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	キーワード (Ja):
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	作成者: Yamauchi, Susumu, 山内, 進
	メールアドレス:
	所属:
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Development of Freshmen EFL Students' Listening Comprehension Abilities*

Susumu Yamauchi

INTRODUCTION

This paper concerns the development of college EFL students' listening comprehension abilities in Freshman English I currently given in the Division of General Education, the University of the Ryukyus. The underlying objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the course on the growth of listening comprehension ability. Evaluation of the existing course is necessary for the development of the curriculum itself and, if necessary, the improvement of instruction in the classroom.

Along with these pedagogical objectives, there is also a practical consideration for answering a criticism or a doubt about the effectiveness of English courses at the college level. Recently, there is renewed criticism toward English education in the midst of the college restructuring movement currently undertaken throughout Japan. Answering the criticism, however superficial it may seem, is the responsibility of those involved in teaching EFL in Japan.

This study intends to measure the development of EFL students' listening skills by conducting a pretest and a posttest in thirteen classes of Freshman English I and further to investigate the relationships between the growth of the skill and various factors related to it. It is hoped that this study provides teachers in charge of the English course with some basic information about the nature of its effects in order

to improve the course in the future.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

For a thorough evaluation of Freshman English I, it is ideal and necessary to measure and evaluate the students' development in four areas of the language skills, i.e., reading, writing, speaking, and listening, since the course is intended to improve all these skills. But considering that such a project requires long-term study, the exhaustive evaluation of the course is beyond the capacity of the present paper. This paper, then, confines itself to analyzing the students' growth in listening comprehension ability in the course.

The rationale for selecting listening comprehension is that the ability is indeed an indispensable one for better communication in real life. It is inconceivable that someone can communicate well with others without being able to understand the utterances of others. The listening comprehension ability is recognized as one of the basic requirements of communicative competence. The importance of teaching listening skill has been recognized as such especially among EFL teachers and curriculum developers in recent years (Underwood, 1989).

Teaching and developing the listening skill is not an easy task especially in countries where English is learned as a foreign language. Mainly from a lack of everyday contact with native speakers of English, EFL students seem to have special difficulty in developing this skill. Now, many EFL teachers have come to realize the necessity for fostering the skill per se in their language classes. This recognition led EFL researchers and textbook writers to produce many textbooks and teacher resource books dealing with this skill (Underwood (1989), Ur (1984), Brown and Palmer (1988), Rost (1990), to name a few). Underwood

(1989) states the importance of the listening skill as follows:

> It is important to help our students develop the listening skills they may need for further study, work or leisure, so that they will not be among the many people who, having studied English for some years, find, to their amazement and horror, that they are unable to understand the utterances of native speakers of English (p. iv).

Developing the listening skill as well as the speaking skill, both of which comprise the basics of communicative competence, is especially important for Japanese learners of English in today's so-called "internationalization" age. Monbusho (1987), facing the criticism that English education is unpractical, decided to introduce Oral Communication A, B, and C courses in high school curriculum, and in the Oral Communication B course, developing the listening comprehension skill is emphasized. Greater attention is now being paid to the importance of developing the listening skill in English instruction in Japan.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the classroom observations and the review of the literature, the following hypotheses are proposed for this study.

Hypothesis 1. Freshman English I is effective in developing students' listening comprehension skills.

This hypothesis is the primary concern of this study, because the verification of the hypothesis is a rebuttal to the criticism that English education is not effective at all. Although the focus of the instruction

in the course is not necessarily upon the listening skill alone, the hypothesis stands as reasonable for the following reasons:

(1) the use of *East West 1* (Graves and Rein, 1988) as the common textbook which contains a lot of oral and aural drills, and

(2) the availability of a language laboratory once a week.

East West, a communicative, grammar-based EFL textbook, has been designed to provide especially extensive speaking and listening practice. The authors explains their principle as follows:

> The numerous speaking activities in each unit generally flow from more controlled use of the language to freer use of the language. They enable the students to speak both accurately and fluently. They are never mechanical drills; rather, they actually provide students with an opportunity to speak with each other. As a result,these activities have a strong listening comprehension component as well... Each unit's listening activities are tightly linked to the unit's content. As in real life, listening activities are purposeful. Students listen in order to complete certain tasks, sometimes listening for general meaning and sometimes for specific information (p. ix, in Teacher's Book).

