.

Table 2.1 – Details about OCI and OCII in 2011-12 academic year

Course name	Oral Communication I (elective)	Oral Communication II (elective)
Prerequisites	None	None
Teachers assigned to course	3	5
Hours per week of class	3	4
Grade of students	11	12
Age of students	16-17	17-18
Number of students enrolled	39	90
Number of students in one class	9-11	10-16

Table 2.2 – Data on students enrolled in OCI and OCII in 2011-12 academic year

	Oral Communication I			Oral Communication II		
	N	Response	% (N)	N	Response	%
Gender	40	Female	67.5% (27)	90	Female	58.9% (53)
		Male	32.5% (13)		Male	41.1% (37)
Have studied abroad	37	Yes	13.5% (5)	87	Yes	21.8% (19)
		No	86.5% (32)		No	78.2% (68)
Have lived abroad	37	Yes	16.2% (6)	87	Yes	8.0% (7)
		No	83.8% (31)		No	92.0% (80)
Have been to an English conversation school	37	Yes	24.3% (9)	87	Yes	4.6% (4)
		No	75.7% (28)		No	95.4% (83)
Eiken* level	37	No Eiken	16.2% (6)	87	No Eiken	17.2% (15)
		5	0.0% (0)		5	3.4% (3)
		4	8.1% (3)		4	8.0% (7)
		3	54.8% (17)		3	21.8% (19)
		Pre-2	18.9% (7)		Pre-2	31.0% (27)
		2	10.8% (4)		2	18.4% (16)

*note: The STEP Eiken series of tests is a general English proficiency test and “Japan’s most widely used English-language testing program” (<http://stepeiken.org/overview-eiken-tests>).

2.2 Specifying an approach to needs analysis

This section will argue that the limited approach to needs analysis taken in this paper is appropriate and beneficial in the context of this study.

2.2.1 Issues in needs analysis

Needs analysis entered language teaching through the learner-centered CLT movement, as Nunan explains:

Proponents of [CLT] argued that the content of language courses should reflect the purposes for which students were learning the language in the first place. Rather than fitting students to courses, courses should be designed to fit students.

(Nunan 1999:148)

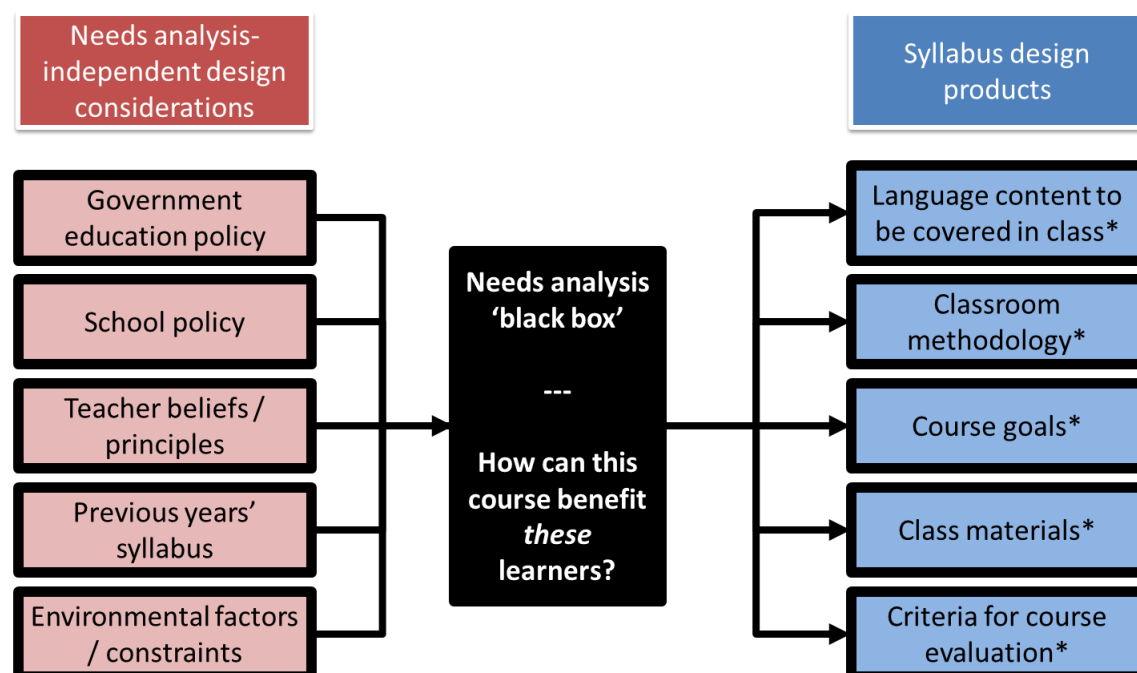
Unlike the approach in “one-size-fits-all” methods, a course based on needs of a particular group of learners is more relevant to those learners (Long 2005b:19), and more likely to bring about successful learning outcomes (Nation & Macalister 2010:1). In the current literature on TESOL syllabus design (Brown 1995, Graves 2000, Richards 2001, Nation & Macalister 2010), needs analysis is considered a fundamental starting point.

Despite the acceptance of needs analysis in syllabus design literature, however, it is, in practice, neglected by many large-scale language programs (Long 2005b:62). Long (2005a, 2005b) argues in *Second Language Needs Analysis* that needs analysis studies generally lack rigor; the studies tend to report successful outcomes with insufficient evidence that their methods were valid or reliable (Long 2005a:2). The solution that Long proposes is to re-assess the methodology of needs analysis in order to establish it as a scientifically sound area of applied linguistics research (Long 2005a:12).

The methodology of needs analysis in the literature is a very open one. Philosophies guiding needs analysis (Brown 1995:38-39), types of needs (Brown, 1995:40-41, Nation & Macalister 2010:24-25), and data collection methods (Richards 2001:59-63, Long 2005b:31-32) permit a wide range of applications. What all needs analysis has in common, then, is that in a given learning situation, what is of greatest benefit to a given set of learners is accommodated through syllabus design. Accordingly, one can

conceive of needs analysis as a ‘black box’ (see Figure 2.1) with known input, but an unknown or undefined process. The input, in this case, is the learning situation and factors in it that would shape the design of the course. In a Japanese secondary school this would include MEXT policy, school policy, and tradition.

Figure 2.2 – Needs analysis as a ‘black box’



(*products of needs analysis summarized from Brown 1995:35)

In answer to Long’s (2005a, 2005b) call for more transparency and discussion of methods, then, it is necessary to open the ‘black box’ and clearly outline what is being investigated and how, so that defensible suggestions for syllabus change can be made. In the following sections, the limiting contextual constraints on needs analysis, the choices made in light of this, and the decision to accommodate learner subjective needs through the syllabus will be explored.

2.2.2 The case for a limited needs analysis

There are a large number of things that can be called “needs” in language learning (Richards 2001:54). Books on TESOL syllabus design offer a large range of potential need types to investigate. The information gathered is pointless, however, if it cannot be

applied to the design of the syllabus (Nation & Macalister 2010:25). Thus, choices need to be made about what the analyst needs to know and can use (Brown 1995:38-39, Graves 2000:105-6). Nunan identifies two trends in needs analysis which make distinctly different choices:

- (a) One [...] is used for collecting and analyzing information about the *target language situation*. [...] The key question addressed here is: What are the skills and linguistic knowledge needed by students to comprehend and produce language for communicating successfully in target language situations?
- (b) The second [...] is designed to obtain information about and from learners themselves. This information can relate to both content and process, and is usually carried out through some form of questionnaire.

(adapted from Nunan 1999:151, emphasis added)

Although Nunan describes the two on even terms, the first of these is the dominant trend in published TESOL needs analysis studies (West 1994:8-10, Belcher 2009:3), because needs analysis has established itself most clearly in syllabus design for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (West 1994, Seedhouse 1995:59, Benesch 1996, Graves 2000:99, Belcher 2009:3). Although subjective factors are often considered and emphasized (i.e. Jasso-Aguilar 1999), the ultimate goal of the target situation analysis is to examine specific language items and tasks for instruction (e.g. Horowitz 1986, Brown 1995:59-64, Richards 2001:70-71, Long 2005b, Lett 2005, Gilabert 2005, Winn 2005). I will use the term ‘strong’ needs analysis to describe this approach, since here needs analysis has a central, critical role in syllabus design.

In contrast to ESP is the “General English” (Seedhouse 1995) context, or English “for no purpose” (Long 2005b:19), where the second of Nunan’s needs analysis trends outlined above is likely to appear. With younger learners such as those in the context of this study, the valid need to develop “control of the wider language system” (Nation & Macalister 2010:32) is traditionally emphasized above any specific target situation. However, Long (2005b:19) argues that every course should be viewed as having a specific purpose with current or future target uses of language. Hutchinson and Waters argue this point as well:

It is often argued that the needs of the general English learner, for example the schoolchild, are not specifiable...In fact, this is the weakest of all arguments, because it is always possible to specify needs, even if it is only the need to pass the exam at the end of the school year. There is always an identifiable need of some sort. What distinguishes ESP from General English is not the existence of a need as such but rather an awareness of the need.

(Hutchinson and Waters 1987:53, in Watanabe 2006).

This view is somewhat problematic in the context of this study, where testing is seen as having an anti-communicative washback effect on English education, and no other need for English in high schools has been widely established.

Chaudron et al. (2005) provide an excellent example of how ‘strong’ needs analysis can be done in other general language situations (Korean, in this case), but in General English contexts this type of study is scarce. Instead, the type of questionnaire study identified by Nunan above, which depends on learners to articulate their needs, is most common (e.g. Hayasaka 1995, Seedhouse 1995, Nunan 1995, 1999:150-164, Watanabe 2006, Nakano, Gilbert, & Donnery 2009). I will use the term ‘weak’ needs analysis to describe this approach (see Table 2.3), where the information is potentially helpful to teachers and students, but does not occupy a central role in the syllabus design process. The syllabus is likely to have been already mainly decided by the factors suggested in Figure 2.2 above.

Table 2.3 – Two trends in needs analysis studies: ‘strong’ and ‘weak’

	‘Strong’ needs analysis	‘Weak’ needs analysis
Typical context	ESP, EAP, adult ESL	General English
Goal	Identify target language use situations and the corresponding tasks and language items	Get a sense of learner background, wants and goals and incorporate those into the course
Method	Varies, multiple methods recommended (Long 2005b:31-32)	Typically questionnaires (Nunan 1999:151)
Role in syllabus design process	Central	Relatively minor; much syllabus content is already decided based on other factors
Typical timing	Pre-course	On-going, in-course
Analyst	“Curriculum specialists, subject panels, and the like.” (Nunan 1999:150)	Teachers

Long (2005b) criticizes ‘weak’ needs analysis—though he does not identify it as a distinct trend—for its lack of rigor, and overreliance on sources unknowledgeable about target language use situations (i.e. pre-service learners and teachers). Long (2005b) says that an “adequate” needs analysis takes time and expertise in applied linguistics and research methods, as well as the involvement of multiple sources of data and triangulation of methods, casting doubt as to whether a ‘weak’ approach can be justified.

The flaws in the ‘weak’ approach, and the limited role it can play in improving the syllabus must be acknowledged. However, this approach can be justified as appropriate in this context for the following reasons:

- (1) Although specific target language use situations, determined objectively and described in terms of tasks and language items, are ideal, a syllabus that promotes some degree of progress toward general competence is defensible in a secondary school EFL context (Nation & Macalister 2010:32). Additionally, the course

guidelines from MEXT allow enough flexibility to accommodate many language use situations that learners find interesting or personally useful.

- (2) In a course that is taught nation-wide, we have the luxury of being able to improve our syllabus incrementally. Nation and Macalister (2010:144) describe a “focused opportunistic” approach to syllabus design, in which limited resources are used to improve one area of the syllabus in detail. Since MEXT has not publicly committed itself to detailed syllabus design, incremental improvement is an approach well suited to practicing teachers.
- (3) The ability also exists in a nation-wide General English teaching context to share data from research. While ideally needs analysis would use multiple methods and sources (Long 2005b), we are able in a sense to triangulate our data with that from similar teaching contexts in Japan, so long as claims made based on this data are not overstated.

2.2.3 The case for using subjective needs

In the ‘weak’ needs analysis approach, learners are asked what they want from the course (see Table 2.3 above). These types of needs are called “subjective needs.” Brindley popularized the notion of an objective/subjective needs dichotomy (Nunan 1999:149). He defined the types of needs thusly:

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 (using as a guide their own personal experience and macro-skills), whereas the ‘subjective’ needs (which are often ‘wants,’ ‘desires,’ ‘expectations,’ or other psychological manifestations of a lack) cannot be diagnosed as easily, or, in many cases, even stated by learners themselves.

(Brindley 1984:31, in Nunan 1988)

Nunan has strongly supported including learner subjective needs into syllabus design, saying that subjective needs, more so than objective needs, are at the heart of learner-centered education (1988:24) and that inclusion of student wants is part of a humanistic approach to education (p.20). Murphey et al. (2009:3-4) list many benefits to be gained

from including learners' subjective needs in the classroom, including the idea that students want to be involved in making choices, and become more motivated and engaged in doing so.

Though good teachers are sensitive to students' needs, ultimately they see language classes from different perspectives (Sullivan & Kagawa 2011). Nunan (1995) suggests that there is a difference in the agendas of teachers and students. Though teachers may be knowledgeable in SLA theory, for example, Riley argues that students' subjective reality and what they hold to be true is more important to their learning outcomes than the theories of prominent linguists (Riley 1997, in Barcelos 2000).

More ominously, there are consequences for failing to include student voice. Brown calls it "political suicide" to ignore the voices of the learner in a course (1995:44). Murphey et al. (2009) explain that students become mentally, emotionally, and physically disengaged when their voices are not included. Students may question the credibility of their teachers when there is a clash between student and teacher beliefs, and there may be passive resistance, non-learning, frustration, and other negative outcomes (Barcelos 2000). Gorsuch (2001:3) suggests that students are a form of "subjective norm," meaning that they limit the behavior of teachers to some extent. She provides the following anecdote about a Japanese teacher of English:

One Japanese high school EFL teacher recounted his first attempt to speak English in the class as extremely stressful. He reported that the students began shouting, jumping from their chairs, and pretending that they could not understand him.

(Gorsuch 2000:686)

Though there are limitations to accommodating subjective needs, which will be explored in Section 2.4, investigating them and incorporating them into the syllabus is to the benefit of both learner and teacher. Dörnyei and Ushioda suggest that much of the advice on how to motivate learners boils down to the following:

Find out your students' goals and the topics they want to learn, and build these into your syllabus as much as possible.

(Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011:116)

2.3 Conceptual models of subjective needs

In this study subjective needs were divided into three categories, which were hoped to be distinct from one another, yet meaningful: Language learning beliefs, classroom preferences, and learning goals. In this section I will define the terms and identify themes in research done in General English Japanese high school and university contexts.

