An Analysis of Student Survey Results on Classroom Experiences and Learning Outcomes Within a Large-Scale English Discussion Program

Peter Brereton, Matthew Y. Schaefer, Anna Bordilovskaya, and Sam Reid

ABSTRACT

This paper describes and discusses the implementation, analysis, and results of an end-of-the-semester survey taken by 2,398 of the first-year students enrolled in the compulsory English for Discussion Class (EDC) program at Rikkyo University in the spring semester of 2018. Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods, the authors analyzed the survey results in terms of students' satisfaction with their classroom experience. The quantitative data showed respondents were extremely satisfied with the EDC course, while the qualitative analysis of respondents' comments showed that while many students initially experienced a sense of resistance to communicating in English, this feeling often disappeared by the end of the semester. Furthermore, respondents provided useful insights into students' perceptions of teacher feedback, assessment, and the use of discussion skills on the EDC program. These results, while overwhelmingly positive, have useful implications for EDC program evaluation and for teacher education.

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum Design

Principled curriculum design is comprised of a number of key stages, including identifying student needs, determining relevant learning objectives, and designing appropriate assessment methods (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Complementary to all of these is program evaluation, which Brown (1995) describes as "the heart of the systematic approach to language curriculum design [...]: the part of the model that includes, connects, and gives meaning to all the other elements" (p. 217). Evaluation as a process begins with the collection and analysis of data. However, the purposes of doing so may vary, so the next step can be defined by the particular approach that evaluators take.

First, program evaluation can be carried out for the direct purpose of determining whether or not course aims have been met. This can be important for purely *summative* reasons, for example to present data to those who work on the course to inform them of how well learning objectives have been achieved. However, it can also be used for *formative* reasons, i.e. to provide data that allows for informed decisions to be made about subsequent iterations of the curriculum. Course aims, it should be pointed out, can encompass both student learning outcomes, and goals regarding professional development.

A second purpose of program evaluation may be to focus less on predetermined aims, but to take a more macro view that is open to exploring unexpected outcomes (Scriven, 1967). This approach acknowledges that there may be a disconnect between what a course sets out to achieve and what effects it actually has. These differences do not necessarily have to be treated as problematic, but may instead provide course designers and practitioners with information that aids curriculum development, especially in terms of re-conceptualizing various aspects of the course.

Both purposes of program evaluation, while looking at the available data in different ways, share the common goal of improving the course on a number of levels. It is important to remember that no curriculum is perfect, and nor are its constituent elements. Therefore, every stage of the curriculum design process should be regularly evaluated, albeit with the understanding that to do so effectively and efficiently is a challenging undertaking. To make this a more manageable task, a practical approach may be to focus on either one element of the program or one particular data source at a time.

Student Surveys

While there are many forms of data that can be obtained and analyzed to assess the effectiveness of a syllabus, end-of-semester student surveys are particularly efficient in terms of understanding learner attitudes and perceptions of the classroom experience (Rowley, 2003). Within a course whose aims focus on learning outcomes, the students' perspectives are arguably more important than their test scores and course grades due to the inherent issues of reliably assessing what students have learned. Having a better understanding of how students feel while actually taking part in the course can inform course designers and teachers of not only whether or not goals were met, but also if any incidental gains were achieved or unforeseen problems arose.

To these ends, both quantitative and qualitative interpretations of questionnaire data can be beneficial. Survey items that focus on the extent to which various course objectives have been met can reveal overall trends that help course designers understand what is generally working and what needs to be reconsidered. Allowing space for students to add open comments can provide data to support these trends, but may also uncover unanticipated beliefs and attitudes. This dual methods approach to data collection and analysis is aimed at providing as full a picture as possible of the learner experience. However, it also means that the interpretation of results, especially those obtained from a large-scale course with a significant number of respondents, must be done with due care and diligence.

CONTEXT

English Discussion Class (EDC) is a required course for all 4,500 to 4,700 first-year students at Rikkyo University, a private institution in Tokyo, Japan. The program follows a strongly unified curriculum, whereby all of the 42 full-time instructors adhere to standardized and prescribed learning aims, methodology, materials, and assessment methods with each of the 12 to 14 groups of students they teach each week. With class size limited to between seven and nine students, this means around 550 classes are scheduled each semester. At the start of the academic year, before lessons begin, students are required to take the listening and reading components of the TOEIC exam. As shown in Table 1, the combined scores from these tests are then used to stream students into four levels of EDC classes: from Level I (the highest) to Level IV (the lowest).

Table 1. EDC levels and corresponding TOEIC scores

Level	I	II	III	IV
Combined Listening and Reading TOEIC Score	680 or above	480 to 679	280 to 479	Below 280

(Center for English Discussion Class, 2018)

The scale of the course also requires four program managers to oversee and maintain the curriculum. They are responsible for supervising and supporting EDC instructors' development, ensuring quality standards in teaching and assessment, maintaining and developing the curriculum, and carrying out program evaluation.

The aim of the course is to develop students' communicative ability in a group discussion context (Hurling, 2012). This is done through a strong emphasis on building speaking fluency and on the use of functional discussion skills and communication skills to improve students' ability to exchange their views in English on a range of contemporary issues, while also encouraging them to enjoy and value the opportunity to do so (Hurling, 2012). Although the main aim of the course

is to improve students' spoken interactional, discoursal, and strategic competence, the soft CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach employed means that a subsidiary aim is for students to develop their understanding of these topics (Brown, 2015).

Hurling (2012) explained that the EDC Discussion Skills (DSs) cover the main functional skills required to interact with others and manage discourse in a discussion, and are based on Dörnyei and Thurrell's direct approach to conversation instruction and the activities described by Kehe and Kehe. In the spring semester, the first three DSs introduced are those to ask for and give opinions, reasons, and examples, although later DSs encompass aspects of discussion management such as choosing discussion topics and turn taking. These DSs are exemplified in lessons through suggested Discussion Skill phrases (DSPs): suggested sentence stems which students are encouraged, but not required, to use. One example of this is in the "Joining a Discussion" DS. While the suggested phrase may be "Does anyone want to ask a question?", students are deemed to be performing the same skill through the use of any phrase which carries similar meaning (such as "Are there any questions?" or "Questions are welcome"). As the focus is on communicating meaning and ensuring mutual comprehensibility, this also includes ungrammatical or "incorrect" utterances, for example "You ask me some question?" Six DSs are introduced and practiced each 14-week semester, as can be seen in Appendix 1.

The Communication Skills (CSs) introduced on the EDC course aim to address aspects of negotiation of meaning, and are divided into three categories:

1. *Comprehension*, incorporating checking understanding (e.g. "Do you understand?"), signaling understanding (or a lack thereof) (e.g. "I understand"), and active listening phrases (e.g. "I see");
2. *Paraphrasing*, incorporating paraphrasing your own utterances and those of a peer;
3. *Clarification*, incorporating asking others for explanation or repetition in case of non-comprehension (e.g. "Sorry, can you explain?) (Schaefer, 2018).