The principle is well embodied in the textbook. The use of *East West* as a common textbook in Freshman English I will surely help improve the students' listening comprehension abilities.

Along with the student's book, *East West* series also provides the students with LAB BOOK and cassette tapes, which are designed for use in a language laboratory. The Freshman English I classes are held twice per week, once in a regular classroom and once in a language laboratory for 90 minutes each. The use of the language laboratory

once a week helps the students improve their listening comprehension a great deal.

For these reasons the author estimates that Freshman English I is effective in developing the students' listening comprehension abilities.

Hypothesis 2. (1) Highly motivated students show higher ability in the listening skill than less motivated students, and also (2) the former students show greater progress in the skill than the latter students.

Brown (1980), in discussing the relationship between personality and language learning, explains the importance of motivation as follows:

> Motivation is probably the most often used catch-all term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task. It is easy to figure that success in a task is due simply to the fact that someone is "motivated." It is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation (p. 112).

A claim like this is nothing new or unique to those involved in the teaching profession. In learning a foreign language, motivation is considered a powerful driving force for producing a successful learner. The hypothesis is presented here simply to see if the widely recognized claim holds true in the case of the students of the university.

Hypothesis 3. Students who received higher grades in high schools show higher progress rates than students who did not.

Mastering the fundamentals of English at junior and senior high schools is a prerequisite for further study at college. So the students who got higher grades (in this case, grade 4 and 5 in the fivescale

evaluation system) can be considered as the students who mastered the fundamentals of English. These students are, therefore, expected to benefit more from college instruction than students who got lower grades.

Hypothesis 4. Female students are better learners of English than male students.

The statement does not mean that success or failure in language learning is inherently decided by the gender of the individuals. It has been recognized that there is no essential difference between male end female learners in language learning or any kind of learning task in general. A seeming difference between them is not due to gender difference, but essentially due to differences in each learner's interest, motivation, past experience and the like (Tazaki, 1978).

The proposal of the above hypothesis, though being superficial and unscientific itself, is based on the noticeable difference between the male and the female students in language classrooms. Everyday observation shows that the female students are, in general, more earnest than the male students in language learning. For example, the female students seem superior to the male students in classroom attendance, discussion participation, voluntary speech presentation and the like. Differences in attitude towards English classes are clearly recognized between the female and the male students. The hypothesis is presented here to see whether the above observation can be verified statistically.

Hypothesis 5. Students who took an English test in the second stage university entrance examination show higher ability at the outset of the course and also show greater progress in the listening comprehension ability than students who did not.

The English test is required of applicants for the university's de-

partments of English Language and Literature, Business Administration in the College of Law and Letters, and for courses of English Teachers Training and Japanese Language Teachers Training in the College of Education. The English test includes a listening comprehension section, so it is presumed that the students in these departments or courses have done some kind of listening exercise before taking the test because it is customary for high school or cram school English teachers to give these applicants some special training before the test. Their previous training in listening will give them an advantage to some degree when they are taking the Freshman English course, and they are, therefore, expected to improve the listening skill more than the students who did not take the English test.

In addition to examining the hypotheses postulated above, the subsidiary question is also addressed in this study in order to understand students' progress in the listening skill: Are there noticeable differences in English listening ability according to the students' major fields of study at the pretest and the posttest?

EXPERIMENT

Subjects

Students in 13 Freshman English classes among 43 classes were chosen as the subjects in this experiment. The total number of the subjects was 356, which was approximately 22% of the entire population of the university freshmen. Originally there were 470 students includedin these 13 classes, but 114 students failed to take either the pretest or posttest or both in the worst cases, so these students were excluded from the calculation of the test results.

The 13 classes were selected by the author so that students from every department or course were included in the experiment. Five classes were taught by English native instructors and eight classes were taught by Japanese instructors. All the instructors were full-time faculty members of the university.