2.3.1 Language learning beliefs

Language learning beliefs (hereafter simply beliefs) can be thought of as “mini-theories” about how languages are learned (Hosenfield 1978, in Ellis 2008:698) or “folklinguistic theories of learning” (Miller & Ginsberg 1995, in Barcelos 2000:41). Dörnyei, summarizing Mori (1999), identifies three salient categories of beliefs:

- (a) Perception of the difficulty of language learning
- (b) The effectiveness of approaches to or strategies for language learning
- (c) The source of linguistic knowledge

(Dörnyei 2005:216)

Sakui and Gaies (1999) developed and administered a questionnaire to university learners about beliefs specific to the Japanese context. The study has since been replicated by others at universities (Riley 2006, Balint 2008) and high schools (Richard 2009). The replication studies found results fairly consistent with that of the original. The authors of the above studies find high agreement with statements such as “English conversation class should be enjoyable,” “In learning English it is important to repeat and practice a lot,” “Listening to tapes and watching English programs on television are very important in learning English,” and “to say something in English, you needn't wait until you can speak it correctly.” Sakui and Gaies (1999) suggest that results such as

these indicate learner agreement with the principles of CLT, which is encouraging to a designer of a CLT-oriented syllabus.

In other studies done in Japanese high schools, other beliefs in agreement with CLT principles have been suggested. Watanabe (2006:105) found that students believed simulating real conversational situations in English and listening and reading for meaning were most effective for learning English, which are both notions central to CLT. Norris-Holt (2002) suggested that students believe that conversation schools were a better place to improve speaking proficiency than their grammar-translation oriented high school English courses. This suggests they are aware of the limits of grammar-translation for practical purposes.

Despite the consistency in the orientation toward CLT-oriented beliefs in the above studies, however, the influence of these beliefs on classroom behavior remains mostly unexamined. Keim, Furuya, Doye, and Carlson (1996, in Riley 2006:21) found that student classroom behavior was not consistent with their professed beliefs in a communicative oriented approach. Richard (2010) suggests that “communication” and “globalization,” commonly used terms in the Japanese media, may have a strong influence on students’ agreement with communication oriented statements on questionnaires.

2.3.2 Classroom preferences

The notion of learners’ classroom preferences answers the question “What do you want to do in class, day to day?” Along with asking learners about their learning goals, this is a key element in General English ‘weak’ needs analysis (e.g. Seedhouse 1995, Nunan 1999:151-2). Preferences are not a clearly defined term in language learning like beliefs, so the following general definition will be used:

The selection of one thing or person *over others*.

(“preference,” 2012, italics added)

Some identifying features of preferences have been suggested. Willing (1988, in Nunan 1995) found that classroom preferences did not correlate to learners' biographical data, suggesting that they are highly individualized. Littlewood (2010:19) proposed two possible dimensions to preference: preference based on "enjoyability" and preference based on usefulness to learning. Unfortunately, however, in his study (and many others), the two are not examined separately. Murphey et al. (2009:14) regard the notion of what interests learners as very important, as it is a key element in sustaining learner engagement with the subject matter, which suggests a link with the concept of motivation. In a context where the demotivating influence of grammar-translation is strong (Kikuchi 2009, Murphey et al. 2009), this is especially important to address in syllabus design.

A number of studies have investigated the preferences of Japanese high school and university learners. For the most part the results reveal a fairly consistent set of preferences. Learners in these contexts have consistently expressed a preference for a classroom style and activities that are fun, and a severe aversion to uninteresting, 'boring' classes (Kikuchi 2005, 2009, Murphey et al. 2009, Sullivan & Kagawa 2011). When asked what classroom topics interest them, learners respond that they are interested in popular entertainment such as movies and music, and to some degree their own general interests and daily life (Watanabe 2006, Small 2011a (results reproduced in Appendix 2)). Learners express a preference for being allowed to communicate through speaking in English with peers—even in English classes not specifically oriented toward speaking—and toward small group work (Kikuchi 2005, Murphey et al. 2009, Sullivan & Kagawa 2011, Small 2011a). Activities typical of grammar-translation are rejected (Kikuchi 2005, 2009, Murphey et al. 2009, Sullivan & Kagawa 2011, Small 2011a).

2.3.3 Differentiating between beliefs and preferences

Due perhaps to the fact that 'beliefs' in language learning research are not fully defined as a closed system (Dörnyei 2005:217), and overlapping notions of 'beliefs' and 'attitudes,' preference statements often appear in belief studies (i.e. Sakui & Gaies

1999). Beliefs and preferences also influence the same area of the syllabus: methodology (Nunan 1999:149). For the purposes of this paper, I made a distinction between what learners believe about the nature of language learning and what they want to do in class (see Table 2.4) based on observed situations where preferences are not being driven by beliefs. Consider the following (contrived) examples:

Belief: I believe that watching a lot of English movies and TV shows with Japanese (L1) subtitles improves one's English ability.

Preference: I want to watch a lot of English movies and TV shows with Japanese (L1) subtitles in my English class.

I have observed that the above preference has a large impact on student behavior, but whether or not the above belief is held and what relationship the belief and preference may have remains unexplored. Item 10 in Norris-Holt's (2002) questionnaire to secondary school students, "English classes at school should be conducted in English," which students disagreed with strongly, was used to suggest that learners lacked confidence in their abilities to keep up. Could it have been that they simply did not want to deal with the added burden, or that they believed English only classes would be sub-optimal? A similarly problematic item is Sakui and Gaies' (1999) belief questionnaire Item 2, "English conversation class should be enjoyable."

Table 2.4 – Distinction between language learning beliefs and classroom preferences

Language learning beliefs	Classroom preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specifically related to how people learn languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Potentially related to anything – language learning, social needs, entertainment needs, emotional needs, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Held about people in general (all human beings, all high school students, all Japanese learners) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Self- or learning context-oriented

Some studies, however, have addressed this dichotomy. Littlewood (2010) found that students in general like typically ‘communicative’ activities, but believe more traditional grammar and vocabulary focused instruction is more useful for their learning. In Japan, Murphey et al. (2009:10-11) found that while many learners rejected grammar-translation methodology as demotivating, many believed that grammar instruction had been useful to them for passing university entrance examinations, which may lead students currently in high school to prefer grammar-translation.

2.3.4 Language learning goals

If preferences are based on what learners want to do in the day to day routines of their class, learning goals are in answer to the questions “What do you want to be able to do in English?” or more broadly, “Why are you studying English?” Asking learners these questions is another key component of ‘weak’ needs analysis, although one that relates more to a course’s language content.

The concept of goals is often related to the larger learner motivation system (Ushioda 2008:22, Kormos, Kiddle, & Csizér 2011:511). The connection a learner makes between an academic task and their long-term goals is called the “utility value,” and the more of this value there is, the more likely learners are to engage fully in the task

(Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011:19). The notion of an ideal L2 self, developed by Dörnyei and others, posits that the more that tasks feel like they will close the gap between the learner's current state and their ideal state of L2 mastery, the more their behavior will be motivated. However, "at any given time, learners orient to a series of hierarchical disparate goals, but due to limited resources, focus on goals of primary importance" (Carver & Scheier 2009, in Richard, Uehara, & Spence-Perkins 2011). This suggests the benefits of identifying learners' already existing goals for language use and aligning the syllabus as much as possible with those goals, because externally regulated motivation only works in the short term, and internal, self-determined goals provide the most motivation (Ushioda 2008:22).

In studies in Japan on learners' goals, one answer appears as number one in almost every study: the goal of being able to use English for 'daily life,' 'daily situations,' or 'daily conversation' (Hayasaka 1995, Kuwabara, Nakanishi, & Komai 2005, Watanabe 2006, Nakano et al. 2009). The use of English abroad is another popular choice (Hayasaka 1995, Watanabe 2006, Nakano et al. 2009). Richard et al. (2011) found that high school students oriented their future goals for English use mainly for personal purposes such as traveling or living abroad, communicating with others, and watching movies (54%), while many (42%) also oriented toward a career goal of some sort.

On the other hand, a study by Pigott (2011) found that while most students felt 'Japanese people' needed English, a majority of them, when asked about their own goals, said that they personally did not want to use English at work and didn't see English as necessary for any of their future needs. The method used in this study—qualitative, open ended surveys asking what learners wanted for themselves—may account for the different results. The choice to have no goals, in other words, may have been more available than to learners agreeing with statements on a questionnaire.

2.4 The limitations of subjective needs analysis

Despite the evidence that accommodating learner beliefs, preferences, and goals in syllabus design makes successful learning outcomes more likely, it is difficult to escape

the common-sense feeling that adolescent learners cannot make optimal choices about syllabus design. There is a sense that teachers and syllabus designers have ultimate responsibility for fostering successful learning.

Unfortunately, there is little research specifically about how far one should accommodate adolescent learners, only the suggestion that we should *to some degree*. In adult learner contexts, on one hand, there is the notion that the life experiences and beliefs of the learner should be respected and accommodated by the syllabus (Nunan 1988:22-24). On the other hand, for young learners aged 5-12, Cameron argues:

In centring on the child, we risk losing sight of what it is we are trying to do in schools, and of the enormous potential that lies beyond the child. [...] If the teacher's concern is centred on the child, there is a temptation to stay in the first place or to follow the child. I have seen too many classrooms where learners are enjoying themselves on intellectually undemanding tasks but failing to learn as much as they might. The time available in busy school timetables for language learning is too short to waste on activities that are fun but do not maximize learning. The teacher has to do what the child may not be able to do: to keep in sight the longer view, and move the child toward increasingly demanding challenges, so that no learning potential is wasted."

(Cameron 2001:2)

Both the adult education and young learner arguments are very persuasive, but where do learners aged 16-18 fit in? In the following subsections, this and other major limitations to subjective needs analysis will be explored.

2.4.1 Limited knowledge of learners

While little research has been done on the limitations of subjective needs analysis, limitations found in negotiated syllabi are instructive. Nation and Macalister suggest some relevant problems:

- The learners have limited awareness of the possible activities.
- The learners are perfectly happy to let the teacher teach.
- Learners' wants are only a small part of learners' needs.
- The needs of the learners are too diverse to reach agreement.
- Cultural expectations make learners reluctant to negotiate with the teacher.

(adapted from Nation & Macalister 2010:156)

Despite the evidence that learners want their voices to be heard (see Murphey et al. 2009), there is a sense in many contexts that the teacher is the one who bears ultimate responsibility for course content and methodology (Graves 2000:99-100). In addition, Long (2005b:20) calls learners in General English situations such as those in the context of this study “pre-service,” meaning that they have never encountered the target situation or the language necessary to function in it. Learners often do not have knowledge of the range of options available to make good, imaginative choices (Nunan 1995:134, Nation & Macalister 2010:155), or they cannot state their needs clearly (Brindley 1984, in Nunan 1988:96).

In this type of scenario, learners who are given questionnaires about subjective needs may agree with approaches that sound better than the ones they are currently experiencing but have never actually encountered. This may lead to a “grass is greener” effect, or an acquiescence bias toward any methodology or content that sounds interesting, logical, or reasonable.

2.4.2 Mistaken beliefs of learners

While reluctance or inability to voice one's subjective needs is problematic, so too is the notion that what learners want in their class is antithetical to language learning. Dörnyei and Ushioda explain:

It is a peculiar fact of life that most learners will have certain beliefs about language learning and most of these beliefs are likely to be (at least partly) incorrect.

(Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011:117)

They explain that mistaken beliefs lead to student disappointment and hinder progress. Dörnyei suggests correcting these “false cognitions” through persuasion (Dörnyei 2005:214), rather than accommodation in the design of the syllabus. On the other hand, there is some question as to whether we should look at learners’ beliefs as deficient, especially without examining them in the larger learning context (White 2008:123-4). This is a valid point, but from a syllabus design perspective it is more important to view ‘wrong’ beliefs as an environmental constraint, especially with young learners (see example in Nation & Macalister 2010:16-17), instead of something to be accommodated at the expense of language acquisition opportunities.

The notion of preferences can also be problematic. When student voice is linked to syllabus design, as it is with student evaluations of teachers (SETs) in many tertiary institutions worldwide (Clayson 2009, Crumbley, Flinn, & Reichelt 2010), it can lead to unintended consequences. Studies done on SETs suggest that students may mistake factors such as nonverbal teacher mannerisms like smiling (Merritt 2008), good grades given by teachers (Clayson 2009), or teaching to tests (Braga, Paccagnella, & Pellizzari 2010) for good teaching, regardless of their actual learning outcomes. Crumbley et al. (2010) suggest that when teachers try to accommodate students, it leads to grade inflation and decreased rigor. These effects are clearly antithetical to the purpose of needs analysis and sound syllabus design in any context.

Of interest to design of an OC syllabus, which is taught in the context of this study by only a non-Japanese “native-speaker” teacher, studies in Japan have suggested that learners may alter their preferences for teaching methodology depending on teacher ethnicity. Shimizu (1995) found that university students expected “native-speaker” teachers in particular to be entertaining and enthusiastic. McVeigh (2002:176-177) suggests that students react negatively when foreign teachers assign challenging tasks and do not live up to the expectations to be an entertainer.

2.4.3 Competing, non-linguistic goals of learners

Yet another problem with the subjective needs concept is the potential existence of learner goals that run counter to course objectives. Nunan explains this dilemma:

[There is a] tension between attempting to be responsive to students' needs and interests (which are often related to nonacademic things such as watching videos and having fun) on one hand, and meeting the objectives of the course; that is, to prepare students for university-level study in English. Although many of these students find lessons on academic writing "boring," this is the central requirement of the course, and cannot be jettisoned.

(Nunan 1999:161)

Sullivan and Kagawa (2011) argue that unmotivated and immature students likely hold social and affective preferences above preferences for effective language instruction. Conflicting goals may include the desire to maintain solidarity with peers, to please a teacher, or to avoid punishment (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011:22) above increasing language proficiency. Additionally, learners may be oriented toward "performance goals," in which the student's main concern in the classroom is to surpass normative-based standards with only minimal effort (Ames 1992). Students like this will want to avoid challenging tasks in the classroom which they might fail. If students are primarily concerned with enjoyment and the avoidance of challenging tasks, we are again faced with learner preferences which cannot be accommodated by needs analysis.