These CSs are based on Nakatani's (2005) interactional achievement strategies, which are designed to ensure clear communication between participants and equip students with the tools to repair communication when breakdowns or misunderstandings occur. All CSs are introduced in the first lesson of the semester and are regularly revisited thereafter, both in explicit review lessons (the fourth, eighth, and twelfth lessons) and, as students are assessed on their use of CSs in all lessons, as a common point of teacher feedback.

The main aim of each regular lesson (i.e. not in review lessons or test lessons) is for students to develop their ability to use that lesson's target DS, which is introduced near the beginning of the lesson. There is then a controlled practice stage, designed to build automaticity in the new skill, before two extended discussions, of ten and 16 minutes. These discussions typically take place in groups of four and are prefaced with a preparation activity, designed to help students generate ideas for the subsequent discussion. They are concluded with a feedback stage which focuses both on students' ideas and on their DS and CS use, typically through one of three forms: teacher-led feedback, peer feedback, or self-reflection. This lesson structure, broadly the same for each regular lesson, is laid out in the in-house textbook, created and developed by the four program managers with feedback and suggestions required from all full-time instructors. The textbook also provides students with their homework. Each week they are required to prepare for the following lesson by reading an article which aims to "build topic familiarity, activate schemata, and provide content that can be used during in-class discussion" (Young, 2016, p. 296).

Assessment of students' performance in these regular lessons constitutes 70% of their total grades. This is based on their punctuality, their overall participation, their scores in a short quiz (based on the content of the article read for homework), and their ability to use the target DSs and CSs. For each of these criteria, students are awarded a score between zero and four, which they

can view on an online portal after the lesson. On this portal, commonly referred to as "the EDC website", students can review these scores and read their teacher's comments and feedback on each lesson.

Students are more formally tested at three regular intervals during the semester. These discussion tests take place in the fifth, ninth, and thirteenth week and account for a total of 30% of each student's total grade (Hurling, 2012). Tests take the format of extended group discussions in groups of three (12 minutes), four (16 minutes), or five (20 minutes) students. These are the same conditions as discussions in regular lessons. After the test, students receive individual written feedback on their test performance from their teacher alongside their test grades on the EDC website.

EDC program evaluation is carried out in a number of ways, including through regular feedback from both instructors and students. Feedback on all aspects of each unit of the in-house course textbook is garnered from all instructors through discussions and questionnaires throughout the semester. Student feedback on the course is requested through an online questionnaire distributed at the end of each semester. All data collected is analyzed by program managers and informs the development of future iterations of the program, such as changes to instructor training, assessment criteria, or the course textbooks. In addition, instructors also receive all comments made by their own students, which can help inform their future teaching practices.

Although quantitative data collected from student surveys since 2014 has consistently been extremely positive, until now, no attempt has been made to document or analyze the qualitative data to discover the reasons that lie behind this. As such, this exploratory study involves the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data from the student survey in spring 2018, with the aim of answering the following basic research questions (RQs):

1. How satisfied are EDC students with their experience on the course and the resulting learning outcomes?
2. What do students value most about their experience on the EDC course?
3. What areas of the EDC course, if any, do students feel could be improved?

Due to the different focus of the results generated by the quantitative and qualitative data, RQ1 is discussed primarily through the analysis of quantitative data, while qualitative results are used to discuss RQ2 and RQ3. As such, the approach taken in this paper is first to outline the analysis and discuss the results of the quantitative data before doing the same for the qualitative data.

METHODOLOGY

A web-based student questionnaire was conducted at the end of the 14-week spring semester, spanning a period of three weeks in July 2018. It was accessible to all 4,538 students enrolled on the course by logging onto the same EDC website used by students to check their weekly grades and course progress. When students entered the website during this period, they were directed in Japanese to participate in the questionnaire. Participation was also encouraged in the final two lessons of the semester through instructors' verbal reminders and distribution of a paper flyer with information regarding the rationale of the survey and step-by-step instructions in Japanese.

The questionnaire consisted of 13 Likert-scale statements and one open-ended comment section. All items were written in both English and Japanese. A four-point Likert scale was employed with the options of responding *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*. The option of *Neither Agree nor Disagree* was not featured, as its inclusion can encourage respondents to remain noncommittal (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). The open-ended item at the end of the questionnaire offered respondents an opportunity to provide 自由記述 ("any comments"). This was included with the aim of providing "far greater richness than fully quantitative data" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 107) and putting some "flesh on the bones" of the questionnaire (Dörnyei &

Taguchi, 2010, p. 109). All questionnaire items, including the open-ended item, required a response, with the aim of encouraging qualitative data. The questionnaire can be seen in full in Appendix B.

The questionnaire items themselves covered a wide range of course goals, beginning with item 1, which dealt with the main affective aim of the course for students of developing a positive attitude towards using English for communication (Hurling, 2012). Items 2 and 3 were concerned with the content of lessons, namely whether students had developed their understanding of the contemporary topics they had discussed, and whether the pre-lesson homework reading in the textbook had helped students prepare for the lessons. Item 4 also evaluated the textbook, asking whether the activities in the textbook had helped students prepare for the group discussions. Items 5 and 6 focused on the DSs and CSs respectively, and the extent to which they helped students participate in discussions. While the terms "Discussion Skills" and "Communication Skills" are commonly used in EDC vernacular, such as in course handbooks issued to students and in teacher feedback, an example of a Discussion Skill phrase or Communication Skill phrase was provided to ensure clarity. Item 7 asked students for their perceptions of the use of the discussion tests in assessing their discussion ability.

Items 8 to 11 asked students for feedback on aspects of their teacher's performance. First, students were asked about the helpfulness of their teacher's feedback both in their lessons (item 8) and on the EDC website (item 9). Next, item 10 asked students how clear their teacher's instructions had been, while item 11 asked whether students felt they had been given sufficient time in class to discuss their opinions. Item 12 asked whether the small class size in the EDC helped students to improve their discussion ability, while item 13 asked students whether their English speaking skills had improved.

It is important to note that no responses were used for evaluative purposes of any instructors. All identifying details of students or instructors were removed from the qualitative data by administrative staff prior to analysis by the authors. As such, any results which suggested dissatisfaction with instructors' performance were viewed as an issue with instructor training or support rather than with any individual's performance.

Of the 4,539 students who were enrolled on the EDC course in the spring 2018 semester and given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire, 2,398 provided responses (52.8%). Table 2, below, shows the breakdown of respondents by level.