Materials and Procedure

To see the development in the listening comprehension skill, listening tests were conducted twice: once at the end of April as a pretest, and again at the beginning of July as a posttest at each instructor's regular English I class. The interval of approximately two months between the tests was judged enough for students to forget the contents of the test; furthermore, test materials and answers were not supplied to them after the pretest.

Both the pretest and the posttest were applied to the students without prior notice. (This must be the main reason why so many students, 114 students out of 470 targetted students, failed to appear in the class on both occasions.) The students were just told that the tests were given to check their listening comprehension skills and no further discussion was made about the test contents.

The *NHK English listening Test* (*Intermediate Level II*) (NHK, 1992) was employed in both tests in this study because it was judged by the present author as one of the best models for measuring Japanese students' listening comprehension abilities, although some instructors' opinions about the quality of the test differed from the author's. The listening test was broadcast on August 8, 1992, on NHK educational radio. Thirty minutes was needed for the administration of the test.

The adoption of the external test was judged critical because this study intended to see the general growth of the listening comprehension

ability fostered in the English I course. If the students were tested on what they were taught, the test results would be biased possibly in favor of the test makers. Objective judgement of the development of the listening skill by an external measure was an imperative procedure for this study.

In this study, no distinction was made between experimental groups and control groups among the participating 13 classes, because the focus of this study was not to compare these classes or to see an effect of some special treatment in these classes, but to measure the overall growth in the listening skill as a whole after two months' attendance in the English course.

Also, it must be added that no control was made over possible external variables because the focus of this study is, as mentioned above, not to see the differences among the selected classes but to see the course's overall effect. What accounts for much importance in this study is the growth of listening ability in each class, and consequently, the sum of it as a unit.

The basic assumption of this study is that the students' growth in the listening ability is due mainly to the effect of Freshman English I, since it is thought to be the main and responsible setting available to the students for fostering the ability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are shown in Table 1, which describes the number of subjects (N), the means ($\overline{X}_1$, $\overline{X}_2$), the standard deviation (S_1, S_2) of the pretest and the posttest, and the difference between the means ($\overline{X}_2-\overline{X}_1$), and the correlation coefficient between the two tests (r). The t test was conducted to see whether the mean difference ($\overline{X}_2-\overline{X}_1$) was statistically significant, and the obtained t value (t) is also

presented in the table. The table shows the basic test characteristics in each selected class and the total result of all the classes.

Before discussing the hypotheses, the reliability and the validity of the listening test employed in this study must be mentioned here. There are usually three ways to estimate reliability of a test: test-retest method, parallel tests method, and internal consistency methods such as split-half method, Kuder-Richardson formula 20 and 21. Since this study employ spretest-posttest design, the correlation between both testsare equivalent to the reliability coefficient estimated by the test-retest method. As shown in the table, the correlation coefficient between bothtests is .719 (see *r* at Total column). Also, the reliability coefficients in both tests were calculated independently by using the Kuder-Richardson formula 21. The reliability coefficient of the pretest showed .689 and that of the posttest was .751, and the average of these coefficients was .72, which was equivalent to the value gained by the test-retest method.

As for the validity of the listening test, the author thinks that it is not necessary to show the validity coefficient of the test quantitatively because it is difficult to find an external criterion listening test in Japan. As stated earlier, the author judged the NHK Listening Test as one of the best models of the listening tests in Japan.

Hypothesis 1 , i. e., Freshman English I is effective in developing students' listening comprehension skills, is fully supported from the results of this study. The mean difference between the pretest and the posttest is 2.14 as a whole. The gain in the mean in the posttest may seem rather low at first glance, but considering the fact that the full score in the test is 40 points, the obtained gain is to be judged high enough to verify the above hypothesis. The obtained t value .719 is statistically significant at the critical value of $p < .01$, which means

that the probability that the obtained gain occurs by chance alone is less than 1 %.

Of the 13 classes subjected to this study, seven classes show significant progress in the listening ability at a $p < .01$ level, three classes show the progress at $p < .05$ level, while three classes show no significant gains in the mean differences. As discussed in the previous paragraph, the result should be considered in terms of the students' overall progress in these classes. Therefore, despite the noticed differences between the classes, it can be concluded that the hypothesis is well supported.