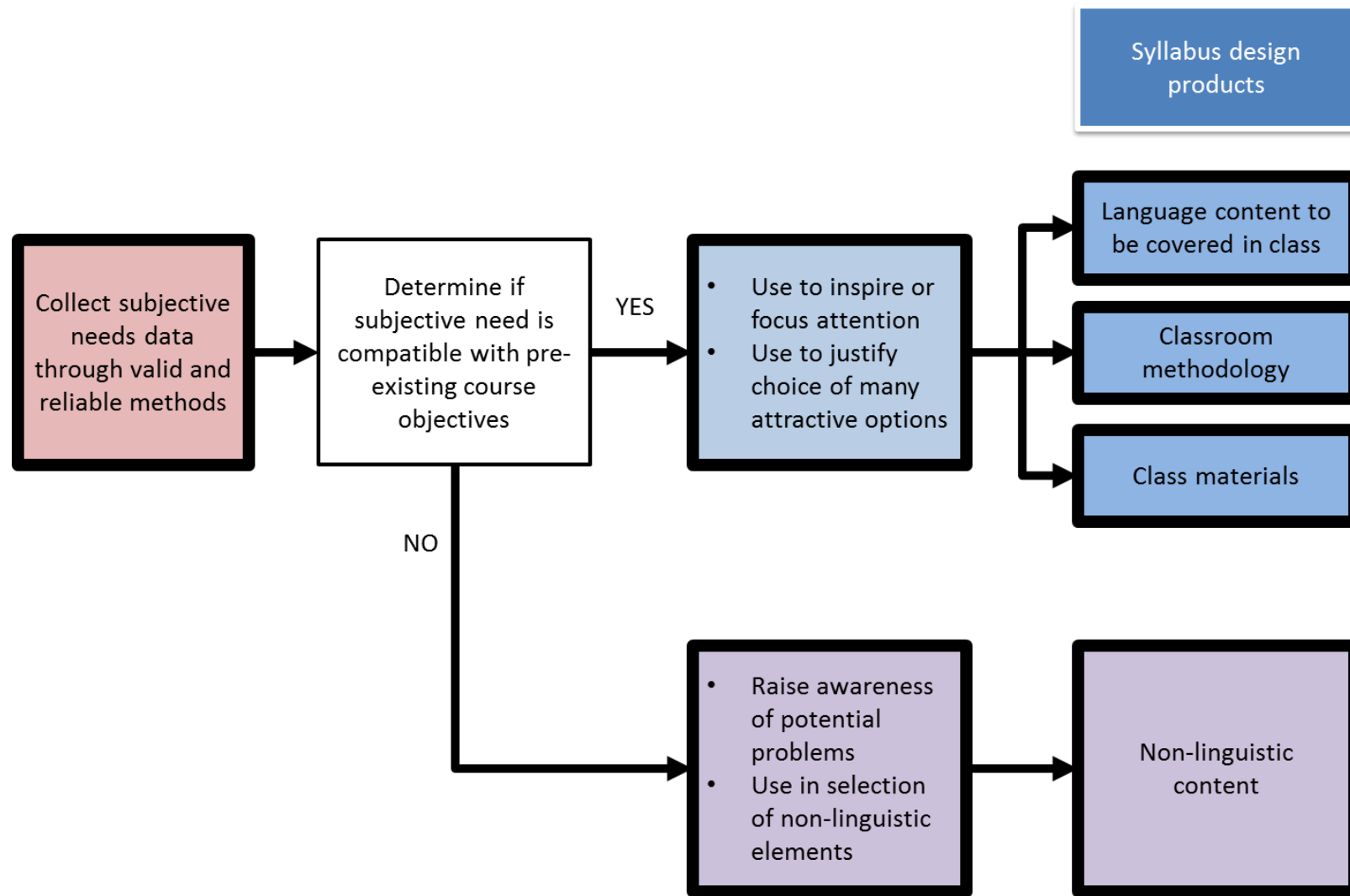
2.5 Conclusion

To summarize, we are faced with the following dilemma:

- Subjective needs should be included in sound syllabus design in order to foster motivation and bring about successful learning outcomes (see Sections 2.2-2.3).
- Subjective needs of adolescent learners are likely to conflict with syllabus design that is consistent with SLA theory (see Section 2.4).

It is therefore necessary to critically examine the subjective needs of learners and their degree of fit with existing course aims and SLA theories, which will be done in Chapter 5. According to the ‘weak’ needs analysis concept, the primary role of the subjective needs that fit OC course aims is to focus the attention of the syllabus designer on what is most likely to motivate learners and bring about successful outcomes, rather than to form the core of syllabus content (see Figure 2.3 for the needs analysis framework).

Figure 2.3 – Framework of needs analysis used in this study



CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This study used interviews to gather data from four students taking OC during the 2011-12 school year. The decision to use interviews was based primarily on two factors. First, as discussed in Chapter 1, I felt that both multiple-choice and open-ended questionnaires had been unsuccessful in eliciting what students wanted from their OC classes. Second, unlike questionnaires, interviews allow a flexible approach, and the ability to probe areas of interest (Dörnyei 2007:143) for further understanding. As it was my first experience with interviews as a research method, I also felt that this approach would allow me the opportunity to clarify or re-state questions that on a questionnaire would have been confusing to students.

I took an “emergent research design” (Dörnyei 2007:37) approach with this study. Specific research aims and data analysis methods were refined after the interviews had concluded. Rather than presenting the findings from the research in the form of individual narratives, common themes in student responses became the focus. Students’ responses to individual questions tended to be limited and tentative. A possible contributing factor was insufficient rapport between the researcher/interviewer team and the students (see Section 3.2). Nevertheless, clear areas of common interest emerged from an analysis of the complete set of interview response data.

This section will describe the methods used to collect and analyze the data.

3.1 Student participants

Four students who were taking OCII were chosen as participants for the interviews. The researcher’s intent was to create a “typical sample” (see Dörnyei 2007:128) representative of the larger body of students. The typical sample was based on the results of a learning preferences survey (Small 2011a, adapted from Nunan 1999:151-2;

see Appendix 2) and students' grades on traditional grammar translation English tests. The tests were not intended to represent student English proficiency, but a certain level of success with and experience of traditional English study. See Table 3.1 for a description of the specific methods used.

Table 3.1 - Typical sample selection criteria and method

Criteria	Description	Method
1. Preferences questionnaire	Small (2011a, Appendix 2), adapted from Nunan (1999:151-2) and translated into Japanese. A "needs analysis" questionnaire about learners' preferred style of learning, topics, teacher feedback methods, etc.	Data entered into excel; Student responses correlated to mean responses by =CORREL() function; Students ranked by correlation.
2. English test grades	All term end tests in required English classes from 10 th grade to 1 st quarter of 12 th grade and English sections of yearly school-wide standardized testing.	Data entered into excel; Nearness to average calculated as: nearness = test1 – mean1 + test2 – mean2 etc. ; Students ranked by nearness.

Students' preference questionnaire rank and test grade ranks were added together, and the top five ranked students were selected. The student ranked second was excluded because she was in my OCII class. All selected students agreed to do the interviews.

Table 3.2 - Biographical data of student participants

Name	Gender	Has studied abroad	Has lived abroad	Eiken level*	Questionnaire rank (n=86)	Test grade rank (n=90)
Student A	F	Yes	No	Pre-2	3	3
Student B	F	No	No	Pre-2	16	11
Student C	F	No	No	Pre-2	17	1
Student D	F	No	No	3	8	24

*note: The STEP Eiken series of tests is a general English proficiency test and "Japan's most widely used English-language testing program" (<http://stepeiken.org/overview-eiken-tests>).

3.2 The interviewer and researcher

The interviews were conducted in Japanese by a Japanese teacher of English at the school. I am a native speaker of English, and requested the interviewer's assistance so the interviews could be conducted in the students' native Japanese without difficulty. Both interviewer and I were present at all interviews. See table 3.3 for biographical information:

Table 3.3- Biographical data of interviewer and researcher

Role	Gender	Years at school	Years	teaching
			English	Country of origin
Interviewer	F	1	7	Japan
Researcher	M	2	8	USA

In order to avoid a possible interviewer-researcher-student relationship creating student reluctance, I chose as my interviewer someone who was a part-time teacher and new to the school. Neither the interviewer nor I had ever taught the students. Nevertheless, the relationship between teacher and student was unavoidably asymmetrical. Due to this, regrettably, it was difficult to develop the rapport and appearance of neutrality needed (Dörnyei 2007:140-1) to encourage students to speak freely.

3.3 Data collection

Each student was interviewed three times over a period of about one month. Following Polkinghorne's suggestion (2005, in Dörnyei 2007:134-5), this was to give students time to think more about the interview topics and let them clarify previous statements, as well as give the opportunity to revise the interview approach.

Each round of interviews was done with the same script for all students. Interview questions were initially developed in order to answer two types of question, based on questions typical of subjective needs analysis studies: "What do you want to do in class?" and "What do you want to be able to do in English?" The three specific

categories of beliefs, preferences, and goals did not emerge until the data analysis process was underway. As a result, data collection did not fully capture the construct of subjective needs analysis that was eventually developed (see Appendices 3, 4, and 5 for interview schedules).

In the third round, using the approach in Simon-Maeda (2004), I began by presenting my findings to date orally to students for corrections, clarifications, or additional comments (See Appendices 6, 7, 8, and 9 for summaries presented to each student). See Table 3.4 for a description of the three interview rounds:

Table 3.4 – Interview schedule

Round	Avg. length	Notes
1	15 mins.	Relatively high structure. Direct questions about preferences and goals.
2	30 mins.	Relatively low structure. Indirect questions about preferences and goals.
3	30 mins.	Presentation of findings by researcher at start and student feedback. Relatively high structure questions (direct and indirect) about goals and beliefs.

The interviews were conducted in an empty classroom after school hours with the researcher, interviewer, and student present. All were seated at a large table with a recording device in the center. The interviewer led the interview according to the script, asking follow up questions on her own initiative where appropriate. I took notes and asked follow up questions in English, which the interviewer translated into Japanese.

3.4 Analysis

Table 3.5 – Summary of terms used in data analysis

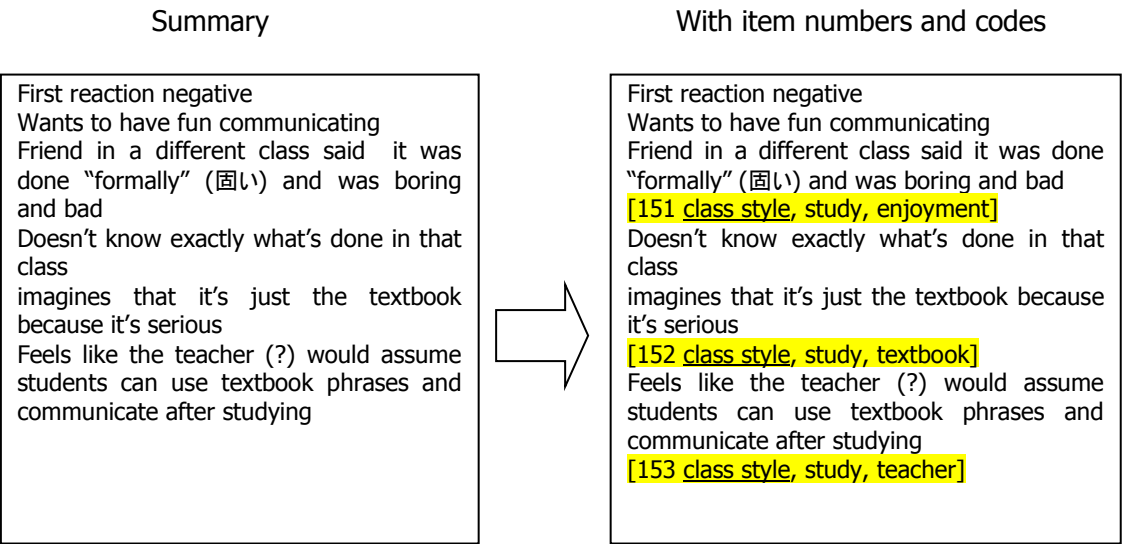
Term	Definition
Code	A meaningful category of concepts expressed by students. Codes were derived from iterative re-reading, re-coding process (Thomas 2006:241-2, Dörnyei 2007:252). See Appendix 10 for complete list of codes used.
Item	A section of a student response that expressed one main idea. Responses were divided into items based on researcher judgement.
Tag	One instance of a code that was attached to an item. Multiple tags were applied to each item in analysis. See Diagram 3.1 for examples.

Based on the recordings of the interviews, each student's response to interview questions was condensed into a standardized-format summary for close reading (Thomas 2006:238,241). An initial coding system was developed from key concepts in the summaries and from research aims (Richards 2003:273, Thomas 2006:241, Dörnyei 2007:251), and codes were revised in an iterative re-reading, re-coding process (Thomas 2006:241-2, Dörnyei 2007:252).

Each one of the main ideas in the summary was labeled with a number. There were 331 of these items in total. Instead of assigning each item one code, an “overlapping coding” (Thomas 2006:242) system was used. Each item was assigned one or more tag for the type of question it was in response to (a question about “class style,” about “peers,” etc.) and multiple tags for the content of the response. See Diagram 3.1 for an example of the tagging process:

Diagram 3.1 – Example of summary data tagged with multiple codes

In response to R2Q3: "In general, not about this year's OC class specifically, what do you not like about OC? Please say any things that come to mind."
[Question tag: class style]



Note: The underlined tag "class style" was derived from the interview question. Other tags derived from response content.

Finally, a database of the items and their tags was entered into Microsoft Excel for easier counting and sorting. Tags that appeared most often were grouped with tags that were used together in items throughout all three interviews. Based on these groups of tags, the researcher identified which features of the class were most salient to the students, and then examined individual items in the group for meaningful patterns and statements of language learning beliefs, class preferences, and goals. The resulting groups and patterns will be presented in the next section.

CHAPTER 4

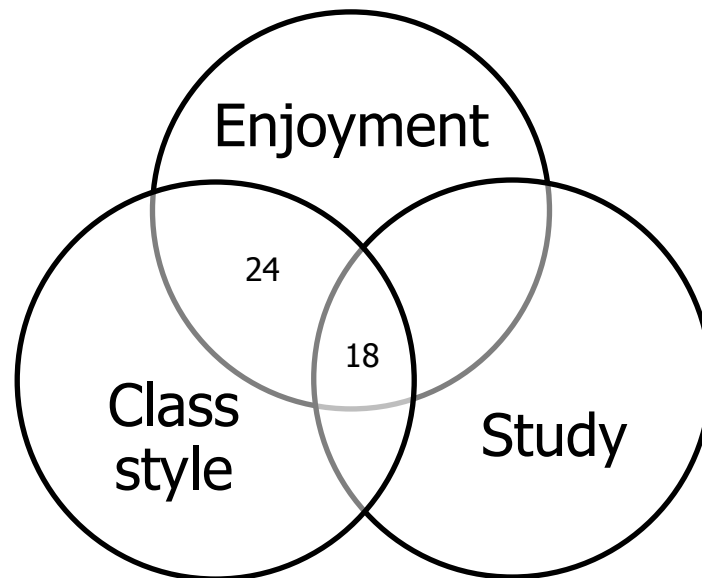
RESULTS

Each section in Chapter 4 is presented using a template. First, a diagram containing a salient group of key word tags is presented, with numbers on the diagram representing the number of items that contained tags in common. Though represented numerically, the data was not collected using a quantitative approach, and should not be interpreted as such. Next, the clearest trends that emerged from the data summaries of the group's items are presented with transcript excerpts. Finally, at the end of each section, a table summarizing the main belief, preference, and goal statements is presented.