Table 2. Breakdown of responses to student survey

Level	Total number of students enrolled	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
I	342	196	57.3%
II	1678	974	58.0%
III	2154	1052	48.9%
IV	365	176	48.2%
Total	4539	2398	52.8%

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Method of Analysis

The responses to the 13 Likert-scale items were automatically collated by the EDC website. Data was arranged by class level and arranged into tables on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (as is seen in Tables 2 to 14 below). Likert-scale responses were given a numerical value (from 1 for *Strongly Agree* to 4 for *Strongly Disagree*) and the mean was calculated for each item as such. As such, lower mean score (i.e. those closer to 1) represent stronger agreement, while higher mean scores (i.e. those closer to 4) represent stronger disagreement.

Results

The following results show how students responded to the 13 Likert-scale survey items, both separated into the four different course levels and in total.

Table 3. Item 1: "EDC lessons made me feel more comfortable using English for communication."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	42.9%	52.6%	46.2%	36.9%	47.8%
2 - Agree	49.0%	44.3%	49.9%	59.1%	48.2%
3 - Disagree	5.6%	2.6%	3.1%	2.3%	3.0%
4 - Strongly Disagree	2.6%	0.6%	0.8%	1.7%	0.9%
Mean	1.681	1.514	1.585	1.688	1.568

Table 4. Item 2: "I deepened my understanding of the topics we discussed in the course."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	41.8%	50.3%	43.2%	33.5%	45.2%
2 - Agree	49.5%	44.8%	51.3%	59.7%	49.1%
3 - Disagree	6.6%	4.3%	4.9%	5.1%	4.8%
4 - Strongly Disagree	2.0%	0.6%	0.6%	1.7%	0.8%
Mean	1.686	1.552	1.629	1.750	1.610

Table 5. Item 3 - "The homework reading in the textbook helped me prepare for lessons."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	52.0%	64.0%	58.1%	47.7%	59.2%
2 - Agree	38.8%	31.9%	36.8%	42.6%	35.4%
3 - Disagree	7.7%	3.7%	4.4%	8.0%	4.6%
4 - Strongly Disagree	1.5%	0.4%	0.8%	1.7%	0.8%
Mean	1.587	1.405	1.481	1.637	1.470

Table 6. Item 4 - "The textbook activities helped me prepare for discussions."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	62.8%	68.7%	63.7%	50.0%	64.6%
2 - Agree	32.7%	28.2%	34.0%	48.3%	32.6%
3 - Disagree	3.1%	2.5%	2.0%	1.1%	2.2%
4 - Strongly Disagree	1.5%	0.6%	0.3%	0.6%	0.5%
Mean	1.435	1.350	1.389	1.523	1.384

Table 7. Item 5 - "The Discussion Skills (e.g. Opinions) helped me to participate in discussions."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	67.3%	78.7%	74.4%	68.2%	75.1%
2 - Agree	29.6%	19.4%	23.9%	31.3%	23.1%
3 - Disagree	1.5%	1.3%	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%
4 - Strongly Disagree	1.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%
Mean	1.370	1.234	1.277	1.332	1.272

Table 8. Item 6 - "The Communication Skills (e.g. Paraphrasing) helped me to participate in discussions."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	66.8%	75.3%	70.3%	64.2%	71.6%
2 - Agree	26.5%	22.3%	27.2%	34.1%	25.6%
3 - Disagree	5.1%	2.3%	2.2%	0.6%	2.3%
4 - Strongly Disagree	1.5%	0.2%	0.3%	1.1%	0.4%
Mean	1.411	1.276	1.325	1.386	1.313

Table 9. Item 7 - "The discussion test was a good way to assess my discussion ability."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	57.7%	62.3%	60.2%	59.1%	60.8%
2 - Agree	28.1%	30.8%	34.4%	36.4%	32.6%
3 - Disagree	10.7%	5.5%	4.2%	4.5%	5.3%
4 - Strongly Disagree	3.6%	1.3%	1.2%	0.0%	1.4%
Mean	1.604	1.456	1.464	1.454	1.475

Table 10. Item 8 - "The teacher's feedback during lessons helped me to understand what skills I needed to use more."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	70.9%	74.2%	71.2%	63.1%	71.8%
2 - Agree	25.5%	23.4%	26.0%	35.2%	25.6%
3 - Disagree	3.1%	1.7%	1.9%	1.7%	1.9%
4 - Strongly Disagree	0.5%	0.6%	0.9%	0.0%	0.7%
Mean	1.332	1.285	1.325	1.386	1.315

Table 11. Item 9 - "The teacher's feedback on the EDC website helped me to understand what skills I needed to use more."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	60.2%	66.3%	57.9%	55.1%	61.3%
2 - Agree	33.2%	27.9%	34.6%	37.5%	32.0%
3 - Disagree	4.6%	5.1%	6.8%	6.8%	5.7%
4 - Strongly Disagree	2.0%	0.6%	1.2%	0.6%	1.0%
Mean	1.484	1.398	1.508	1.529	1.464

Table 12. Item 10: "The teacher gave clear instructions for using skills and completing activities."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	85.2%	84.8%	80.6%	71.6%	82.0%
2 - Agree	13.3%	13.7%	18.2%	26.7%	16.6%
3 - Disagree	1.5%	1.1%	1.0%	1.7%	1.2%
4 - Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%
Mean	1.163	1.171	1.208	1.301	1.200

Table 13. Item 11 - "The teacher gave enough time to discuss their opinions and ideas."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	83.7%	89.0%	84.0%	76.7%	85.5%
2 - Agree	11.7%	10.4%	15.0%	21.6%	13.3%
3 - Disagree	4.1%	0.4%	0.8%	1.1%	0.9%
4 - Strongly Disagree	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.6%	0.3%
Mean	1.214	1.118	1.172	1.256	1.160

Table 14. Item 12 - "EDC's small class size helped improve my discussion ability."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	80.6%	84.3%	80.5%	72.7%	81.5%
2 - Agree	14.3%	14.0%	16.7%	23.9%	15.9%
3 - Disagree	4.1%	1.1%	2.1%	2.8%	1.9%
4 - Strongly Disagree	1.0%	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%	0.7%
Mean	1.255	1.180	1.230	1.313	1.218

Table 15. Item 13 - "After taking EDC, my English speaking skills have improved."

Level	I (n = 196)	II (n = 974)	III (n = 1052)	IV (n = 176)	TOTAL (n = 2398)
1 - Strongly Agree	58.7%	65.8%	58.0%	56.3%	61.1%
2 - Agree	31.1%	29.0%	35.3%	38.6%	32.6%
3 - Disagree	4.1%	4.1%	5.5%	4.5%	4.8%
4 - Strongly Disagree	6.1%	1.1%	1.2%	0.6%	1.5%
Mean	1.576	1.405	1.499	1.494	1.467

Discussion

The most obvious interpretation of the results of the survey across all of the items is the generally positive attitude that students had towards the course. In each of the 13 items, the mean score always fell between 1 and 2, with over 93% of students either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statements, including over 98% for three of the items (items 5, 10, 11).