Table 1 : Pretest and Posttest Characteristics

Class	N	Pretest $\overline{X}_1$	Pretest S_1	Posttest, $\overline{X}_2$	Posttest, S_2	$\overline{X}_2-X_1$	r	t
1	28	17.61	5.62	21.32	5.36	3.71	.795	5.472**
2	29	13.17	3.70	17.14	4.90	3.97	.435	4.489**
3	25	15.52	4.74	19.12	6.38	3.60	.768	4.313**
4	37	13.86	4.51	16.24	5.11	2.38	.760	4.225**
5	34	14.21	3.76	17.31	5.10	3.12	.470	3.812**
6	24	14.92	3.70	17.67	3.46	2.75	.363	3.261**
7	19	26.05	3.75	27.79	4.90	1.74	.813	2.579**
8	30	12.63	3.02	14.40	4.01	1.77	.380	2.384*
9	28	15.00	4.69	16.75	4.67	1.75	.538	2.020*
10	17	22.59	4.58	24.76	5.12	2.18	.626	2.067*
11	26	12.54	4.43	13.38	5.69	0.85	.561	0.874
12	27	15.89	4.12	16.41	4.47	0.52	.519	0.627
13	32	14.56	3.86	14.06	3.97	-0.50	.467	-0.692
Total	356	15.49	5.38	17.63	6.07	2.14	.719	9.298**

**$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

In order to check the validity of hypothesis 2, which concerns the motivational factor, the subjects were first asked whether they like English or not in a questionnaire given at the same time with the pretest. They were asked to select their choices from the given five-scale choices, from 5 (very much interested) to 1 (least interested). They were divided into the following three groups according to their self-judgement. The students who selected 4 and 5 were regarded as highly motivated students and the students who chose 3 were considered as averagely motivated students. The rest of the students, who selected 1 and 2, were grouped together as less motivated students. These students were operationally referred to as High group (students who selected 4 and 5), Average group (students who selected 3), and Low group (students who selected 2 and 1) respectively in the following table.

The hypothesis 2 — (1) stated that highly motivated students show higher ability in the listening skill than less motivated students. Notice that the differences of the means of the three groups both in the pretest and the posttest were just as expected. As overall differences were observed between the means in both the pretest and the posttest, a further analysis by F — test was conducted to see the mean difference

Table 2 : Test Characteristics by Different Motivational Groups

		Pretest		Posttest				
Group	N	$\overline{X}_1$	S_1	$\overline{X}_2$	S_2	$\overline{X}_2-\overline{X}_1$	r	t
High	128	18.13	6.18	20.41	6.62	2.29	.828	5.901**
Average	134	14.33	4.46	16.16	5.26	1.84	.530	4.444**
Low	94	13.57	3.75	15.94	4.90	2.36	.513	5.194**
Total	356	15.49	5.38	17.63	6.07	2.14	.719	9.298**

**$p < .01$

between each pair. The results showed that there were significant differences between the higher motivated students and the other groups ($p. < .01$), but there were not statistically significant differences between the averagely motivated group and the lower motivated group in both test occasions. Therefore, the hypothesis is fully supported; the highly motivated students (High group in the table) show higher ability than less motivated students (Average and Low groups in the table).

Hypothesis 2 — (2) said that the highly motivated students show greater progress in the listening skill than less motivated students. As shown in Table 2, the hypothesis is not fully supported in this study. The gains of the high, average, and low groups in the posttests are 2.29, 1.84 and 2.36 respectively. Quite contrary to the expectation, the least motivated students show higher progress in the posttest, although the highly motivated students' progress is greater than that of the averagely motivated students.

How can the above result be explained? It clearly does not coincide with the common-sense expectation that motivation is one of the important key factors to success in learning. One plausible explanation of this unexpected result is that there might have been gradual change in intensity of students' motivation. It is also common sense that intensity of motivation changes according to environmental factors. So, it is conceivable that the subjects in this study became more or less interested in the course, changed their attitudes toward it accordingly, and showed more or less progress in the listening comprehension ability at the time of the posttest.