The text in this section makes reference to specific item numbers throughout in order to represent the coding system and source for claims made as transparent as possible. Items are included in parentheses after each statement based on student ideas along with the student's letter. Item 128A, for example, marks that the idea was expressed by Student A.

4.1 Enjoyment-Class style-Study

Figure 4.1 – Association frequency between enjoyment, class style, and study



In many of the interview topics, feelings of enjoyment or boredom were frequently mentioned by students as an immediate response to what was done or might be done in OC class. Here student A explained:

Excerpt 4.1a: Student A, R2Q2. Items 128-130.

Student A: Sometimes in class I'm just there having fun. Before I go to class I don't think "I'm going to OC today. What am I going to learn?"

Interviewer: Oh, ok.

Student A: I go to class and the teacher says "Ok, today we're going to do this." And if it's a test I am surprised, because the teacher usually doesn't give warning. If I do know ahead of time, I

feel “I have to get a good score.” If it’s a fun project I think “This is fun,” and that’s the end. I don’t go in thinking “I want to learn such and such today.”

Note: excerpt translated from original Japanese by author.

In the first and second interviews, which had many questions focusing on students’ preferred class styles and activities, the students tended to associate the notion of the way the class should be with things that are enjoyable. Students, in response to the first question (R1Q1¹) asking why they chose the OC elective, all cited the fact that they enjoyed the class last year as a reason (Items 6A, 13B, 16C, 23D). Student C said that if OC were not fun, she would prefer to take another elective (Item 172C). Student D said that having fun conversing with classmates in OC was more important than receiving a good grade in the class (Item 180D), while student C said the opposite (Item 174C).

Throughout, the students described many of the activities that ought to be done in OC class as being enjoyable: games (Items 35B, 124D, 164B), movies (Items 38B, 103D), singing performances (Item 111A), acting performances (Item 119C), and conversation practice (Items 42C, 160B, 177D).

Some of the students were asked to elaborate on the importance they placed on enjoyment. Student B explained that it was difficult for her to put effort into and participate in activities that were not interesting to her (Item 226B). Student C hinted at the motivational aspect of fun when she suggested that teachers could try making activities more interesting in order to get some of her reluctant classmates to participate more in class (Item 142C).

There was a fairly strong association between the terms enjoyment, class style, and study, and this came from R2Q3 (and later follow-ups), which asked what students

¹ R indicates the interview round, and Q the question number. R1Q1 represents the first question of the first round of interviews. This convention is used throughout Chapter 4. See Appendices 3-5 for interview schedules.

imagined a ‘serious’ OC class would be like. In this paper I have used the label “study” to indicate a traditional teacher-oriented class style, which is what the students tended to think of when asked what ‘serious’ meant to them. When asked why a more traditional way of study in OC would be undesirable, student B said this:

Excerpt 4.1b: Student B, R3Q1. Items 232-233.

Interviewer: You said before you don’t want to study silently with the textbook in OC class. Why is that?

Student B: Usually English is always done as study. But in OC... which is study too... I want to learn English while having fun. That’s what I think about OC. I don’t want to learn how some form of grammar works. I want to have fun, without the class being too formal.

Note: excerpt translated from original Japanese by author.

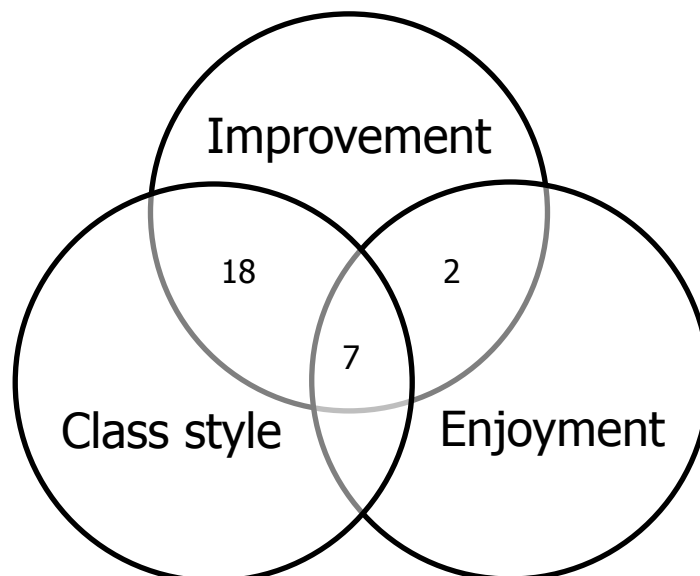
Students imagined that in the ‘serious’ class, students would mostly read the textbook and take tests (Items 152A, 176D), or work alone at their desks on worksheets (Item 159B) and that the classroom atmosphere would be quiet (Items 159B, 162B), anxiety-inducing (178D), and too difficult (Item 171C). All students said this type of class would be boring (Items 151A, 152A, 160B, 170C, 176D). Students C and D said they would not take OC if the class were like this, preferring to have fun (Items 172C, 180D), while Student A was unsure, but saw the potential for improved language skills through this type of study (Item 154A). Students A and C granted that some students may prefer the ‘serious’ class style. Finally, Students A and B (Items 151A, 326B) said they had friends in OC classes whose teacher had a more ‘serious’ style, and that these friends had a very negative impression of their class.

Table 4.1 – Beliefs, preferences, and goals related to enjoyment, class style, and study

<p>Beliefs:</p> <p>[B1] Activities that are enjoyable are more effective because they increase students' level of participation (Student B and C).</p> <p>[B2] Some students may benefit more from an enjoyable class style, and some more from a traditional study oriented class style (Students A and C).</p>
<p>Preferences:</p> <p>[P1] I want to do enjoyable classroom activities (Students A, B, C, and D).</p> <p>[P2] I want OC to be different from traditional classroom learning, which is boring (Students A, B, C, and D).</p>
<p>Goals:</p> <p>None</p>

4.2 Improvement-Enjoyment-Class style

Figure 4.2 – Association frequency between improvement, enjoyment, and class style



Due to the researcher's intense interest in the possible conflict between enjoyment and successful learning outcomes, the students were asked in follow up questions during R2Q1, R2Q3, and elsewhere to think of what language learning benefits the activities they found enjoyable had. Students A and D admitted that fun activities they did may not have had any learning benefits (Items 112A and 124D). Student A in particular seemed to have never thought about this aspect of it, and struggled to answer:

Excerpt 4.2a: Student A, R2Q1. Item 112.

- Interviewer:** [While doing the singing project], did you learn ...?
- Student A:** Aaah....
- Interviewer:** Not just in terms of English...
- Student A:** Well, honestly... what... What did I learn?
- Interviewer:** Something that benefited you in some way...?
- Student A:** [3s pause] Well. Hm. [7s pause]
- Interviewer:** Other than just having fun. Like, "Thanks to this class, I..."
- Student A:** If you put it like that, we chose a song and practiced it. We learned how to sing the song well. But did I learn anything? Did it help me? Honestly, I didn't think about it like that.
- Interviewer:** So you were just enjoying it.
- Student A:** It wasn't like "Okay, we're going to learn how to do such and such by doing this singing project." It was just, "We made something good. Ok, now let's perform it for our classmates."

Interviewer: Well, Ok, but did you feel you improved your pronunciation by practicing singing a lot, or learned how to speak better?

Student A: My partner was my good friend and I was able to say what I wanted to do. I didn't do it with someone who wasn't my friend. We were able to say what we wanted to do openly to each other.

Note: excerpt translated from original Japanese by author.

The emphasis at the end on her working relationship with her friend during the project suggests a social benefit of the activity. Upon further reflection, she later went on to say that conversational activities should have a purpose, and OC class should not be for the sole purpose of having fun (Items 222A, 224A).

Students B and C on the other hand expressed that enjoyable activities bring about learning (Items 161B, 163B, 175C, 227B, 319C). Student B put it thus:

Excerpt 4.2b: Student B, R3Q1. Item 227.

Student B: If it's fun, even if you don't set out to learn, you will learn naturally [without trying].

Interviewer: Unconsciously.

Note: excerpt translated from original Japanese by author.

This seems to be a belief that fun activities engage them, leading to increased effort, which means they are engaging the material the teacher wants them to learn with their full and undivided attention. Student B gave the example of a language game played in class for candy prizes (Item 163B). Perhaps this method of learning was seen as

successful in contrast to the traditional teacher-fronted ‘serious’ English class. Student D thought that this is true in her case (Item 257D).

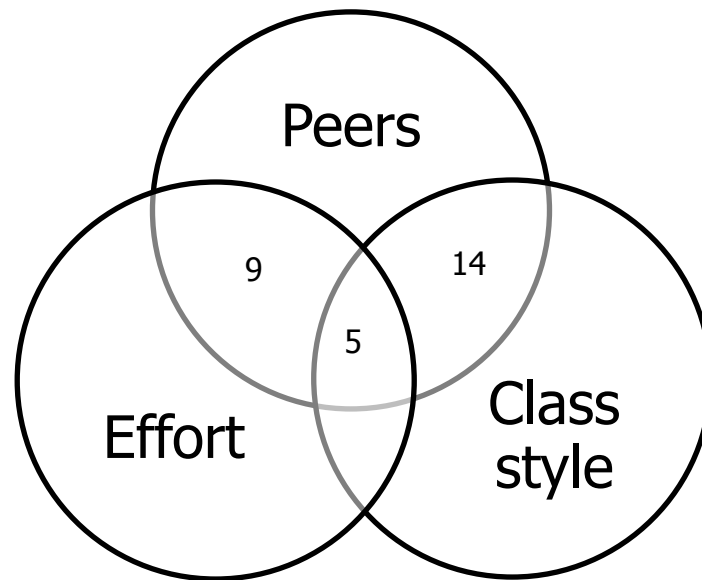
When it came to associating the specific class style of OC with improved abilities, there were few consistent answers or answers in common between students. There were, nevertheless, some interesting beliefs expressed. Student A felt in particular that this type of class has improved her willingness to communicate and listen in difficult situations (Items 134A, 135A). Students A and C suggested that the native-teacher lead L2 only style of OC is more likely to lead to increased improvement (Items 190C, 249C, 294A, 297A). Student B said that in a conversation activity with native speaker exchange students she was able to notice the gaps in her vocabulary, and this was more effective than rote memorization of vocabulary from a textbook typical of traditional English classes (Item 117B).

Table 4.2 – Beliefs, preferences, and goals related to improvement, enjoyment, and class style

<p>Beliefs:</p> <p>[B3] Enjoyable activities do not necessarily lead to improvement (Students A and D).</p> <p>[B4] Enjoyable activities bring about effortless learning (Students B and C).</p> <p>[B5] English-only instruction leads to improvement (Students A and C).</p> <p>[B6] Noticing the gaps in one’s vocabulary in a meaning-focused communicative task and finding out how to say it later is more effective than memorizing vocabulary from textbooks (Student B).</p>
<p>Preferences:</p> <p>None</p>
<p>Goals:</p> <p>None</p>

4.3 Peers-Effort-Class style

Figure 4.3 – Association frequency between peers, effort, and class style



Not surprisingly, the students were very much aware of their peers and peers' behavior in class, and this was a salient feature in the interview dialog. Student C and D believed that the nature of OC, brings the role of their peers to the forefront (Items 139C, 145D). Student C explained:

Excerpt 4.3: Student C, R2Q2. Item 139.

Student C: I don't hate this, necessarily, but depending on who's in the class, the mood is different. I can't say if this is true for all 3 teachers, but even if the teacher is the same, classes with bright, enthusiastic students look like they're having fun. Even with the same teacher. I think, "Wow, the class really depends on the students."

Interviewer: More than what you're doing in class, the people you're together with ...

Student C: ...are really important, I feel.

Interviewer: So in class you want those kinds of classmates.

Note: excerpt translated from original Japanese by author.

Student C further elaborated that the nature of the class requires students to exchange opinions and give advice with one another on a regular basis (Item 248), which is not true of “regular” English classes or perhaps other subjects.

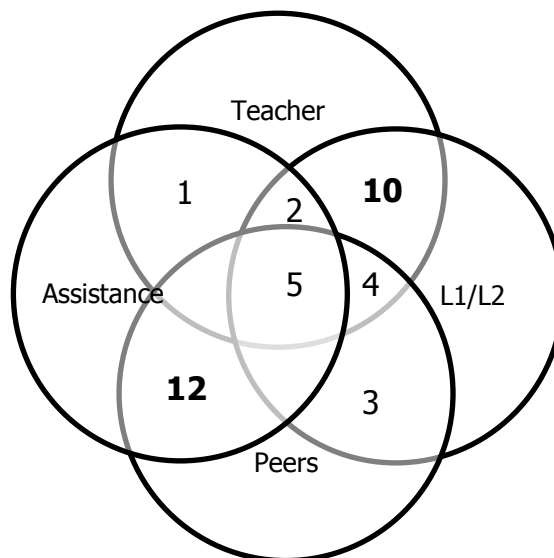
Students B, C, and D expressed concern about their classmates' level of effort, remarking that they wished their classmates would volunteer to participate actively and speak out more (Items 77B, 84C, 106C, 141C, 260D). Student D in particular seemed concerned about her peers' perceived lack of effort. She noted that some students are high enough in level that they do not need to put in much effort to get a good grade, and felt this is unfair (Item 149D). Both Students C and D, when asked, declined to suggest measures the teacher or school could take to compel students to participate more (Items 142C, 260D) and instead placed the responsibility on the students (Items 140C, 260D). Students A, B, and D said it wasn't the proficiency level of their classmates so much, but whether they were willing to participate actively or not that mattered to them personally (Items 75A, 80B, 88D).

Table 4.3 – Beliefs, preferences, and goals related to peers, effort and class style

Beliefs: None
Preferences: [P3] I want my classmates to participate actively in class (Students A, B, C, and D). [P4] Rules and other coercive measures should not be used to compel students to participate actively (Students C and D).
Goals: None

4.4 Teacher-L1/L2-Peers-Assistance

Figure 4.4 – Association frequency between teacher, L1/L2, peers, and assistance



Note: Associations between teacher and L1/L2 related through R2Q4 have been removed from the results represented here. The association was through the question itself, not response content.

In OC, the language of teacher talk is English, and the students' L1 is rarely, if ever, used. This fact was extremely salient to the students interviewed.

The most prominent idea related to these key words was that all of the students expressed having significant difficulty understanding what the teacher says in class (Items 36B, 104B, 105B, 135A, 147D, 229B, 230B, 246C, 325B). Consequences of this include: a feeling of missing out (Item 104B), feeling lost in class (Item 135A), a feeling of demotivation and the desire to talk with friends instead of staying engaged (Item 230B). Student B in particular had a lot to say about this issue. She wanted the teachers to slow down their speech (Items 36B, 229B, 325B), and said that some teachers are easier to understand than others (Item 276B). This concern seemed centered on difficulties she was currently experiencing, as she explained:

Excerpt 4.4: Student B, R3Q6. Item 325.