This overall agreement is echoed in the fact that 1.5% was the highest percentage of students strongly disagreeing with any one item (item 11). One possible reason that this item ("The teacher gave enough time to discuss their opinions and ideas") had the lowest total mean (1.160) is the emphasis placed on student talking time during the training of new instructors by program managers. Clear targets are set in terms of how much of a lesson should be given to student-to-student interaction: a minimum of 45 minutes in a 90-minute lesson for first-year instructors, rising to a minimum of 55 minutes for third, fourth, and fifth-year instructors. Program manager oversight for this target includes observation procedures that require instructors to calculate the total student-to-student interaction time in a sample lesson. If the minimum amount is not reached, instructors are supported in developing ways to increase the quantity of interaction time they can provide students. The result of item 11 in the survey suggests that this aspect of teacher training is effective in terms of bringing about lessons in which students feel they have enough time to

adequately share their ideas.

At the other end, the item with the highest total mean was item 2 ("I deepened my understanding of the topics we discussed in the course"). While it should be remembered that this statement was still generally responded positively to by students, its relative amount of disagreement can be possibly explained through two points. First, while this item refers to one of the stated aims of the course, it is an aim that is rarely explicitly addressed in teacher training sessions. Instructors may therefore understandably neglect to consider it when planning and teaching lessons, preferring to focus on the more concrete and testable aspects of the course, such as students' use of target language. Program managers provide few clear guidelines to instructors in terms of how to raise students' awareness of whether or not they deepened their understanding of topics, save for suggestions to include references to student-generated content when giving feedback. However, this is often seen as secondary to target language feedback, and therefore is perhaps often omitted.

A second possible explanation for the item 2 result is that this particular aim is better addressed through the second semester of the course, and therefore would not be reflected in these first semester results. The target language in the first semester is designed to give students phrases to share relatively basic ideas on the topics and to organize their discussions. The second semester's target language, by contrast, is more focused on phrases that help students apply critical thinking skills to the topics, such as through questions and answers that address considering different viewpoints, balancing opinions, or comparing ideas. The course design intends that the use of these more advanced discussion skills will better help students deepen their understanding of the course topics. Therefore, a follow-up study that analyzes the second semester survey results is needed in order to determine whether or not this aim of the course is ultimately better achieved.

Another notable trend from the results is that, in 11 of the 13 items, the Level II students had the lowest mean scores of all the levels, and the second lowest in the other two. In addition, the Level III students had the second lowest mean scores in 8 of the 13 items. This is possibly a result of the overall course design being aimed at the "average" EDC student, in terms of overall language proficiency, and the stronger set of "average" students, i.e. Level II over Level III, being better capable of achieving course aims and therefore more satisfied with the course. To maintain relative unification of the course goals, materials, methodology, and assessment across all EDC students, there are few differences among the curriculum for the four different levels. As a result, however, it should be recognized that, as a result, some students at the high and low ends of language proficiency do not feel that the course adequately addresses their needs. While some steps have been taken to address this issue in the past (e.g. the addition of Japanese translations of instructions in the Level IV textbook), and some have been considered for the future (see Lesley & West, 2019), program managers should continue to seek ways to better meet the needs of all EDC students.

The two items in which neither Level II nor Level III students indicated the strongest agreement also merit discussion. First, Level IV students most strongly agreed with item 7 ("The discussion test was a good way to assess my discussion ability"). This possibly points to the fact that the discussion tests are assessed through criterion-referenced scoring that focuses purely on use of target language phrases and overall participation. Level IV students are therefore able to score well on the test through the reciting of those phrases and typically are not penalized for a lack of linguistic competence. By contrast, Level I students' mean score on this item was the lowest among the four levels (and low relative to their scores on most of the other items). This may be because the test design does not specifically reward their stronger linguistic competence and they may reject assessment that focuses on the repetition of fixed expressions. One implication of this is a possible need for development of the test design, especially for Level I students.

The other item that was not most strongly agreed with by Level II or Level III students was item 10 ("The teacher gave clear instructions for using skills and completing activities"), for which Level I students had the lowest mean score. This is perhaps unsurprising as Level I students are likely to have the strongest listening comprehension skills and therefore can interpret instructions by the teacher with relative ease. However, this suggests that future teacher training sessions by program managers could include ones that address how to help instructors develop their ability to give comprehensible instructions to lower level students.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Method of Analysis

Given that the qualitative data came from an open-ended item asking only for "any comments", it was clear that the responses could potentially be wide-ranging in terms of focus. As a result, and due to the large amount of qualitative data being analyzed in this study, a smaller-scale pilot study was deemed necessary in order to safeguard against any issues which could not otherwise be anticipated, to test out the proposed research instruments, and to guide the approach taken in the main study (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001; Conn, Algase, Rawl, Zerwic, & Wyman, 2010).

This pilot was carried out using all of the comments that had been written in English. This approach was taken as it was felt English comments would be relatively quick to analyze yet would still provide a valuable insight into the types of comments which could potentially be encountered. As comments were a required part of the survey, several hundred were very short, including variations of "thank you" or "fun", and "nothing [to add]". After these comments were removed, a sample of 838 items remained. As a starting point for the pilot, the Likert-scale items were divided into broad areas for analysis by different researchers. By way of example, this meant that one researcher searched for comments on DSs and CSs, while another searched for responses referencing teacher feedback, lesson assessment, and discussion tests. Relevant instances were categorized by the researcher and quantified by the type or theme of the comment. Representative comments were then chosen to serve as examples and findings were reported among the researchers. These findings helped inform the approach taken to qualitative data analysis in the main study itself, as described below.

From the entire qualitative dataset of all English and Japanese responses, comments were first all read to get a general overview. From this overview, two broad categories for further investigation were identified:

- Attitude change and affective factors
- Attitudes towards DSs, DSPs, feedback, and assessment

This division covers what might be considered more informal aspects of students' feelings or experiences, as well as more formal aspects of the course and curriculum. After identifying these two areas of interest, the comments were read though again in order to determine the total number of particular instances of these two themes.

Identification of Emergent Themes

For the first category of attitude change and affective factors, two points stood out. The first was that many students reported a change in their attitude towards English, and this was a change from negative to positive feelings. The second was that a noticeable number of students mentioned what could be termed *affective factors*. This means positive comments about the effect of classmates or the effect of the atmosphere in class. Both of these themes might be classed as personal, individual, or internal effects of the course, as opposed to comments related to specific course goals or comments related to lesson content or teaching style. These themes are broad areas, so more specific guidelines were necessary when identifying instances. For *changes in attitude*, comments

were counted if they included explicit statements of a change in attitude from negative to positive. This refers specifically to comments stating a previous negative feeling and a later positive feeling towards English or towards the course more generally. Although there were a number of comments in which a change in attitude could be implied or inferred from what was written, these were not included to maintain consistency. Two examples of comments that were included are shown below. (Comments written by students in Japanese are followed by English translations produced by the authors of this paper in italics).