In summary, taken the above discussions together as a whole, despite the denial of hypothesis 2—(2), Table 2 seems to indicate that motivation is an important factor for success in learning a foreign language. Notice that the highest mean scores are obtained by the highly

motivated students and that the lowest mean scores are gained by the lower motivated students in both tests. This clearly indicates that one of the important tasks language teachers face is how to create, foster, and maintain students' motivation successfully in classrooms.

To see the relationship between the students' high school grade of English and the development in the listening ability in the course, hypothesis 3 stated that students who got higher grades in high school show higher progress than the students who did not.

The students are grouped into the following three categories according to their self-report: highly advanced G－5 group (students who got grade 5 in high schools), advanced G－4 group (students with grade 4), G－3 intermediate group (students with grade 3), and G－2 elementary group (students with 2 or 1 grades). Although the test results of the G－5 and G－4 groups are shown separately in the table, these students are to be considered as 'students who got higher grades in high schools' as referred to in the hypothesis. The test characteristics obtained by these gradedifferentiated groups are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 : Test Characteristics by Grade-Differentiated Groups

		Pretest		Posttest				
Group	N	$\overline{X}_1$	S_1	$\overline{X}_2$	S_2	$\overline{X}_2-\overline{X}_1$	r	t
G－5	91	17.49	5.93	19.68	6.67	2.19	.764	4.739**
G－4	120	16.25	5.59	18.94	6.34	2.69	.722	6.362**
G－3	106	13.64	4.14	15.49	4.74	1.85	.576	4.597**
G－2	39	13.56	3.35	14.73	3.35	1.16	.386	1.875*
Total	356	15.49	5.38	17.63	6.07	2.14	.719	9.298**

**$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

The results show that all these groups make certain progress in the listening skill in the posttest: the highest mean gain of 2.69 is obtained by the G−4 group, while the lowest gain of 1.16 is shown in the G−2 group. The result of the *t* test show that the gains in the posttests in G−5, G−4 and G−3 are statistically significant with the probability of 99%, while the gain in the G−2 group is significant at 95% probability.

Hypothesis 3 is supported from the above test results. Clearly, the students who got higher grades (in this case, G−5 and G−4 groups) show higher progress than the other students (G−3 and G−2 groups). This indicates that mastering the fundamentals of English at high school levels is crucial for succeeding in college English classes. The students who received grades 4 or 5 in high schools are expected to benefit more from Freshman English I than the students with lower grades.

Table 4 is constructed to investigate the validity of hypothesis 4, which stated that female students are better learners of English than male students. As shown in the table, the results clearly support the hypothesis. Increase in the mean in the posttest is greater in the female students than in the male students (see $\overline{X}_2-\overline{X}_1$ column in the table).

Table 4 : Test Characteristics by Male and Female Groups

		Pretest		Posttest				
Group	N	$\overline{X}_1$	S_1	$\overline{X}_2$	S_2	$\overline{X}_2-\overline{X}_1$	r	t
Male	230	14.83	5.02	16.70	5.72	1.87	.680	6.516**
Female	126	16.70	5.78	19.33	6.32	2.62	.752	6.827**
Total	356	15.49	5.38	17.63	6.07	2.14	.719	9.298**

**$p < .01$

A further analysis of the mean differences by F—test show that differences between the male students and the female students are statistically significant both in the pretest and in the posttest at the $p < .01$ level. The female students clearly surpass the male students in the listening skill in the pretest, and the difference between them becomes even greater in the posttest. If this is the case, then the scores of classes with more female students will be higher.

Hypothesis 5 is as follows: Students who took an English test in the second stage university entrance examination show higher ability at the outset of the course and also show greater progress in the listening comprehension ability than students who did not. Among the 356 subjects in this study, 53 students were found to have taken the English test in the second stage examination to the university. Those students are tentatively referred to as Group 1 in the following Table 5. Group 1 was further separated into two subgroups of 34 English majors (EM) and 19 non-English majors (non-EM), because the students in the English department are estimated to perform above other students in overall English ability. The students who did not take the English test in the second stage examination are referred to as Group 2 in the table.