Student B: I'd like my teacher now to speak more slowly and use simpler words.

Interviewer: Because you'd like to be able to understand, right?

Student B: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think that it's easy for teachers to change the way they speak? Do you think that's something they can just be like "OK" and ...

Student B: It seems like it would be easy. I don't really know, though...
[...]
But not just speaking slowly, also emphasizing words more. Putting more emphasis on words when speaking to be more clear.

Note: excerpt translated from original Japanese by author.

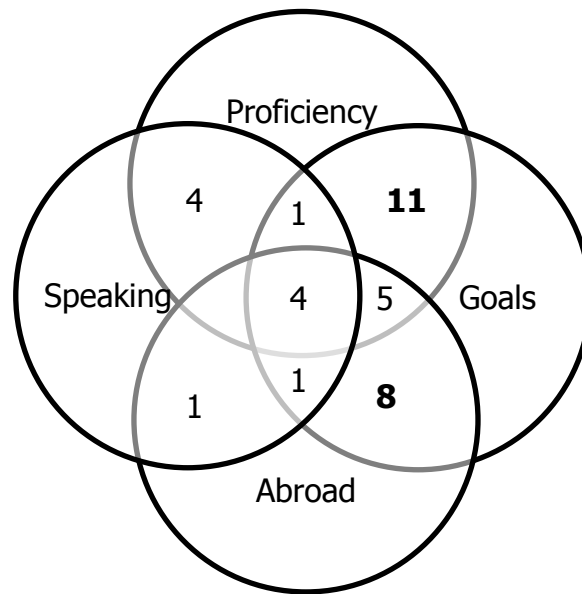
The higher level students in the class, according to all interviewed students, end up in the role of interpreter for the rest of the students who cannot understand what the teacher says (Items 72A, 78B, 82C, 228B, 263D), which the lower level students are grateful for. When no student is able to fully understand what the teacher says, students end up working together to decipher the meaning of teacher questions and instructions (Items 245C, 246C, 249C).

Table 4.4 – Beliefs, preferences, and goals related to teacher, L1/L2, peers, and assistance

Beliefs: [B7] Interacting with an interlocutor who does not speak the learner's L1 is effective because the learner must use L2 in order to communicate meaning (Students A, C, and D).
Wants: [P5] I want to be able to understand what the teacher says in English in class (Students A, B, C, and D).
Goals: None

4.5 Proficiency-Goals-Abroad-Speaking

Figure 4.5 – Association frequency between proficiency, goals, abroad, and speaking



Note: Associations between proficiency and goals related through R3Q3 have been removed from the results represented here. The association was through the question itself, not response content.

One of the research aims in this project was to explore what target situations the students believed they would use English in. English use abroad was the most common. Here Student B spoke of the significance of using English overseas and how it related to her current and desired proficiency:

Excerpt 4.5: Student B, R3Q1. Items 236-239.

Student B:

In Japan we only need Japanese, and people from other countries don't often come up to us and speak in English, so I didn't think about [English use] very much. But when I went abroad, where they use English, I had opportunities to use English. I felt, "I wish I could speak with them more. I wish I

could understand them better.” I thought if I got better at English I could speak more and listen better.

Interviewer: OK, so you felt a gap between your level and being able to speak with people there.

Student B: Yes.

Interviewer: How big is the gap?

Student B: Pretty big. When people overseas speak they blend their words together, and I have trouble understanding that. Even if I know the words they’re saying, I can’t understand them when they’re blended together. I wish I could learn that in OC class.

Note: excerpt translated from original Japanese by author.

Students A, B, and C had clear ideas of how English was or could be used abroad, and compared to other English use situations, it was these situations that they were able to talk most specifically about. For Student C, this was related to a study abroad trip which she would be going on later in the school year (Items 101C, 252C, 253C). For Student A, it was a plan to join a Japanese youth organization which does volunteer work abroad (Items 90A, 197A, 200A). For Student B, it was an experience traveling to Hawaii (Items 32B, 202.5B-209B, 305B). Student D, on the other hand, did not have an experience abroad or specific plan to go abroad, and overall gave fewer examples of imagined future English use.

In addition to orienting future language use toward situations abroad, the students tended to talk about language use and proficiency mostly in terms of speaking ability. To some extent, since the interviews were specifically about an OC course, this should be expected. However, none of the questions explicitly asking about future language use

and target proficiency (R1Q4, R2Q5, and R3Q3) specified speaking. Students A (Items 198A, 284A), B (Items 96B, 286B), and C (Item 212C) expressed a desire to be able to speak English conversationally abroad without difficulty. The examples given of spoken language use abroad tended to be purely social (Items 101C, 198A, 199A, 200A, 212C, 216D), or transactional (Items 199B, 202.5B, 203B, 213C, 216D, 305B) exchanges.

Table 4.5 – Beliefs, preferences, and goals related to proficiency, goals, abroad, and speaking

<p>Beliefs:</p> <p>None</p>
<p>Wants:</p> <p>None</p>
<p>Goals:</p> <p>[G1] I want to be able to converse socially in English without difficulty (Students A, B, and C).</p> <p>[G2] I want to be able to use English abroad in transactional situations (Students A, B, and C).</p>

Table 4.6 – Summary of results

Beliefs	Preferences	Goals
[B1] Activities that are enjoyable are more effective because they increase students' level of participation (Student B and C).	[P1] I want to do enjoyable classroom activities (Students A, B, C, and D).	[G1] I want to be able to converse socially in English without difficulty (Students A, B, and C).
[B2] Some students may benefit more from an enjoyable class style, and some more from a traditional study oriented class style (Students A and C).	[P2] I want OC to be different from traditional classroom learning, which is boring (Students A, B, C, and D).	[G2] I want to be able to use English abroad in transactional situations (Students A, B, and C).
[B3] Enjoyable activities do not necessarily lead to improvement (Students A and D).	[P3] I want my classmates to participate actively in class (Students A, B, C, and D).	
[B4] Enjoyable activities bring about effortless learning (Students B and C).	[P4] Rules and other coercive measures should not be used to compel students to participate actively (Students C and D).	
[B5] English-only instruction leads to improvement (Students A and C).	[P5] I want to be able to understand what the teacher says in English in class (Students A, B, C, and D).	
[B6] Noticing the gaps in one's vocabulary in a meaning-focused communicative task and finding out how to say it later is more effective than memorizing vocabulary from textbooks (Student B).		
[B7] Interacting with an interlocutor who does not speak the learner's L1 is effective because the learner must use L2 in order to communicate meaning (Students A, C, and D).		

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This section will begin with a discussion of the methods used in this study. Next, the salient belief, preference, and goals statements from Chapter 4 will be examined in light of their fit with OC course aims. Finally, syllabus design suggestions will be made based on learner subjective needs.

5.1 Discussion of methods

The first step in the ‘weak’ needs analysis framework proposed in Chapter 2 is the collection of data about subjective needs through the use of reliable and valid methods. As discussed in Section 2.2, Long (2005a, 2005b) has argued that needs analysis studies need to include explicit discussion of their methods. I would argue that this is especially critical in light of the type of needs analysis undertaken in this paper: An attempt to base items of the syllabus on the expressed beliefs and desires of adolescent learners. Subjective needs, by definition, may be difficult for learners to express (Bridley 1984, in Nunan 1988). It is therefore important to consider the methods used and potential limitations in the methodology as not to overstate the results of this study. Due to the limitations of this dissertation assignment, however, only the two considerations I felt had the largest impact will be discussed in detail. See Table 5.1 for a summary of all method issues.

Table 5.1 – Summary of the potential impact that the methods of this study had on results

Facet of methods used in this study	Potential impact
Typical sampling (Dörnyei 2007:128)	Salient features tended to be shared by most students, with no outliers, suggesting the student sample was homogenous.
Interview schedule development	Initial questions were guided by a vague notion of preferences and goals. The construct of beliefs, preferences, and goals as subjective needs was developed in the data analysis process.
Coding method	The coding system used in this study was highly susceptible to researcher agenda. Frequent follow up questions about enjoyment, for example, made this feature more salient in the results.
Member checking (Richards 2003:287, Dörnyei 2007:60-61)	Students readily took the opportunity to clarify and expand on the summaries presented by the researcher. Member checking allowed the researcher the opportunity to confirm many preliminary findings.
Researcher/interviewer and student relationship	The degree of power distance between the researcher/interviewer and students was high, and a “relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere” (Dörnyei 2007:140) was not developed.
Social desirability bias (Dörnyei 2007:141)	The likelihood of social desirability bias influencing student responses was high. Students on the whole presented a very positive image of themselves in their approach to English learning.
High level of interview structure (Dörnyei 2007:135-136)	The unintentionally high degree of structure in the interviews reduced student ‘ownership’ of the interview dialog, but allowed for important comparisons to be made between student responses.

5.1.1 Member checking

The use of a three round interview format carries a certain opportunity cost. It would have been possible to triple the student sample size through the use of single-round interviews. Aside from the benefits of increased time per student had on “data saturation,” (Croker 2009:10) however, the greatest benefit was the ability to use the final interview to share my observations with the students directly and receive their feedback (see Appendices 6-9 for the summaries used in the third interview round). This process, known by names such as “member checking” (Dörnyei 2007:60), bolsters the validity of findings (Richards 2003:287, Dörnyei 2007:60-61) by allowing participants to elaborate or clarify the researcher’s interpretation.

The use of member checking in this study proved extremely valuable. For the most part the students agreed with the summaries as they were and often volunteered valuable additional information. Student B went into great detail about her trip to Hawaii and the various ways in which her brief trip there allowed her to reflect on linguistic features of English such as pronunciation. For reasons that will be explored in the next section, an open rapport was never fully developed between the students and researcher/interviewer team. The use of member checking proved more effective at getting additional information than the use of follow-up questions had in earlier interviews.

There was only one major disagreement with the summaries. Student C disagreed when I said that her frequent mentions of her and her classmates doing things together suggested a belief that the nature of the OC class compelled students to act together as a team. Though it was a struggle for me, the interviewer, and Student C to come to a mutual understanding, I realized that her central worry was that some of her classmates were not cooperating with her teacher. The chance to clarify this point through member checking helped me connect this idea to the salient theme of students’ concern about the role of their peers in class.

5.1.2 The relationship between researcher, interviewer, and students

As mentioned in Section 3.2, the relationship between the researcher/interviewer team and the students was not ideal. Eder & Fingerson (2001) argue that while interviews with adolescents can be challenging, interview can be a valid research method if care is taken.

They recommend, for example, interviewing students in groups to reduce power distance, or incorporating the interview into one of the students' daily routines. They warn against creating a teacher-student dynamic in an interview.

Unfortunately, due in large part to both the researcher and interviewer being English teachers at the school in this study, interview dialog at times resembled "initiate-respond-follow up" (IRF) classroom exchanges (Ellis 2008:966). As a result, I was unable to get students to speak at length in response to prompts and to get the rich monologue style of data characteristic of good interview studies (e.g. Barcelos 2000, Simon-Maeda 2004). In turn, this required more interpretation of the data on my part, and placed more of my own agenda into the co-constructed dialog.

Also of note, as I was aware of the power distance during the interviews and the fragility of the rapport that existed, I at times hesitated to ask certain kinds of questions. I was very sensitive to avoid asking follow up questions that would seem to defend the views of students' OC teacher or the school administration. For example, though I was very interested in asking questions such as "Do you think it's possible to improve your speaking skills without doing some uninteresting things?" I instead tried to approach such things using oblique questions, which did not prove very successful.

5.2 Discussion of fit between subjective needs, course aims, and effective pedagogy

In this section each of the belief, preference, and goal statements will be examined individually. Following the model proposed in Chapter 2, the degree of agreement between each statement and the course aims of OC, language acquisition theories, and effective pedagogy will be explored.

It must be noted that the notion of making a definitive statement that any given subjective need is 'right' or 'wrong' is problematic. The approach in this section will be to compare the subjective needs with theories, hypotheses, and approaches in current SLA and TESOL literature. The decision on whether a statement 'fits' will be based on what is suitable for the teaching context of this study.

5.2.1 Discussion of beliefs

As stated in Chapter 2, the greatest concern with beliefs in a classroom context is whether or not they are ‘mistaken,’ though this notion is somewhat problematic (see Section 2.4.2). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011:117) argue that mistaken beliefs can lead to learner disappointment and hinder progress. The purpose of this section is to determine the degree of fit between belief statements and current SLA theories in light of the teaching context.

Belief 1: Activities that are enjoyable are more effective because they increase students’ level of participation.

This belief statement is consistent with recent research on motivation in EFL. For secondary school students and teachers, motivation is equated with fun and interest level (Ushioda 2008:21). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011:118-119) stress the importance of making learning more enjoyable as a teacher strategy for generating and maintaining learner motivation. Assuming that enjoyment is not at the expense of pedagogic value, this belief statement is consistent with the purpose of the OC course.

Belief 2: Some students may benefit more from an enjoyable class style, and some more from a traditional study-oriented class style.

This belief statement is a recognition of the fact that learners have different preferred learning styles, and that “what works well for one learner may not be useful for another” (Cohen and Dörnyei 2002, in Nel 2008:53). This recognition is not problematic from the perspective of syllabus design. It is important, however, to consider exactly what ‘enjoyable’ and ‘traditional’ class styles are from the perspective of the students. All students in this study personally identified with the ‘enjoyable’ approach. This belief statement may be problematic if the students believe that they personally could not benefit from dictation techniques or rote learning of vocabulary typical of grammar-translation. Use of these techniques is effective in a speaking and listening course (Nation and Newton 2009:59,132-133). Due to the limitations of the research methods used in this study, however, it cannot be said definitively that this belief statement is problematic.

Belief 3: Enjoyable activities do not necessarily lead to improvement

Cameron (2001:2) says that in young learner contexts, time in school language courses is too short to waste on enjoyable activities that do not maximize learning. This certainly holds true for the context of this study. The OC course syllabus must at its core maximize learning benefit, and this belief statement is a recognition of that.

Belief 4: Enjoyable activities bring about effortless learning

The concept of “incidental learning” holds that knowledge of already encountered vocabulary items can be enhanced through meaning-focused activities (Dörnyei 2009:170). Though Student D did not express the above belief statement in her interviews, she was able to recall specific vocabulary items used in a meaningful direction-giving activity that had been done in the previous school year. Other activities considered enjoyable by students, such as meaningful conversation, would fit this description as well. This belief is problematic if it is extended to enjoyable activities that have little pedagogic purpose, such as the dance performance project that Student A described in Section 4.2, or movie watching, as suggested by others. Again, however, it is difficult to say with certainty with the limitations of the data collected.

Belief 5: English-only instruction leads to improvement

There is disagreement on whether L1 should be allowed in language classes or not. Teacher L2 may be some of the only language input that learners receive, but studies have not definitively proved that any given L1/L2 is more effective than another (Ellis 2008:801-802). Nation (1997:24) argues that the use of L1 to set up language tasks to be done in L2 by students is appropriate if an L2 only approach would cause confusion.