> “毎回授業の前は緊張するけど、授業が始まると毎回意外と楽しい。最初の方の授業では、自分の考えを言いたくても全然うまく言葉にできなくて伝えられなかったど、授業を重ねて行くうちにだんだん上手にディスカッションできるようになっていったと思う。”
> *I’m nervous before each class, but when the lessons start it is surprisingly fun. In the first lessons I couldn’t say my own opinion and the words didn’t come out so I couldn’t communicate, but as the lessons continued I think I gradually got better at having a discussion.*

> “みんなで英語を喋るのに抵抗があったけど、やってみたらすごく楽しかったです！！”
> *I had resistance to speaking English with everyone, but when I tried it, it was really fun!*

The catalogue of comments on affective factors included those that referred to the positive effect of class members or positive feelings towards class members. Two examples illustrate this point:

> “仲が良いクラスで円滑にディスカッション出来ました。”
> *We could have a smooth discussion because the class got on well.*

> “理解が追いつかず何も言えずにいた私にも丁寧に説明をしてくださった先生、私の拙い英語を理解しようと努めてくれたクラスの人たちに感謝致します。”
> *I feel grateful for the teacher, who explained carefully to me when I couldn’t follow or say anything and my classmates who worked hard to understand my poor English.*

Determining and selecting the comments relevant for the second category (attitudes towards DSs, DSPs, and CSs) involved a holistic interpretation of students’ narratives as quite often there was an overlap with other themes, such as the previously mentioned affective factors and overall gratitude to the EDC instructors. Another reason for that was variations in the labelling of DSs, DSPs and CSs found in students’ comments. Although the Likert-scale items included examples of DSs and CSs to help students respond appropriately, students used the following words and phrases to refer to DSs and DSPs: “ディスカッションスキル” [*discussion skills*], “教科書に記載されているフレーズ” [*phrases printed in the textbook*], “ディスカッションフレーズ” [*discussion phrases*]. In addition, sometimes it was not clear whether some respondents differentiated accurately between DSs, DSPs, and CSs. It is also worth mentioning that there were very few responses about any particular DSs, DSPs, or CSs, as in the following comment:

> “パラフレーズをうまく使えるようになった。”
> *I have learned how to use Paraphrasing [a CS] well.*

Rather than naming a particular skill or phrase, students tended to give more general comments about their improvements, but they tended to demonstrate an understanding that the use of skills taught in the course was essential for that progress.

However, from the two types of skills, i.e. CSs and DSs, the former was not often mentioned in narratives with examples or reasoning of improvements, whereas DSs (and DSPs) were mentioned relatively frequently. As such, only DSs and DSPs will be further discussed. One example of the comments that were considered relevant to students’ learning outcomes was:

> “毎回新しいディスカッションスキルを学ぶことで、前回よりもより深い話し合いができたと思う。また、毎回新しいフレーズを習いつつ、前回使ったワードを復習していくことで自分の中でディスカッションにおける大切なフレーズを定着させることができた。”
> *By studying new Discussion Skills every time, I think I managed to have deeper discussions than before. Also, while studying new phrases every time, we reviewed the words we used previously, and this helped me to get a good hold of the important phrases that appear in discussions.*

There were also variations in the words used by students to refer to feedback, for example, “フィードバック” [*feedback*], “コメント” [*comment(s)*], “アドバイス” [*advice*], “評価” [*assessment*], “採点” [*scoring*], and even “フィードバックの数字” [*feedback numbers*]. Sometimes, those categories were difficult to differentiate, as they seemed to be closely related in students’ comments. For example, one student reported:

> “毎回評価とコメントが貰えるので緊張感があった。”
> *I was nervous because every time I was able to receive assessment and comments.*

Exploring these two categories of students’ comments in depth was useful for discovering areas for the further development of the program that were not identified by the quantitative part of the survey. To summarize, the notable trends concerning affective factors focused on the change in attitude towards English and the importance of class dynamics. For the trends in comments concerning formal factors, these demonstrated that most students connected their improvement of discussion skills with DSs and DSPs taught as a part of the course. While students appreciated the feedback and assessment from their teachers, there were some organizational aspects of formal assessment that could be improved based on students’ comments. The following sections discuss the qualitative results in more detail and the potential implications of these findings.

Results

Attitude change and affective factors

There were 288 comments referring to students’ changes in attitude from negative to positive. Such comments support the idea that the course objective of helping students to feel comfortable with English is successful. In particular, many descriptions of the changes in attitude used the word 抵抗 [*teikō*], which in this context is probably best translated as a feeling of discomfort, hesitancy, or psychological resistance. This is illustrated in the two examples below:

> “前より英語を話すことに抵抗がなくなったし、ディスカッションの仕方が分かったので良かった。もっと話せるようになりたいと思った。”
> *My hesitancy towards speaking English went away compared with before, and it was good that I understood the format of a discussion. I want to be able to speak more.*

> “英語を話すことに前より抵抗がなくなったと思う。”
> *I think my resistance to speaking English is less than before.*

It would seem that numerous students began the course with a somewhat hesitant or reluctant attitude towards speaking, but this gradually changed over the duration of the course. That the course engendered a positive change in attitude among so many who took it can be viewed as a great strength.

There were 130 comments about affective factors. These can broadly be divided into three areas. Most of these comments (n = 96) mentioned making friends or developing relationships with classmates. Two examples of these are:

> “友達ができて楽しかったです。”
> *It was fun because I could make friends.*

> “いい友達にも恵まれて非常に楽しい授業でした。”
> *I was blessed with good friends so it was a really enjoyable class.*

The frequency of this kind of comment seems significant. We would argue that the small class size and the active nature of the class (in terms of constant interaction) encourage personal connections. The second area (n = 27) was regarding classroom atmosphere, such as:

> “話すことが決して得意ではないため、はじめは不安などありましたが、クラスの明るく楽しい雰囲気と先生の面白おかしい御指導のおかげで最初から最後まで楽しくディスカッションができました。”
> *Because I wasn’t really good at speaking I felt uneasy at first, but because of the bright and fun atmosphere, and the teacher’s amusing instruction, I could have a fun discussion from beginning to end.*

> “また、聞いている側も馬鹿にせず真剣に耳を傾けてくれたので、いつも良い雰囲気のクラスだったと思います。”
> *The people listening didn’t make fun of me and listened seriously, so I think there was always a good atmosphere.*

The third area (n = 7) grouped together other affective factors not captured by the previous two areas. These included:

> “先生の毎回の指示と今のクラスのメンバーがみんな向上心を持って明るく取り組んでいたおかげだと感じ、このクラスで本当に良かったなと思いました。”
> *Thanks to the teacher’s instruction in each lesson, and the fact that my classmates tackled the class ambitiously and lightly, I was really glad I was in this class.*