Mean differences between Group 1 and 2 in both tests are 6.56 and 6.88 respectively, both of which are statistically significant. Gains in the means in the posttests are 2.42 in Group 1 and 2.09 in Group 2. So, as far as group 1 is treated as a whole, it can be fairly concluded that hypothesis 5 is supported in this data.

A closer analysis of the table, however, shows that the matter is not so simple. Obviously the high means in group 1 in both tests are due to English majors' high averages in both cases. The English major subgroup shows the highest means in both tests. The mean gain in the

Table 5 : Test Characteristics by Group 1 (students who took the English test in the second round) and Group 2 (students who did not)

Group	N	Pretest $\overline{X}_1$	Pretest S_1	Posttest $\overline{X}_2$	Posttest S_2	$\overline{X}_2-\overline{X}_1$	r	t
Group1	53	21.08	6.61	23.49	6.25	2.42	.805	4.316**
(EM)	34	24.50	4.39	26.35	5.31	1.85	.739	2.952**
(nonEM)	19	14.95	5.38	18.36	4.22	3.42	.578	2.201**
Group2	303	14.52	4.46	16.61	5.42	2.09	.621	8.257**
Total	356	15.49	5.38	17.63	6.07	2.14	.719	9.298**

**$p < .01$

posttest, however, is minimal in this subgroup, although the gain is found statistically significant at a 99% probability.

On the other hand, the non-English major subgroup shows the highest progress rate in the posttests. Their gain is 3.42, which is far higher than English major subgroup's 1.85 and group 2's 2.09. The mean of 14.95 by the non-English major subgroup in the pretest proves not statistically different from the 14.52 of the group 2's. This finding is against the author's earlier expectation, because the non-English major students in group 1 score higher than the students in group 2 in listeni ng abilitydue to their earlier training before taking the entrance exami nation. In the posttests, however, the mean difference between those twogroups is found statistically critical, even though both of these gro upsshow meaningful progress in the posttests. Although the number of subjects in the non-English major subgroup is very small (19 students), compared to the number of group 2 (303 students), the result clearly shows that the listening comprehension ability in the non-English major subgroup developed quite significantly.

Taking the above findings into consideration, it is safe to conclude that hypothesis 5 is partly supported, because the progress of the English major students is smaller than group 2 in the posttest, although the mean difference is subtle. The causes of the low growth rate in the English majors are not known to the current author, but the plausible speculations on this finding are as follows: English major students did not show much progress in developing listening skill,

(a) because the availability of the LL room is restricted due to the LL schedule conflict; English majors can use it 45 minutes per week, while the other students can use the LL room 90 minutes per week. and/or

(b) because the textbooks used in these classes are different from the other classes; a consensus among English teachers at the university is that *East-West 1* is considered too easy for English majors and that other suitable textbooks could be utilized for these classes at the instructors' discretion. So, the textbooks used in these classes might not be suitable for developing listening skill.

But the above discussion is based on the author's mere speculation. It is also necessary to remind the readers that the current study does not intend to be a comprehensive evaluation of the Freshman English courses. This study confines its discussion to evaluation of the development of listening comprehension ability alone. For a fair discussion of a thorough evaluation of the course, measuring the growth in other fields, for example, the growth in speaking ability, is also required.

Now, the discussion is focused on the last question; Are there noticeable differences at the time of the pretest and the pretests in English listening ability according to the students' major fields of study? To answer the above question, Table 6 was compiled.

In comparison between the colleges, the highest mean of 16.85 is

observed in the subjects in the College of Law and Letters in the pretest. The second highest mean is 16.60 by the students of Faculty of Medicine, and the third was 15.28 by the students of College of Education.

In the posttest, however, the rank order of means among the colleges is different from that observed in the pretest. The 20.40 average score by the students of Medicine is the highest, and the second highest score of 19.78 is obtained by the students of the Law and Letters. Third comes the Science major students with a score of 16.74.