The issue in the context of this study is whether or not teacher L2 qualifies as “comprehensible input,” which is hypothesized as helpful for language acquisition (Krashen 1981, 1982 in Ellis 2008:246). In the interviews, the students suggested that they had a great deal of trouble understanding teacher talk despite over a year of experience in L2 only classrooms. The conditions in this teaching context do not seem to support this belief statement, though objective data about teacher talk and student proficiency is necessary to say

for sure. Nevertheless, this belief may be problematic if students were to reject the incorporation of limited L1 instruction.

Belief 6: Noticing the gaps in one's vocabulary in a meaning-focused communicative task and finding out how to say it later is more effective than memorizing vocabulary from textbooks

Student B's belief, which is grounded in her experience in OC class of conversing with exchange students, relates to the idea of "pushed output" (Swain 1985, in Nation and Newton 2009:5). The following process occurs when one speaks to communicate meaningfully:

"The noticing/triggering function occurs when learners are attempting to produce the second language and they consciously notice gaps in their knowledge. That is, they do not know how to say what they want to say."

(Nation & Newton 2009:5)

This belief statement is in agreement with Swain's hypothesis, and fits with a communicative approach to OC.

Belief 7: Interacting with an interlocutor who does not speak the learner's L1 is effective because the learner must use L2 in order to communicate meaning

This statement has two aspects: (i) it is effective because output is being pushed, and (ii) the motivation to produce pushed output depends on the interlocutor being unable to speak Japanese.

Aspect (i) has been discussed with regards to Belief 6, and is not problematic. Aspect (ii), however, requires more careful consideration. The difference between speaking with a 'native' and with another Japanese person, or 'native' who speaks Japanese, is that of necessity. In an OC classroom, however, the majority of potential interlocutors for students are other students who speak Japanese as a first language, suggesting that the belief may hinder meaningful interaction between students.

Concluding thoughts on belief statements

While the above statements represent a set of beliefs held by students, the degree of endorsement given to each belief varied. Beliefs about the use of L1 and L2 in the classroom and the necessity to use L2 with teachers were clearly stated by students, possibly due to the salience of the language of OC instruction. Statements relating to the relationship between enjoyment and improvement, however, came about as a result of the attention drawn to this issue by the researcher and interviewer.

All of the statements relate to the context of the OC classroom and students' experience in it. This is consistent with what Barcelos (2000:44) suggests about the nature of language learning beliefs. It also suggests that students who have not yet taken OC may hold entirely different sets of beliefs. This fact must be kept in mind when suggesting syllabus changes based on these learner beliefs. Also of note is the fact that the beliefs mostly correspond to hypotheses advanced in SLA literature, in agreement with Preston's (1991, in Barcelos 2000:41) argument that learner beliefs are valid products of human reasoning.

It is important to remember the limitations of the interview methods. Due to social desirability bias or other factors, one cannot assume that this set of belief statements represents an entire picture of the larger set of language learning beliefs held by OC students. Observation, or other research methods, would be necessary to determine the degree to which learner beliefs influence their classroom behavior.

Table 5.2 – Summary of fit between belief statements and OC course

Statement	Fit
[B1] Activities that are enjoyable are more effective because they increase students' level of participation (Student B and C).	Good fit; consistent with theories of motivation (e.g. Dörnyei & Ushioda:118-119).
[B2] Some students may benefit more from an enjoyable class style, and some more from a traditional study oriented class style (Students A and C).	Conditional; Problematic if students reject all activities associated with traditional instruction as incompatible with their learning style.
[B3] Enjoyable activities do not necessarily lead to improvement (Students A and D).	Good fit.
[B4] Enjoyable activities bring about effortless learning (Students B and C).	Conditional; Problematic if students believe they will learn from enjoyable activities which have little pedagogical purpose.
[B5] English-only instruction leads to improvement (Students A and C).	Problematic, given that students do not find actual teacher input comprehensible.
[B6] Noticing the gaps in one's vocabulary in a meaning-focused communicative task and finding out how to say it later is more effective than memorizing vocabulary from textbooks (Student B).	Good fit; consistent with Swain's (1985, in Nation & Newton 2009:5) notion of "pushed output."
[B7] Interacting with an interlocutor who does not speak the learner's L1 is effective because the learner must use L2 in order to communicate meaning (Students A, C, and D).	Conditional; problematic if students believe that speaking with other Japanese people is ineffective.

5.2.2 Discussion of preferences

The purpose of this section is to discuss the degree of fit between learner preferences and course aims as well as effective pedagogic practice.

Preference 1: I want to do enjoyable classroom activities

There are two possible dimensions to this statement: (i) activities with a pedagogical purpose that are relevant and interesting to students, and (ii) activities without a pedagogical purpose

that are only “ludic” (a term used by Sullivan & Kagawa 2011 for ‘play-like’ activities) or fulfill only socialization needs.

In the case of (i), as explored in Section 5.2.1, activities that match student interests and are novel and interesting are more likely to generate and maintain interest in language learning. Student preference for activities of this sort is compatible with the aims of OC, and should be a part of the course syllabus. A fitting activity suggested by students in interviews was meaningful pair conversation. Language games, depending on their pedagogic purpose, may or may not fit into this category.

The case of (ii) is problematic. The example of the dance project that Student A described, where she was unable to recall any language element, or movie watching for no purpose, fits into this category.

Preference 2: I want OC to be different from traditional English learning, which is boring

In this statement, students express the desire for an alternative to traditional grammar-translation. This fits in with the idea of OC as a course based on CLT principles. Examples of ‘serious’ class activities, including silent textbook reading, extensive use of worksheets, and an anxiety-inducing atmosphere, are for the most part things to be avoided in a course of this nature. Additionally, as research in Japan has suggested (Kikuchi 2005, 2009, Murphey et al. 2009), this type of class is demotivating. The syllabus designer must, however, be aware of the possibility of an over-reaction to traditional but legitimate activities such as deliberate vocabulary study and dictation (see discussion of Belief 2), as McVeigh (2002) suggests is common in Japan with his notion of “fantasy English.” It is important for the teacher to use meaningful, effective, *and* enjoyable methodology. This preference statements suggests that difficulty could arise if activities superficially resemble those of traditional classrooms, and accommodation of this preference could be contrary to course aims.

Preference 3: I want my classmates to participate actively in class

The preference for classmates to be cooperative, put effort into learning, and take the class seriously does not run counter to the aims of OC. The result would be that class time would be used efficiently, and learning outcomes would likely be better. It suggests a preference for

good group dynamics in the classroom. Dörnyei and Murphey offer the following description:

“In a ‘good’ group, the L2 classroom can turn out to be such a pleasant and inspiring environment that the time spent there is a constant source of success and satisfaction for teachers and students alike.”

(Dörnyei & Murphey 2003:3-4)

This outcome is desirable, and Dörnyei and Murphey suggest a number of strategies toward creating a positive environment in *Group Dynamics in the Language Classroom* (2003).

Preference 4: Rules and other coercive measures should not be used to compel students to participate actively

Nation (1997:19) argues that teachers should try to solve classroom problems through pedagogical, and not disciplinary means. The students who stated this preference did so after first stating that their classmates were not participating actively. The preference seems to suggest that they do not want the teacher to take any classroom management measures that are coercive or authoritarian. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003:91) argue that a heavy handed approach to leadership is not the best long-term strategy toward classroom management, suggesting a fit between this preference and best practice.

This preference only becomes a problem if students reject even reasonable appeals by the teacher to participate, or a preference for a type of laissez-faire approach (Dörnyei and Murphey 2003:91). McVeigh (2003:167) suggests that Japanese students operating under a “fantasy English” frame of mind confuse “ordinary” classroom management with zealous disciplinarianism. The suggestion from Students C and D that the classmates should regulate their behavior of their own volition may suggest an obstacle for effective teaching. Without a deeper understanding of these students’ preference, however, such a claim cannot be made definitively.

Preference 5: I want to be able to understand what the teacher says in English in class

Students interviewed in this study spoke often of their struggle to understand teacher talk, and dependence on more proficient classmates for understanding. If we work under the

assumption that teachers of OC are doing their best to make their teacher talk comprehensible to students, accommodation of this preference may be difficult, if not impossible. Generally speaking, however, it is in the best interests of all parties involved that OC teachers attempt to use teacher talk that students can understand.

Concluding thoughts on preference statements

I was surprised when summarizing student preferences that there were so few statements. The suggestion that preferences are highly individualized (Willing 1988, in Nunan 1995) did not seem to be the case in the results of this study. This was perhaps due to the fact that a typical sample of students who held a lot in common was used. I would suggest that it has something to do with the interview methods as well. Preference is defined as choosing one thing *over another*, and none of the interview questions were structured to ask students to make choices between various activities or approaches. Specific examples of preferred activities were less important than what the activities held in common: enjoyment.

The preference for enjoyment, the most salient of those stated, is consistent with the results of other studies. Sullivan and Kagawa's focus group study (2011) in particular found that students' preferences centered on enjoyable activities, and not a desire for activities promoting effective language learning. They suggested that students in their sample were, in general, unserious about learning. There is insufficient evidence in this study, however, to make the same claim about the learners in this context.

Table 5.3 – Summary of fit between preference statements and OC course

Statement	Fit
[P1] I want to do enjoyable classroom activities (Students A, B, C, and D).	Conditional; problematic if students prefer activities that are enjoyable but have little pedagogic purpose.
[P2] I want OC to be different from traditional classroom learning, which is boring (Students A, B, C, and D).	Conditional; problematic if students reject effective activities that resemble those used in traditional classroom learning.
[P3] I want my classmates to participate actively in class (Students A, B, C, and D).	Good fit.
[P4] Rules and other coercive measures should not be used to compel students to participate actively (Students C and D).	Conditional; problematic if students reject any but a “laissez-faire” teaching style (Dörnyei & Murphey 2003:91).
[P5] I want to be able to understand what the teacher says in English in class (Students A, B, C, and D).	Good fit.

5.2.3 Discussion of goals

In this section, the goal statements made by students will be discussed regarding their fit with the aims of the OC course. Degree of fit will be considered in light of MEXT’s (2003) *Course of Study* guidelines for OC and general CLT principles for course design. MEXT’s OC guidelines are listed in Appendix 1, but relevant details from the OCI course are reproduced below:

(1) Language Activities

The following communicative activities should be conducted in concrete language-use situations so that students play the role of receivers and senders of information, ideas, etc.

- A To understand content by listening to English and to respond in a way appropriate to the situation and the purpose.
- B To ask and answer questions about topics that are of interest to students.
- C To transmit information, ideas, etc. appropriately in accordance with the situation and the purpose.
- D To organize and present information obtained by listening or reading, one's own ideas, etc. and to understand what is presented.

(MEXT 2003)

Goal 1: I want to be able to converse socially in English without difficulty

There are two main aspects to this goal. Students want (i) to be able to use English in conversational situations, and (ii) want to converse without difficulty.

With regards to (i), this statement fits perfectly with CLT principles as it is a common, real-life use of English. It also fits into the meaningful activity types that MEXT (2003) suggests. Hughes (2011:84) states that conversation is the most commonly occurring genre of speaking. It helps build relationships and social identities as well as sharing understanding between speakers. ‘Small talk’ is also important for successful integration into workplaces (Holmes 2005), and one can imagine this is the case with many English speaking groups that learners may at some point find themselves in.

More difficult, however, is (ii), the notion of having social conversation without difficulty. None of the students stated that this was their exit goal for the course, which would be difficult in most cases. Nation and Crabbe (1991:195) say that proficient social conversation is an “ambitious aim” and offer anecdotally the case of a man who couldn’t complete more than 3 turns in conversation with even 250 hours of study. So long as students do not have unrealistic expectations about proficiency gains, it is unlikely that this goal would be a source of difficulty.

Goal 2: I want to be able to use English abroad in transactional situations

The transactional situations that students listed in their interviews included shopping, café and restaurant orders, and using a taxi. All of these are service encounters are reasonably likely to be encountered abroad, as the students attested through their own experiences. The above situations are represented in MEXT’s (2003) *Course of Study* language use situations as well. This type of goal is reasonable, and fits in with the aims of OC.

Concluding thoughts on goal statements

While students' goals fell into only two categories, the students gave examples of many different facets of both goals in their interviews. There is certainly enough material in these very broad genres to base syllabus content for two years of OC upon.

In contrast to Richard et al.'s (2011) finding that 54% of high school students' goals were personal-oriented (including conversation and travel) and 42% were career oriented, the students in this study did not appear to hold such goals. Though some students did, in their interviews, mention the possibility of using English for work, this was not a salient feature in the data.

Finally, the research methods of this study did not reveal competing in-class goals such as the need for social interaction or a 'performance goal' orientation. Due to limited rapport, and the likelihood of a social desirability bias effect, there is insufficient data to comment. Observation or other methods would need to be used in order to determine if there are competing, non-linguistic goals to consider in course design.

Table 5.4 – Summary of fit between goal statements and OC course

Statement	Fit
[G1] I want to be able to converse socially in English without difficulty (Students A, B, and C).	Good fit; consistent with development of general proficiency and MEXT course guidelines.
[G2] I want to be able to use English abroad in transactional situations (Students A, B, and C).	Good fit; consistent with development of general proficiency and MEXT course guidelines.

5.3 Syllabus suggestions

The assumption in a 'weak' needs analysis, as outlined in Chapter 2, is that there is already a syllabus of some kind in place in the teaching context. This is true of the context of this study, where although teachers of OC are not bound strictly to one detailed syllabus, there are a number of administrative constraints and shared norms in place. While an argument could be

made for changing any of the given constraints, for the purposes of this paper they will be assumed to be fixed. Fixed factors include:

- OC at this school is solo-taught by a ‘native speaker’ of English.
- There are 3 hours of class per week for OCI, and 4 hours a week for OCII.
- The number of students is typically 10-15 per class.
- The administration requires that grading is based mainly on summative evaluation of speaking proficiency.

In addition, the suggestions made in this section are not meant to represent a comprehensive syllabus. Rather, their purpose is to offer modest changes in order to make OC more valuable to learners. None of the changes proposed are novel. As argued in Chapter 2, the purpose of a ‘weak’ need analysis is primarily to focus a syllabus designer’s attention, and to justify specific choices from the many attractive options available in TESOL literature.

5.3.1 Team teaching and use of L1

As noted in Section 5.2.1, Belief 5, there is no clear consensus in TESOL on whether teacher L1 use is a net positive or negative for learners’ language acquisition (Ellis 2008:801-802). Based on the results of this study, however, I believe a strong case can be made for the use of teacher L1 in this school’s OC courses, as discussed regarding Belief 5, Belief 7, and Preference 5. Students themselves pointed out the consequences of not understanding teacher talk: feelings of missing out, being at a loss, and demotivation.