> “単語が思いつかなくてもメンバーと協力してディスカ ションをこなすことができた。”
> *Even when I couldn't come up with the right words, I could cooperate with class members and manage to do the discussion.*

These comments about atmosphere and miscellaneous affective factors illustrate the importance of good relationships for a positive experience for EDC students. The frequency with which affective factors featured in comments suggests that the interpersonal side of classes is as significant as the pedagogic side for students. For the vast majority of students, this is likely to be the first time they are taking an English-only course requiring constant spoken participation, not to mention one which requires participation and actual discussion. Indeed, the challenges of communicating in a foreign language are particularly apparent in academic discussions due to the often improvised nature of discussion and the large cognitive load this places on students. This is because successfully participating in an academic discussion requires students to generate ideas both pre- and mid-discussion, organize their ideas and discourse appropriately, and interact effectively with their peers. In addition, they need to take turns negotiating meaning and repairing communication breakdowns when necessary, and try to achieve a greater awareness of discussion topics through analysis and negotiation of ideas and opinions (Alexander, Argent, & Spencer, 2008). Performing all these tasks together is demanding, so a supportive learning environment would seem vital. The value students placed on such affective factors also links to the comments about changes in attitude from negative to positive. It seems safe to assume that if the learning atmosphere is positive, then this contributes to changing students' perceptions of English.

An interesting side note to these affective comments is that *fun* seemed to be an important part of the class for students. (In the analysis the idea of “fun” could be considered an element of affective factors, but was considered too vague to constitute it by itself.) There were 558 comments that included the word “楽しい” [*fun*]. A particularly pertinent example is:

> “英語が好きになることはありえませんが楽しかったです。”
> *It seemed impossible that I would come to like English, but the class was fun.*

Clearly, ‘enjoyment’ is valued by students as an evaluative criteria, and is widely reported among those taking the course.

Attitudes towards DSs, DSPs, feedback, and assessment

There were 192 representative comments related to two important aspects of the EDC course: organizing and practicing English discussions by using DSs and/or DSPs (n = 145) and attitudes to the EDC assessment and feedback system (n = 47).

Overall, there were two main tendencies in students' comments about practicing and developing English discussion ability through the use of DSs and DSPs. The first can be grouped into those showing a positive attitude and understanding of the practical outcome (n = 125) while the second group had a negative attitude to the repeated use of DSs and/or DSPs (n = 20). The comments about DSs and/or DSPs were considered to be positive if they included specific reasoning that the suggested patterns, structures, and set phrases helped them have more interesting discussions and develop their proficiency, i.e. students explicitly explained why or how learning DSs and/or DSPs was beneficial for their English progress. Two examples of these positive comments were:

> “教科書に記載されているフレーズを何度も活用することで自然と話題を切り替えたり自分の意見を英語で伝えることができるようになった。”
> *I have become able to naturally change topics and to communicate my opinions by using the phrases listed in the textbook many times.*

> ‘楽しく学べたし、明確に「こういう時はこのフレーズ」と資料で示してくれていたので、その資料を思い出しながらディスカッションができたし、それにより英語でコミュニケーションを取るのに抵抗がなくなった。”
> *I had fun studying, and my repulsion towards communication in English disappeared because I was able to have discussions by remembering the materials that clearly stated when a good timing for using each phrase was.*

On the other hand, the negative comments contained some explicitly stated criticism or dissatisfaction with the use of DSs and/or DSPs. One instance of these negative comments was:

> “フレーズばかりでディスカッション内容が浅はかだった。”
> *The content of the discussions was shallow due to constant use of phrases.*

Another example was written mostly in English, with one Japanese word at the end:

> “What we are actually learning in discussion class is not working for progress, but learning a form. In a word, 形式主義 [*formalism*].”

These examples demonstrate that if instructors focus too much on students’ ability to follow discussion patterns and to use particular set expressions, it can be demotivating for some students. This is potentially a more noticeable tendency among more proficient students. Anecdotally, there does appear to be frustration among some Level I students at the requirement to demonstrate their ability to use DSs, and the appearance of comments in English (7 out of 20) reflecting this view certainly supports this possibility.

It is important to note that the positive comments (n = 125) significantly outnumbered the negative ones (n = 20). However, the negative comments can serve as a good reminder for EDC instructors and program managers that students are well aware of and sensitive to instructors teaching toward the test, oversimplifying the goals of the course into purely using the DSPs to achieve a good grade, and focusing too much on the form of specific skills, rather than on students’ ideas or the interactional ability. Students might not be explicit about their dissatisfaction of the focus during the course of the semester, but they can clearly distinguish between instructors prioritizing the form they use and “how” they speak over the ideas they generate and what they actually say.

Another aspect of students’ comments investigated was their attitude to feedback and assessment. There were 47 comments that mentioned some forms of feedback and assessment, either together or separately. The comments were also divided into those which were categorized as positive (n = 18) and those which could be labeled as negative (n = 29). The following representative example of positive comments shows that a student found their teacher’s advice explaining their evaluation very useful:

> “講師の先生からは毎回評価のメールが送られて来て、自分に何が足りないのか明確に知ることができて、そのお陰でより英語力が向上したと思います。”
> *I think my English proficiency improved even more because every time we received emails with evaluation, we could clearly understand what we lacked.*

On the other hand, students’ comments about post-class assessment showed that some (n = 20) cited a lack of understanding as to how to interpret their score on the EDC website. One particularly recurring theme was that the numeric representation of the score was not clear enough for some students:

> “評価の数字がなんだかよくわからなかったので、もっとわかりやすいといいと思う。”
> *I could not understand the numbers of the evaluation well enough, I think they should be easier to understand.*

Discussion

The qualitative analysis of students’ comments and identification of two broad categories uncovered several potential areas for the further development of the EDC program. These range from large-scale potential implications for the faculty development and professional training of EDC instructors to more organizational aspects, such as the need for allocating more time to make sure that all students can understand the EDC website assessment system. There are other outcomes, for example, learning more about students’ attitudes and insecurities towards speaking English and any changes in these attitudes that occur over the course of the semester is rewarding and motivational for EDC instructors and program managers.