In view of a mean improvement, the highest gain of 3.79 is achieved by the subjects of the Faculty of Medicine. The second and the third gains are those of the College of Law and Letters and the College of Agriculture, which are 2.93 and 2.31 respectively.

It is important to note that the mean differences between the pretest and the posttest are significant in every department. Of these, the improvement in the Colleges of Law and Letters, Science, and Medicine are significant at the $p < .01$ probability level, while the rest are significant at the $p < .05$ level.

In comparison between the departments, the top five means in the pretest are observed in the scores of the subjects in (1) the Japanese Language Teaching Course in the College of Education, (2) the English Language and Literature Department in the College of Law and Letters, (3) the English Teachers Training Course in the College of Education, (4) the Business Administration Department in the College of Law and Letters, and (5) the Medicine Department in the Faculty of Medicine. It must be added, however, that the number of subjects in the Japanese Teaching Course in the College of Education is very small compared to other subjects; only two students are included as subjects.?

In the posttest, the top five are also occupied by the above departments or courses, while there is a minor change in the rank order. The

Table 6 : Test Characteristics by Colleges and Departments

College / Department	Pretest N	Pretest $\overline{X}_1$	Pretest S_1	Posttest $\overline{X}_2$	Posttest S_2	$\overline{X}_2-\overline{X}_1$	t
Law&Letters	115	16.85	5.97	19.78	6.16	2.93	7.278**
Law&Pol.Sc.	24	13.83	3.88	17.54	5.11	3.71	3.419**
Economics	17	13.59	3.76	17.47	3.48	3.88	3.511**
Bus. Adm.	3	19.00	2.16	20.67	3.40	1.67	0.764
Japanese	6	14.00	3.27	18.16	4.41	4.17	1.898
English	29	24.52	4.35	26.62	4.88	2.10	3.523**
History	12	13.75	4.47	15.42	4.97	1.67	1.811*
Sociology	24	14.92	3.58	17.86	4.53	2.96	3.214**
Education	50	15.28	5.79	16.48	6.31	1.20	1.736*
Elementary	13	14.92	5.43	18.00	6.60	3.08	2.088*
Lower Sec.	19	12.42	3.50	12.26	3.89	-0.16	-0.141
(English)	5	24.40	4.59	24.8	7.11	0.40	0.151
Info. Ed.	11	14.45	3.00	16.45	3.89	2.00	1.506*
Japan. Ed.	2	26.50	NA	26.00	NA	-0.50	NA
Science	58	15.05	4.48	16.74	4.82	1.69	3.206**
Math.	18	14.44	4.96	17.22	5.54	2.78	2.890**
Physics	12	13.67	4.23	16.25	4.73	2.58	3.039**
Chemistry	5	13.80	3.19	14.00	3.52	0.20	0.233
Biology	6	18.17	2.85	17.50	5.91	-0.67	-0.318
Marine Sci.	17	15.94	4.18	17.12	3.46	1.18	1.102
Medicine	53	16.60	5.33	20.40	5.78	3.79	7.193**
Medicine	26	18.35	5.29	22.50	5.88	4.15	5.086**
Health Sci.	27	14.93	4.81	18.37	4.90	3.44	5.059**
Engineering	67	13.55	3.58	14.07	3.96	0.52	1.028*
Mechanical	17	14.88	3.38	13.94	3.33	-0.94	-0.855
Enrg. Mech.	8	12.50	3.64	13.00	3.16	0.50	0.394

Table 6 (continued)

College Department	Pretest N	Posttest $\overline{X}_1$	S_1	$\overline{X}_2$	S_2	$\overline{X}_2-\overline{X}_1$	t
Civil	12	14.67	4.35	14.17	4.84	-0.50	-0.043
Archit.	9	14.33	2.67	17.78	4.52	3.44	4.562**
Electrical	9	10.22	2.97	12.89	3.03	2.68	2.667*
Electronics	12	13.17	1.99	13.00	2.94	-0.17	-0.75
Agriculture	13	11.77	4.53	14.08	6.43	2.31	2.246*
Bio. Prod.	5	10.20	2.86	13.60	2.94	3.40	1.805
Prod. Envir.	5	13.20	6.24	17.20	8.731	4.00	2.586*
Bio. Res.	3	12.00	1.63	9.67	1.25	-2.33	-7.060
Total	356	15.49	5.38	17.63	6.07	2.14	9.298**