I propose that limited team teaching with the ‘native speaker’ teacher and a Japanese teacher of English (JTE) be used to introduce L1 to the classroom for specific purposes. The limited nature of team teaching would be necessary because of scheduling issues, as JTEs have their own teaching schedules and non-teaching duties, and thus would not be able to attend every session of the 3 or 4 hour per week class.

The JTE could serve as translator or equal teaching partner, depending on the JTE’s level of comfort with the class style and his or her available time for cooperative preparation. During the limited time in the classroom, the JTE could focus his or her time on the following,

recommended as optimum L1 use situations by Nation (1997) and Cook (2001, in Ellis 2008:801): the explanation of grammar and vocabulary points when form-focused instruction is necessary, task organization, classroom management, and explanation and administration of tests. The use of L1 in class would also allow students the opportunity to voice their own concerns to the teachers, and to be better involved in classroom decisions (Nation 1997:24). The use of L1 for matters not strictly related to language content will be discussed further in Section 5.3.5.

5.3.2 Simplification through routines and repetition

If the limited team teaching scheme were adopted, the majority of the class would still be solo-taught by the ‘native’ teacher in L2 only. In order to further meet the need of students to understand teacher talk (Preference 5), while still preserving the value that students place on the L2-only nature of teacher talk (Beliefs 5 and 7), I propose the use of routines and repetition.

The first way that this could be done is through the sequencing of content. In Burner’s (1962, in Nation & Macalister 2010:82) spiral syllabus model, the teacher covers major content items repeatedly over the course of the year in increasing levels of detail. Repetition of the same major items would promote greater task familiarity and require less demand on the teacher to constantly explain new concepts.

The second recommendation is the use of predictable routines throughout the school year. I already do this with tests in my classes, where the majority of unit tests are recorded pair tests following the same basic template, and have found this effective in reducing confusion. Another suggestion would be to use formulaic task instruction routines, taking care to use the same or similar language whenever possible.

5.3.3 Conversation

As previously discussed with regards to Goal 1, conversation is the most common form of speech (Hughes 2011:84). By making conversation one of the core areas of content, students’ desire to be able to speak socially can be used to make the course more relevant and

interesting to them (conversational activities were identified as interesting in Preferences 1 and 2).

As Johnson and Tyler (1998, in Hughes 2011:85) note, speakers are unaware even in their native language about how conversation is structured and managed, and often have misconceptions. Moritoshi (2002) identifies many salient features of conversation, which I have summarized into possible focus areas for instruction in Table 5.5:

Table 5.5 – Summary of salient features of conversation

Conversation has the following features:

- It involves turn-taking
- It has opening and closing rituals.
- It frequently involves back-channeling.
- It frequently involves non-verbal communication.
- Turns in conversation are quite short.
- Speakers are cooperative.

(summarized from Moritoshi 2002:14-17)

In addition to these discourse features, topics in conversation are “relatively unconstrained,” (Coulthard 1985, in Moritoshi 2002:16) which allows flexibility in selection of topics that are interesting to students, and vocabulary items that suit their level of proficiency. It is important to ensure that conversation be used as an end in itself in class, rather than pseudo-conversation for the purposes of form focused instruction.

5.3.4 Survival Syllabus

As discussed in regards to Goal 2, students identified service encounters abroad as situations they would like the ability to deal with in the future. The “Survival Syllabus” developed by Nation and Crabbe (1991) is an excellent starting point for syllabus content. This list of items also has the benefit of being based on needs analysis and learner feedback (Nation and Newton 2009:179). The language in this syllabus is flexible enough to be adapted to specific situations learners express interest in. Also, because the language can be used in many situations, it fits a spiral syllabus design with multiple repetitions of common, useful elements.

As Nation and Macalister (2010:32) warn us, “control of the wider language system” is more important than language for limited situations, especially for secondary school learners who do not have one clear situation, such as a job in medicine, for language use. Fortunately, many items in the Survival Syllabus are high frequency vocabulary and phrases that are likely to appear in non-service encounter situations, many also being useful for conversation.

5.3.5 Non-linguistic syllabus elements

Because of the limits of the methods used in this study, it was not possible to fully describe the subjective needs of students in OC. It is possible to leave the option for ongoing investigation of subjective needs as the school year progresses by including non-linguistic elements to the syllabus. Also, we can do our best to encourage beliefs, preferences, and goals that fit with OC course aims by incorporating various strategies, such as reflection techniques and discussion in L1, into the syllabus by design.

If the suggestion to use team teaching and introduce L1 is taken, this allows teachers to use strategies to foster a positive group dynamic (see Dörnyei and Murphey 2003). Since the JTE shares linguistic and cultural resources with students, he or she is in a good position to develop rapport. Studies have shown a tendency for Japanese learners to highly value qualities in teachers such as sense of humor, understanding, and caring for students (Hadley & Yoshioka-Hadley 1996, Ryan 1998). Using L1 as a shared resource, it is much more likely that open communication will allow the teachers to foster this type of relationship. In turn, this will help the group dynamic and address Preferences 3 and 4 by motivating students to work together and reducing the need for overt disciplinary measures.

Table 5.6 – Summary of proposed syllabus changes as a result of needs analysis

Suggestion	Details	Corresponding belief, preference, and goal statements
Team teaching and use of L1	Limited use of L1 in class fulfils a student need to understand classroom instruction. L1 use is appropriate for administration and classroom management matters (Nation 1997, Cook 2001 (in Ellis 2008:801)).	Belief 5, Belief 7, Preference 5
Simplification through routines and repetition	Use of simplification and routines will likely reduce the amount of incomprehensible teacher talk, fulfilling the student need to understand and benefit from L2 instruction.	Belief 5, Belief 7, Preference 5
Conversation	Conversation with classmates was identified by students as an enjoyable activity. Development of conversational skills encourages general proficiency.	Belief 1, Preference 1, Goal 1
Survival Syllabus	Through the use of Nation and Crabbe's (1991) Survival Syllabus, students can learn high frequency vocabulary and phrases for situations they want to use English in.	Goal 2
Non-linguistic elements	Periodic reflection on beliefs, preferences, and goals may promote fit between student subjective needs and class aims. Improvement of group dynamics through L1 use fulfils a student need for a positive learning environment.	Preference 3, Preference 4

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of findings

The results of this subjective needs analysis are consistent with findings in studies of similar contexts of Japan on two major areas: the salience of desire for enjoyment in English learning (Sakui & Gaies 1999, P.A. McVeigh 2002, Kikuchi 2005, 2009, Riley 2006, Balint 2008, Murphey et al. 2009, Richard 2009, Sullivan & Kagawa 2011), and an orientation toward daily conversation and travel goals (Hayasaka 1995, Kuwabara et al. 2005, Watanabe 2006, Nakano et al. 2009, Richard et al. 2011). Other results, which were more peculiar to the context of this study, did not strongly correspond to other trends identified in the literature.

Using the model for ‘weak’ needs analysis proposed in Chapter 2, it was possible to propose changes to an already in place syllabus that are in line with student needs. Due to the limitations noted in Section 5.1, however, further study is necessary to determine how well the proposed changes will reflect students’ true wants and beliefs.

6.2 Limitations of the study

This study took place in a private school with circumstances uncommon to public schools, where the majority of Japan’s students attend high school. The most important difference for the purposes of this study is the fact that the class is taught alone by a ‘native speaker’ teacher of English instead of being team-taught as is the case in public high schools. In addition, the sample size, although care was taken to make sure it was representative of typical students taking OC, was very small. These factors limit the generalizability of findings, and by extension, the syllabus suggestions made in section 5.3.

6.3 Recommendations for further research

In this paper I set out to use needs analysis in a situation in which it is not often applied in published research: a secondary school General English context. While I believe that the

results of the analysis and subsequent syllabus changes will be of value to the learners at this school, an important piece of the puzzle has remained unaddressed, namely, the issue of objective needs (i.e. specific linguistic content for target situations and proficiency testing). Practicing teachers can make headway in needs analysis and syllabus design, as I have attempted to do in this paper. Ultimately, however, MEXT is in the best position to carry out region- or nation-wide needs analysis studies addressing both objective and subjective needs which can be generalized to many Japanese teaching contexts. In Table 6.1, I have proposed directions for research based on Nation and Macalister's (2010) three categories of needs: Necessities, Lacks, and Wants.

Table 6.1 – Proposed direction for future needs analysis research

	Need type	Focus	Example studies
Objective needs	Necessities	Society-level needs analysis	Brecht & Rivers (2005)
		Conversation analysis	Chaudron et al. (2005)
		Corpus studies	
	Lacks	Valid and reliable proficiency testing	
Subjective needs	Wants	Beliefs	Sakui & Gaies (1999)
		Preferences	Sullivan & Kagawa (2011)
		Goals	Richard (2011)

(note: Need types based on three categories identified by Nation & Macalister 2010)

In addition, further research into subjective needs will need to respond to Long's (2005b) recommendation for the use of multi-method studies. Interviews should be complimented with the use of observation and journals in order to develop a more complete picture of learner subjective needs.

6.4 Final thoughts

The results from this study, done in the 2011-2012 school year, are going to be used for the basis for changes made to my own teaching syllabus in the 2012-2013 year. The problem with doing a needs analysis such as the one in this paper not as an ongoing, in-class dialog between teacher and student, but instead as a pre-course study, is that when one group of learners leaves, you may be confronted by learners with an entirely different set of subjective needs. Thus, I am trying to examine a ‘moving target.’

Fittingly, as a result of OC’s reputation for lenient grading, and students’ strategic decision-making in their choice of electives, the school administration asked teachers to lower class grade point averages in line with other required English classes for the 2011-12 year. Students choosing their 2012-13 electives have been influenced by this choice, and the enrollment numbers for OC have dropped by over 50%. The typical sample of students interviewed in this study will likely not represent typical learners from next year, who will likely have higher English abilities overall and different experiences with English education. This casts doubt on whether or not a time-intensive research project to investigate subjective needs is indeed a worthwhile effort.

Nevertheless, I will conclude that I found the process of doing this needs analysis very enlightening and enjoyable. I feel I have gotten closer to answering many of the questions I had at the start of this project, and have, through the use of interviews, gone far deeper than was possible through the use of end-of-year questionnaires and in-class discussions with students. I am very optimistic that the syllabus changes suggested in this paper will in fact be relevant and of benefit to students in the next school year.

APPENDIX 1

EXCERPTS FROM MEXT 2003 *COURSE OF STUDY*

II Subjects

1 Aural/Oral Communication I

1 Objectives

To develop students' basic abilities to understand and convey information, ideas, etc. by listening to or speaking English, and to foster a positive attitude toward communication through dealing with everyday topics.

2 Contents

(1) Language Activities

The following communicative activities should be conducted in concrete language-use situations so that students play the role of receivers and senders of information, ideas, etc.

- A To understand content by listening to English and to respond in a way appropriate to the situation and the purpose.
- B To ask and answer questions about topics that are of interest to students.
- C To transmit information, ideas, etc. appropriately in accordance with the situation and the purpose.
- D To organize and present information obtained by listening or reading, one's own ideas, etc. and to understand what is presented.

(2) Treatment of the Language Activities

A Items to be Considered in Instruction

In order to conduct effectively the communicative activities stated in (1), instruction on the following items should be given when necessary.

- (a) To pronounce English with due attention to the basic characteristics of English sounds such as rhythm and intonation.
- (b) To understand and utilize basic sentence patterns and grammatical items that are required for communicative activities.
- (c) To utilize expressions that are required in asking for repetition and paraphrasing.
- (d) To understand the role of nonverbal means of communication such as gestures and use them effectively in accordance with the situation and the purpose.

B Language-use Situations and Functions of Language

In conducting the language activities stated in (1), language-use situations and functions of language suitable for the attainment of the objectives stated in 1 above should be chosen mainly from among the Examples of Language-use Situations and the Examples of Functions of Language listed after *Writing* (hereafter referred to as Examples of Language-use Situations and Functions of Language), and these chosen examples should be integrated and utilized. In so doing, consideration should be given so that the situations for communication on

an individual basis and for communication in groups can be actively provided.

(3) Language Elements

A In carrying out the language activities stated in (1), language elements suitable for the attainment of the objectives stated in 1 above should, in principle, be chosen from among the Language Elements listed in the Course of Study for Lower Secondary School and the English Language Elements listed after *Writing* (hereafter referred to as Language Elements for Lower and Upper Secondary Schools). In so doing, consideration should be given to the following.

(a) The language elements should be contemporary standard English in principle.

However, consideration should also be given to the fact that different varieties of English are used throughout the world as means of communication.

(b) Analyses and explanations of language elements should be minimized. Emphasis should be placed on understanding how language elements are used in actual situations and on utilizing them.

B Words suitable for the achievement of the objectives stated in 1 above should be chosen from within the limits indicated in Contents(3)B of *English I*. Basic collocations should be chosen for instruction.

3 Treatment of the Contents

(1) Taking into account the emphasis on developing students' aural/oral communication abilities in lower secondary schools, the basic learning items introduced in lower secondary schools should be reviewed and mastered by conducting communicative activities which cover a wider range of topics and involve a greater variety of partners.

(2) Listening and speaking instruction is conducted more effectively by integrating listening and speaking activities with reading and writing activities.

2 Aural/Oral Communication II

1 Objectives

To further develop students' abilities to organize, present and discuss information, ideas, etc. in English, and to foster a positive attitude toward communication through dealing with a wide variety of topics.

2 Contents

(1) Language Activities

In addition to the communicative activities stated in Contents(1) of *Aural/Oral Communication I*, the following communicative activities should be conducted.

A To understand the outline and the main points of organized utterances such as speeches, and organize one's own ideas etc. about them.

B To organize and present effectively information and ideas about a wide variety of topics.

C To discuss or debate a wide variety of topics.

D To create and perform skits etc.

(2) Treatment of the Language Activities

A Items to be Considered in Instruction In order to conduct effectively the communicative activities stated in (1), instruction on the following items should be given when necessary.

- (a) To take notes while listening to organized utterances when necessary.
- (b) To pronounce with due attention to rhythm, intonation, loudness, speed, etc. in order to transmit one's own intentions and feelings correctly.
- (c) To utilize the expressions that are required for activities such as presentation, discussion and debate.
- (d) To learn and utilize the basic rules of discussion, debate, etc. and ways of presentation.

B Language-use Situations and Functions of Language

In conducting the language activities stated in (1), language-use situations and functions of language suitable for the attainment of the objectives stated in 1 above should be chosen mainly from among the Examples of Language-use Situations and Functions of Language, and these chosen examples should be integrated and utilized. In so doing, consideration should be given so that the situations for communication aimed at groups or a large number of people and for creative communication can be actively provided.

(3) Language Elements

A In carrying out the language activities stated in (1), language elements suitable for the attainment of the objectives stated in 1 above should, in principle, be chosen from among the Language Elements for Lower and Upper Secondary Schools. The language elements should be contemporary standard English in principle. However, consideration should also be given to the fact that different varieties of English are used throughout the world as means of communication.