While a change in attitude from negative to positive can be considered a success, on a more general scale this brings up the important point that so many students held negative attitudes towards speaking English in the first place. In other words, it is important to consider that the default position of many of those who enter a 100% English discussion class will be one of discomfort, hesitancy, or resistance. First of all, instructors must understand that this is the initial attitude for many of their students. They should be aware that, with their support, this attitude is likely to change over time, and take this into account when administering classes. It may be a good idea for EDC instructors to make this explicit and explain this common change to students in order to prepare them for the experiences they will likely have. More practically, the first lessons of the course should focus on building confidence and making students feel at ease. The instructor must take care to encourage and praise student effort. It is also important for the instructor to stress the need for participation, which can be done when explaining the goals of the course, and also by intermittently reminding students of the positive effect of active participation on grading throughout the course. Moreover, if instructors are aware that students will feel resistance and experience the initial lessons as taxing, they should be explicit that students are nevertheless performing to the required standard in these initial classes. In other words, teachers should explain to students that even though the lesson goals may seem challenging, they are still making progress and achieving what is expected of them. This explicit communication can help teachers make sure that students understand they are performing to the desired and appropriate level and reduce learners’ anxiety. Chiefly, then, the implications of the frequent change in student attitude for instructor behavior are to be aware of students’ mindset, and to verbalize their understanding of students’ mindset in order to reassure students that their experiences are valid.

Comments about the positive effect of classmates and atmosphere indicate that students

view success on this course as relying heavily on teamwork and a level of trust between class members. For instructors, this highlights the importance of rapport building and creating positive class dynamics as early as possible. It suggests this should be a major goal of the first lesson of the course. Specifically, this could be achieved, at least in part, by implementing activities in which students can learn classmates' names and some personal information about each other. To ensure classmates are assisting each other as the course progresses, instructors can use practice activities to strengthen 'helping' behaviors. For example, students could be given a structured dialogue in which they have to help paraphrase a classmate's idea, or in which they are encouraged to provide positive feedback on a classmate's idea during post-discussion feedback. In terms of feedback, the instructor must be careful to exemplify and praise instances where classmates help each other to encourage students to keep doing this in the future. When relevant, the instructor can also point out that such behavior is linked to student grades with respect to how CSs or DSs are used in helping interactions. Another alternative is that teamwork can be incorporated into self-feedback, whereby students assess the degree to which they helped each other after each discussion. Although the quality of interpersonal relationships are determined to some degree by the students themselves, instructors must be aware of the significance of fostering positive interpersonal relationships and facilitating good teamwork. While these aspects are explicitly introduced in the first EDC lesson of each semester and routinely reiterated in subsequent lessons by the majority of instructors, it is worth ensuring that instructors new to the program understand this point during their initial orientation and training period. This is particularly important considering that successful class dynamics will almost certainly improve other more formalized learning outcomes.

Students' perceptions of and attitudes towards learning English discussions with the help of DSs and DSPs was consistent with the quantitative results and provided clear examples of overall students' satisfaction with the course and lessons' structure. However, the negative comments also demonstrate how sensitive students were if the focus of the lessons shifted to drilling DSPs. Moreover, students' comments on DSs and DSPs suggest that EDC instructors' feedback should not be overly focused on the formal aspects of students' discussions. EDC instructors, in the course of their professional training, are strongly recommended not to focus on drilling DSPs, but rather on delivering DSs in a communicative and meaningful way. However, there may be a tendency to emphasize using DSs and/or DSPs in feedback, and this may make students feel as if EDC lessons are concerned with form regardless of whether or not content is attached to it. This perception can further affect students' motivation and understanding of the whole program. Although these negative comments were not numerous, they still serve as a good reminder of how important it is to keep DS presentation, practice, and feedback meaningful and communicative, as well as to provide students with additional DSPs if necessary. Learning this from students' comments rather than being reminded by the program managers may be more motivational for EDC instructors.

Students' comments about the feedback and assessment are valuable for EDC instructors and program managers for two reasons. Firstly, it is clear that some students benefit from reading their instructors' online feedback and following their recommendations. Therefore, it is important to make all students more aware of the value of these comments. In addition, instructors must ensure their comments are written in an accessible and precise way. This could be an area for training of new instructors or for continuing professional development. Secondly, although EDC instructors spend time in the first lesson explaining the assessment criteria, this may not be sufficient for all students, and so it may be beneficial for instructors to guide students through their scores, the weight they hold, and how students can improve, more thoroughly and systematically.

To summarize, giving students the option of leaving free comments and analyzing them was an effective way not only to support the quantitative data, but also to identify the areas not

covered and anticipated by the Likert-scale items offered by the program managers. Qualitative data provided a strong support for the overall positive learning experience students were receiving in the EDC program, and exemplified that students were aware of getting practical learning outcomes by improving English discussion skills, as well as having a significant change in their attitude and motivation to studying and speaking English.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that the overwhelming majority of respondents were extremely satisfied with their EDC classroom experience, and firmly believe that their ability to communicate and discuss in English improved as a result of taking the course. Key facets of the course, including the use of discussion and communication skills, the soft CLIL approach, the small class size, and the role and performance of the EDC instructors all received highly positive feedback. Respondents were also very positive regarding the use of formalized discussion tests to test their progress. Additionally, respondents approved of the quality of the textbook, in terms of it helping them prepare for upcoming discussions and generate ideas for future lessons.

This high satisfaction across all aspects of the course was evident irrespective of students' proficiency levels, although Level I students did appear to be slightly less satisfied by certain elements of the course compared to students in other levels. There were only two occasions when the percentage of Level I respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the Likert items dropped below 90%. This occurred in item 7 (85.7%), which asked whether the discussion test was a good way to test students' discussion ability, and item 13 (89.8%), which asked whether students felt their English speaking skills had improved after the course. When viewed in isolation, these figures appear extremely positive. Yet, when compared with quantitative results from other levels, this suggests that the course may better meet the communicative needs of students with lower language abilities than those already capable of communicating in English. At the other end of the scale, Level IV students indicated that they are the most satisfied of the four levels with EDC assessment methods yet, understandably, they also suggested that they understood their teachers' instructions less than students in other levels. As discussed, these findings have implications for both the way the discussion ability of the most proficient EDC students is assessed, as well as how EDC instructors communicate with their lowest level learners.

The results of this study have clear implications for ongoing program development. Firstly, EDC instructors should be made more aware of the negative feelings many of their students associate with learning English. The discomfort and psychological resistance associated with 抵抗 [*teikō*], a concept which may require further research in itself, has potentially damaging consequences for the success of both the students themselves and the course they are taking. It is therefore essential that teachers allocate sufficient time at the beginning of their courses for their students to familiarize themselves with their new context and build a comfortable and supportive environment with their peers and teachers. The beginning of the course is also crucial when it comes to students understanding how they will be assessed and how they can monitor their progress. While EDC assessment is clearly laid out in a course handbook issued to all students at the beginning of each semester, it cannot be assumed that students will read, comprehend, and retain this information. In the first lesson of the EDC course, instructors outline the assessment criteria and format, and introduce students to the EDC website where they can check their grades and progress. This, however, seems to be too much information for some students to take in, especially in a second language. It would therefore appear wise for instructors to revisit the key assessment points on a regular basis and perhaps check students' understanding of both the criteria and the meaning of allocated scores more carefully.