NA = Not available due to the small number of the subjects

**$P < .01$ *$p < .05$

following are the top five departments or courses which gained the highest mean scores in the posttest: (1) the English Language and Literature Department in the College of Law and Letters, (2) the Japanese Language Teaching Course in the College of Education, (3) the English Teachers Training Course in the College of Education, (4) the Medicine Department in the Faculty of Medicine, and (5) the Business Administration Department in the College of Law and Letters.

Interestingly enough, these departments or courses are not included in the top five groups which show the highest mean gains in the posttest, except in the case of the Medicine Department. The departments or courses which show the highest improvements were as follows: (1) the Japanese Language and Literature Department in the College of Law and Letters, (2) the Medicine Department in the Faculty of Medicine,

(3) the Production Environment Department in the College of Agriculture,
(4) the Economics Department in the College of Law and Letters, and
(5) the Law and Political Science in the College of Law and Letters.

Although further discussion is not made here, the above findings and the table also would be of some interest to those concerned with evaluation of the effects of Freshman English I of the university. The results clearly show that there are noticeable differences between colleges and departments with respect to the means in the pretest and posttest. The growth in listening ability in each college and department/course also shows considerable differences.

CONCLUSION

This study tried to identify some characteristics of the development in listening comprehension ability of EFL students enrolled in Freshman English I at the university of the Ryukyus and, thus, to evaluate the effects of the course in light of the skill. The study found the following:

(1) Freshman English I is effective and meaningful in developing the students' listening comprehension abilities.

(2) Motivation plays an important role in success or failure in language learning, although it is difficult to accurately measure the intensity of motivation because of its changing nature.

(3) Students who got higher grades in English at high schools show higher progress than the students who did not. This indicates that basic English knowledge at high school levels is a prerequisite for college level English courses.

(4) Female students are better learners of English than male students. The female students' superior performance on listening tests is possibly due to their positive attitudes toward the English classes.

(5) Students who took an English test in the second stage of entrance examination, except English major students, show greater progress in developing listening comprehension ability in the course. The English major students' abilities in listening are much higher than the other students, although their progress in the skill is not as high as expected.

(6) There are noticeable differences in the listening comprehension ability in view of the differences in students' major fields of study. The growth in the listening ability in each college and department/course also shows considerable differences.

The author hopes that the above findings and discussions in this study will provide useful information for the improvement of the course and instruction in the Freshman English classroom in the future.

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— 論文要約 —

日本人英語学習者のリスニング能力の養成について

山内　　進

本稿は，琉球大学の総合英語「英語Ｉ」の指導が，学習者のリスニング能力の養成に及ぼす効果，及びそれに影響を与えると考えられる動機づけや高校時の英語学力など外的要因との関わりを論じたものである。

英語Ｉの13クラスの学生356人を被験者として，４月下旬に事前テストを，約２ヶ月後の７月上旬に事後テストを実施し，そのテスト結果を考察した処，以下のような結論が得られた。

(1)　リスニング能力の伸びにおいては，13クラス中，10クラスにおいて有意な結果が得られ，全体では2.14点（40点満点）の伸びがみられたことから，英語Ｉの指導効果が有効なものである，と結論できる。

(2)　英語に対する「動機」の度合が高くなればなるほど，英語Ｉの学習開始時点のリスニング能力が高く，また伸び率も高い。

(3)　高校時の英語の評価が高いグループは，そうでないグループよりもリスニング能力の伸びが顕著である。

(4)　二次試験で英語のテストを受験した学生（英語・英文専攻をのぞく）は，他の学生よりも，より高いリスニング能力の伸びを示した。

(5)　女子学生は男子学生よりも，事前・事後テストにおいて高い能力を示し，伸び率もはるかに高い。

(6)　各学部間また各学科間において，リスニング能力や，伸び率に著しい違いがみられる。