B Words suitable for the achievement of the objectives stated in 1 above should be chosen from within the limits indicated in Contents(3)B of *English II*. Basic collocations should be chosen for instruction.

3 Treatment of the Contents

The same considerations stated in Treatment of the Contents of *Aural/Oral Communication I* should be applied.

[...]

2 Contents

(1) Language Activities

The following communicative activities should be conducted in concrete language-use situations so that students play the role of senders and receivers of information, ideas, etc.

- A To write down the outline and the main points of what has been listened to or read in accordance with the situation and the purpose
- B To organize and write down one's own ideas etc. of what has been listened to or read.
- C To organize and write down one's intended messages in accordance with the situation and the purpose so that they can be understood by the reader.

(2) Treatment of the Language Activities

A Items to be Considered in Instruction

In order to conduct effectively the communicative activities stated in (1), instruction on the following items should be given when necessary.

- (a) To write down sentences that are spoken or read aloud.
- (b) To utilize necessary words, phrases and expressions to transmit ideas and feelings.
- (c) To write with due attention to the structure and development of passages.

B Language-use Situations and Functions of Language

In conducting the language activities stated in (1), language-use situations and functions of language suitable for the attainment of the objectives stated in 1 above should be chosen mainly from among the Examples of Language-use Situations and Functions of Language, and these chosen examples should be integrated and utilized. In so doing, consideration should be given so that the opportunities to have the actual experience of communication can be provided by utilizing language-use situations such as exchanging letters or E-mails.

(3) Language Elements

A In carrying out the language activities stated in (1), language elements suitable for the attainment of the objectives stated in 1 above should, in principle, be chosen from among the Language Elements for Lower and Upper Secondary Schools. The language elements should be contemporary standard English in principle.

B Words suitable for the achievement of the objectives stated in 1 above should be chosen from within the limits indicated in Contents(3)B of English I. Basic collocations should be chosen for instruction.

3 Treatment of the Contents

(1) Writing instruction is conducted more effectively by integrating writing activities with listening, speaking and reading activities.

(2) The purpose for writing should be emphasized in instruction, not only learning language elements but also transmitting information and ideas etc. In so doing, emphasis should also be placed on the process of writing to make the students' writing richer in content and more appropriate in form.

[Examples of Language-use Situations]

(a) Situations for communication on an individual basis

phone calls, traveling, shopping, parties, home, school, restaurants, hospitals, interviews, letters, E-mails, etc.

(b) Situations for communication in groups

recitations, speeches, presentations, role-plays, discussions, debates, etc.

(c) Situations for communication aimed at a large number of people

books, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, posters, radio, television, movies, communication networks, etc.

(d) Situations for creative communication

recitations, skits, dramas, in-school broadcasting programs, video-making, compositions, etc.

[Examples of Functions of Language]

- (a)Smoothing human relationships
addressing, greeting, introducing, showing comprehension and attention, etc.
- (b)Transmitting feelings
expressing gratitude, welcoming, celebrating, praising, expressing contentment,
expressing pleasure, expressing surprise, expressing sympathy, complaining,
criticizing, apologizing, expressing regret, expressing disappointment, deploring,
expressing anger, etc.
- (c)Transmitting information
explaining, reporting, describing, giving reasons, etc.
- (d)Transmitting ideas and intentions
offering, promising, claiming, agreeing, disagreeing, persuading, accepting, refusing,
inferring, assuming, concluding, etc.
- (e)Instigating action
asking questions, requesting, treating, inviting, permitting, advising, suggesting,
giving orders, prohibiting, etc.

[English Language Elements]

A Sentence Patterns

- (a)'Subject +Verb +Complement' in which the verb is other than *be* and the complement is a present participle or a past participle, or in which the verb is *be* and the complement is a clause that begins with *what* etc., *that* or *whether*
- (b)'Subject +Verb +Object' in which the object is a clause that begins with *what* etc., or *if* or *whether*
- (c)'Subject +Verb +Indirect Object+Direct Object' in which the direct object is how etc. +to-infinitive, or a clause that begins with *what* etc., *that*, or *if* or *whether*
- (d)'Subject +Verb+ Object+ Complement' in which the complement is a present participle, a past participle or a root infinitive
- (e)Other sentence patterns
 - a. *It + be* etc. + ~ + a clause that begins with *that* etc.
 - b. Subject+ *seem* etc. +to-infinitive
 - c. It+ *seem* etc. +a clause that begins with *that*

B Grammar

- (a)Use of the infinitive
- (b)Use of relative pronouns
- (c)Use of relative adverbs
- (d)Use of the pronoun *it* representing following noun phrases or noun clauses
- (e)Use of tenses:
the present perfect progressive, the past perfect, the past perfect progressive,
the future progressive and the future perfect
- (f) Use of the passive voice that follows auxiliary verbs
- (g)Basic use of the subjunctive mood
- (h)Basic use of participial constructions

(Excerpts of information relevant to Oral Communication I and II from MEXT 2003)

APPENDIX 2

RESULTS OF CLASSROOM PREFERENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Group 1 – Topics	N	M	SD	±M	g rank	o rank
1. I like talking about my opinion, way of thinking, lifestyle, likes and dislikes.	123	3.96	0.79	0.13	2	14
2. I like studying content from other subjects (science, info tech, ethics).	123	2.77	0.95	-1.06	5	25
3. I like talking about music, movies, television, comics, and other pop culture.	123	4.33	0.75	0.50	1	8
4. I like talking about recent news, current events, etc.	123	3.24	0.84	-0.59	4	22
5. I like controversial topics, such as euthanasia, international problems, etc.	123	2.58	0.91	-1.25	6	27
6. I like studying about other countries customs and cultures.	123	3.95	0.88	0.12	3	15
Group 2 – Study methods						
7. I like studying in small groups of 2-5 students.	123	4.09	0.83	0.26	2	12
8. I like studying by myself.	123	3.09	1.04	-0.74	4	24
9. I like studying from textbooks, vocabulary books, example problem books, etc.	123	2.64	1.06	-1.19	5	26
10. I like listening to teacher stories and explanations.	123	3.50	0.89	-0.33	3	19
11. I like watching DVDs and videos.	123	4.64	0.71	0.81	1	3
Group 3 – English skills						
12. I want to improve my listening skills in particular	123	4.65	0.51	0.82	2	2
13. I want to improve my speaking skills in particular	123	4.70	0.54	0.87	1	1
14. I want to improve my reading skills in particular	123	4.43	0.63	0.60	3	5
15. I want to improve my writing skills in particular	123	4.41	0.78	0.58	4	6
16. I want to improve my grammar in particular	123	4.22	0.95	0.39	6	10
17. I want to improve my pronunciation in particular	123	4.41	0.78	0.58	4	6
Group 4 – English out of class						
18. I like using the internet in English.	123	3.20	1.01	-0.64	5	23
19. I like speaking English with native speakers.	123	3.72	1.01	-0.11	3	16
20. I like speaking English with Japanese people.	123	3.30	0.97	-0.53	4	21
21. I like watching English movies and TV.	123	4.20	0.96	0.36	2	11
22. I like listening to English music.	123	4.33	0.86	0.50	1	8
Group 5 – Checking improvement						
23. I think I can check my progress by being graded or evaluated by a teacher.	122	3.66	0.90	-0.17	3	17
24. I think I can check my progress by being corrected (or not) by teachers in class	122	3.97	0.75	0.14	2	13
25. I think I can check my progress through self evaluation.	122	3.55	0.81	-0.28	4	18
26. I think I can check my progress through peer comments and evaluation.	122	3.35	0.85	-0.48	5	20
27. I think I can check my progress by going abroad and trying to use English.	122	4.55	0.72	0.72	1	4

(source: Small 2011a, adapted from Nunan 1999)

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: INTERVIEW ROUND 1

Round/ Question number	Question	Question tags
R1Q1	Why did you choose OC? What was your process for choosing OC as an elective? What things influenced your choice of OC?	Goals
R1Q2.1	What do you want from OC? How do you want OC classes to be done? What do you want the teacher to do in class? What type of listening and speaking practice do you want to do? What materials do you want to use in class?	Class style
R2Q2.2- Q2.3	How do you want OC class grades to be decided? What kind of tests do you think OC should have?	Grades
R2Q2.4	What do you want your classmates to do in OC? What level do you want them to be at? How do you want to practice together with them?	Peers
R1Q3	How do you want to be able to use English in the future?	Goals
R1Q4	Are there any other things you would like to say about OC?	

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: INTERVIEW ROUND 2

Round/ Question number	Question	Question tags
R2Q1	Tell us about one OC class day that you have a very good memory of. What did you do from the start to the finish of the class? Please describe as much as you remember, and how you felt, what you thought, etc. (Give time to think, press for more details)	Class style
R2Q2	In general, not about this year's OC class specifically, what do you not like about OC? Please say any things that come to mind. (Give time to think)	Class style
R2Q3	Please tell us what a "serious" (まじめな) OC class would be like. Please take time to think, and use your imagination to describe this class in as much detail as you can. (Give students time to think, press for more details). (After a thorough description by the student) Would you take an OC class like this, if you had the chance? Why or why not?	Class style, study
R2Q4	Please compare Japanese and "native" teachers of English. What is different? What is the same? Please give as much detail as possible. (Give time to think, press for more details)	Class style, teacher, L1/L2
R2Q5	Tell us what type of situations you see yourself using English in abroad in the future. Use your imagination. What kind of things would you need to be able to say? Please give some examples.	Goals

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: INTERVIEW ROUND 3

Round/ Question number	Question	Question tags
R3Q1	Check what students said in interviews 1 and 2	
R3Q2	How will you have improved after taking 2 years of OC at this school?	Improvement, Proficiency
R3Q3	What level of English speaking do high school students need after graduation?	Goals, Proficiency
R3Q4	How can people improve their ability to speak English?	Improvement, Speaking
R3Q5	How can people improve their ability to listen to English?	Improvement
R3Q6	Is there anything students think that you want your teachers or the school to know about OC?	

APPENDIX 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TO DATE: STUDENT A

Interview 3

Student A conclusions for checking

- Future plans: You have a clear idea of what you are going to do after high school, and how you will use English. English is a big part of those plans. You will go to an international department at university, study abroad, and then go to Africa. You feel that when you study abroad, you will greatly improve your English skills there.
- Grades: You heard that a 4 was guaranteed for all students before you took OC, and heard it from your teacher too. You chose OC as part of a strategy to get a good GPA to help your chances of getting into the university of your choice. Getting the good GPA is more useful to you than learning things in seminar style classes. Also, knowing that you are going to get a 4 or higher makes you feel relaxed, and worry-free when you are in OC class.
- Teacher feedback: You really appreciate feedback from the teacher. This makes you feel that the teacher really cares, and is paying attention. It gives you useful information about your level of English, and where you can improve.
- Class priorities: Your ideas about the priorities of OC are a little contradictory. On one hand, you feel that improving language skills is very important. One reason is globalization. You want to improve your skills (as mentioned with the test feedback). On the other hand, the idea of enjoying OC and having fun is extremely important. You say you don't ever think about what things you might learn before going to class, and have very positive feelings toward projects that are very fun but you don't think have much educational value. You like OC, have a very positive feeling toward it, and feel it's a good environment to be in. You feel strongly that the class should not be "かたゝい"

APPENDIX 7

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TO DATE: STUDENT B

Interview 3

Student B conclusions for checking

- Fun: You think that fun and enjoyment give you motivation. Movies motivate you to listen and try to understand. Games motivate you to participate actively and speak English. Doing ad-lib speeches is new and interesting, which gives motivation. Fun leads to learning.
- Teacher English: You feel that higher level classmates are necessary to help you understand what the teacher says in English in class. You want to be able to understand the teacher, but that you can't. You feel you lose something by not being able to understand the teacher.
- Study and tests: You feel there is a balance between tests scores and putting in effort. If the tests are too easy, that's not good. But you don't want to study as in a "traditional" class, silently with textbooks. You don't want to memorize vocabulary from books.
- Experiences: Your experience in Hawaii is important to the way you think about English now. You used English in Hawaii, and you want to go there again. You also see yourself using English when travelling to other places. You have experiences using English with Hawaiian friends and exchange students. You learned a lot from these experiences.
- Future: You have a clear idea of how you can use English in the future. You have an idea of how English might help you when you have a job.

APPENDIX 8

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TO DATE: STUDENT C

Interview 3

Student C conclusions for checking

- Fun: You took OC because it was fun last year. You think OC class should be fun. You think fun motivates students to work hard, and helps them learn. Extrance exam preparation is not fun, and OC is a different kind of class.
- Good grades: You think getting good grades is very important for your future. The promise of good grades from OC is maybe the biggest reason you chose to take OC.
- Team spirit: You have a strong feeling of classmates in OC being like a team. You said that the best thing to do in class is cooperative group work. You wouldn't like a class with competition between students. Student effort is the most important thing. Students should do their best to participate actively in the class together.
- Native teachers: Native teachers means English only. The English only environment is the best way to learn English and the best way to improve English skills.
- Future: English will not help you in the future for your job. It will help you in the future when you study abroad. Studying abroad is a goal for you when you study OC. You really want to be able to speak English well.

APPENDIX 9

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TO DATE: STUDENT D

Interview 3

Student D conclusions for checking

- Fun: You think OC class is fun and it should be fun. You chose all your electives based on fun because you wanted to really enjoy this year at school. You think OC class should be like a movie watching and acting type of class. A serious entrance exam preparation type of class would be horrible.
- Conversation: You want to use class time actually speaking in English to classmates and trying to communicate with classmates. You think that's more important than studying English.
- Classmates: You think a lot about your classmates. How your classmates act has a big impact on OC class. They should be helpful and cooperative with each other, and put in a lot of effort. You have mixed feelings about high level students and returnees. On one hand, you think they are helpful and translate what the teacher says, but on the other hand you worry that they get good grades without effort. You also see a difference in the students in class who can understand and talk to the teacher in English and those who can't.
- Future: English is cool, and it might help you get a job in the future. You want to be able to interact with native speakers socially in English, but perhaps don't feel that's a realistic goal?

APPENDIX 10

LIST OF CODES USED IN DATA ANALYSIS

Code	Description Statements or questions relating to...
Class style	... the nature of OC class, as opposed to other English classes and other subjects at school.
Enjoyment	... how fun or how boring an activity is.
Study	... a traditional, grammar-translation style of learning or the general notion of 'studying'.
Improvement	... increasing one's proficiency in English.
Peers	... a student's classmates.
Effort	... engagement in classroom activities, tests, studying, etc.
Teacher	... OC teachers.
Assistance	... one person in OC helping another with something.
L1/L2	... decisions to use either Japanese or English, or the marked use of Japanese or English in OC class.
Proficiency	... can-do statements, for example: "I want to be able to ...," "I can't ...," "I don't need to be able to ..."
Speaking	... speaking as a distinct skill separate from general English proficiency.
Goals	... goals for English use or English study.
Abroad	... situations outside of Japan.

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