In addition, it should be emphasized to instructors that their approach to the teaching of

DSs ought not to revolve around the insistence of repeated use of specific phrases, particularly when teaching more proficient students. While this is already an important factor in EDC instructor training, it may be that instructors need to alter their approach more dramatically from class to class, and tailor their lessons more carefully to individual student's needs. This may involve teaching specific DSPs to less proficient or less confident students to enable them to successfully perform and recognize the skill in discussion. Yet, at the same time, instructors must be able to take a more flexible approach towards the use of specific DSPs with more proficient students. In particular, a more balanced approach to feedback seems to be necessary in some cases. Instructors must be reminded that a good discussion is multi-faceted, and that students may value a focus on their ideas and their interactional ability, and not just their use of specific phrases. As some Level I students have identified, this also has implications for assessment in the formalized discussion tests, in which students are required to demonstrate an ability to use each DS introduced on the course so far.

As this was an introductory study into a large bank of EDC student survey data, it was difficult to anticipate the results, particularly of the qualitative data. While the exploratory RQs allowed the scope to remain broad and the pilot study permitted a smaller-scale "test run" (Polit, Beck, & Hungler, 2001, in van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001), future investigations of EDC student surveys will be able to build on this introductory study by better anticipating areas for analysis and, thus, investigate more discrete aspects of students' responses.

Future studies will also be able to learn from two limitations to this study in terms of data collection. Firstly, after all data was collected, it was noticed that the computer system administering the questionnaire had set all responses to display *Strongly Agree* by default. This clearly increases the chances of an acquiescence bias through a willingness to agree with the "given" or "suggested" answer. This error has since been rectified. A further oversight led to information regarding respondents' level being omitted from the raw qualitative data, meaning that cross-level comparisons could only be made using quantitative data. The inclusion of level information alongside respondents' comments could have better supported the contrasts and comparisons made through analysis of the quantitative data, and permitted more insightful conclusions to be drawn. In part as a result of this, while both quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed in this study, the results do not always complement each other. While this approach has certainly succeeded in "providing a fuller and more complete picture of the thing that is being studied" (Denscombe, 2014, p. 147), the use of the two methods did not always prove to be complementary, as is the desire with a mixed methods approach (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Data collection and collation methods have since been rectified in the hope that studies into student survey data collected in the future can investigate differences in satisfaction and attitude based on students' language ability.

As the EDC course runs for two 14-week semesters in an academic year, a logical next step may be to collect student survey data for the fall semester and carry out a comparative study of the results. It would be of particular interest to analyze how students' views towards communicating in English change, given the reduction in 抵抗 [*teikō*] cited by many respondents that takes place over the spring semester. Of particular interest to the authors is the impact on student motivation and confidence that this may have. Further, a number of respondents in this study seemed to be frustrated by a perceived necessity to simply repeat the DSPs and by a lack of balance in teacher feedback between skill use and students' ideas. This would appear to be another area worthy of exploration, i.e. investigating how students' attitudes towards the use of DSPs develop as the number of DSs at their disposal rises and the complexity of the lesson topics increases. Given that qualitative data in future studies will also include respondents' proficiency level, the hypothesis that this view is more prevalent among Level I students could be better tested.

As key stakeholders in any language program, students are ideally placed to provide unique insights into how successful they perceive the program to be. This study has shown that students, even when broadly satisfied with their course, are capable of providing extremely insightful comments with regard to how they view their learning experience. As has been seen, students' voices can have powerful implications for ongoing program development and teacher education and, as such, they play a vital role in ensuring the success of any language program.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to thank the EDC academic administration team, who were extremely helpful in providing support in the compiling and anonymizing of data.

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APPENDIX A – Overview of EDC Spring 2018 Semester

Lesson	Content	Skill
1	**Introduction**	**Communication Skills:** Checking Understanding, Clarifying, Paraphrasing
2	**Communication 1:** The Importance of Communication	**Discussion Skill:** Asking for and Giving Opinions
3	**Communication 2:** Making Friends at University	**Discussion Skill:** Asking for and Giving Reasons
4	**Education 1:** Going to University	**Communication Skill Review:** Checking Understanding
5	**Education 2:** University Entrance Exams	**Discussion Test 1**
6	**Environment 1:** The Environment and You	**Discussion Skill:** Asking for and Giving Reasons
7	**Environment 2:** Urbanization	**Discussion Skill:** Joining a Discussion
8	**Social Issues 1:** Becoming Independent	**Communication Skill Review:** Paraphrasing
9	**Social Issues 2:** Students and Social Pressure	**Discussion Test 2**
10	**Technology 1:** Face-to-face versus Online Communication	**Discussion Skill:** Choosing Topics
11	**Technology 2:** Technology: Past, Present, and Future	**Discussion Skill:** Asking about and Talking about Possibilities
12	**Values 1:** Learning Values	**Communication Skill Review:** Clarifying
13	**Values 2:** Happiness	**Discussion Test 3**
14	**Review**	

APPENDIX B – EDC Student Survey, Spring 2018

No.1 EDC lessons made me feel more comfortable using English for communication.
授業を受けたことで、以前より英語でコミュニケーションを取ることに抵抗がなくなった。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.2 I deepened my understanding of the topics we discussed in the course.
授業で話したトピックについて理解が深まった。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.3 The homework reading in the textbook helped me prepare for lessons.
教科書を読む宿題は予習に役立った。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.4 The textbook activities helped me prepare for discussions.
教科書のアクティビティーはディスカッションに役立った。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.5 The Discussion Skills (e.g. Opinions) helped me to participate in discussions.
授業で学んだディスカッションスキル（例：意見）はディスカッションに役立った。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.6 The Communication Skills (e.g. Paraphrasing) helped me to participate in discussions.
授業で学んだコミュニケーションスキル（例：言い換え）はディスカッションに役立った。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.7 The discussion test was a good way to assess my discussion ability.
ディスカッションテストは自分のディスカッション能力を評価する良い方法だった。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.8 The teacher's feedback during lessons helped me to understand what skills I needed to use more.
授業中の講師からのフィードバックにより、どのスキルをより使うべきかよく理解できた。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.9 The teacher's feedback on the EDC website helped me to understand what skills I needed to use more.
EDC ウェブサイトに掲載される講師からのコメントにより、どのスキルをより使うべきかよく理解できた。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.10 The teacher gave clear instructions for using skills and completing activities.
講師の説明や指示は明確であった（スキルの使い方やアクティビティーの行い方について）。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.11 The teacher gave enough time to discuss their opinions and ideas.
講師は学生にディスカッションする時間を十分に与えた。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.12 EDC's small class size helped improve my discussion ability.
少人数クラスのため、ディスカッション能力を向上させることができた。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.13 After taking EDC, my English speaking skills have improved.
ディスカッションクラスを受講して以前より英語を話すことができるようになった。
Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

No.14 Any comments
自由記述