報告

Meaningfulな語学学習センターに向けての初動調査
—英語サポートルームの4つの方針—

Steve T. Fukuda1) 坂田浩 2)
1) 徳島大学大学院国際教育研究科
2) 徳島大学国際センター

要約：大学を取り巻く国際化がますます大きなものとなっている。英語教育の充実は欠かせない。本学でも英語教育の充実は優先的課題といえる。英語学習を支援するために2008年7月にEnglish Support Roomを発足した。開始以来、英語コミュニケーションを体験するための英語の自主学習を行うための場、英語学習に関する相談・指導、英会話講座、英語学習対策講座などの課外授業の提供が主に展開している。ESRは4つの方針を持っての発足になった。3つの方針はDeci & Ryan1)の自己決定理論の心理的欲求の「自律性・有能性・関係性」である。それに加え、「環境づくり」から始まったESRである。今回の初動調査の結果からは4つの方針中3つの方針：有能性・関係性・環境づくりを強く支持することができたと解った。自律性に関してはこれから検討していくものとする。しかし、今回のアンケート結果を見るとESRは学生にとってMeaningfulな学習時間と場を提供しているといえる。
（キーワード：英語教育、語学自習室、自己決定理論）

Initial Investigation of a Meaningful Language Learning Center
-Four Principles of our English Support Room-

Steve T. Fukuda1) Hiroshi Sakata2)
1) Center for General Education, The University of Tokushima
2) International Center, The University of Tokushima

Abstract: With the importance of English skills getting stronger each year, in July of 2008, the Center for General Education of the University of Tokushima established an Language Learning Center. The initial implementation was based on the three psychological needs of the Self-Determination Theory1): Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness, in addition to a fourth: Relaxed Environment. These principles have led us to believe that we have created a meaningful learning environment for language learners. A questionnaire of these principles was administered to a few of the 650 (December 2008) learners. The results show that three of the four principles, Competence, Relatedness, and Relaxed Environment, were maintained strongly showing the effectiveness of our Language Learning Center. However, though showing high results on individual items, the Cronbach Alpha showed a low reliability suggesting further investigation on the principle of Autonomy.
(Key words: English Education, Language Learning Center, Self-Determination Theory)

1. Introduction: The English Tsunami

A tsunami of terms such as Internationalization, Globalization, the Ministry of Education’s (MEXT) ‘Plan to Invite 30,000 international Students’, or MEXT’s ‘Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities’ have been influencing the educational scene numerously in recent years. Now, even more, we have a great many number of reasons for improving the English abilities of our university students. In our university alone, there have been countless reforms from curriculum changes, to introductions of costly e-learning campaigns, to hiring of more native speakers. However, in the recent years many students still seem to be turned off when hearing the words “English”. When the students are asked if they want to be able to use English, most say yes, however, when it comes to studying English almost all say they don’t like it. Undoubtedly, there are many interpretations to these questions. However, arguably, they ultimately arrive to one: ‘Are we doing something wrong?’ We know there should be no end of studies for the advancement of English abilities. Contrastingly, the status quo seems to be once a test is passed, credits are attained, or a high score on a proficiency exam is received, many abandon their studies. Therefore, the question arises: ‘What must,
or can, we do as an institution, to sustain motivation and for further gains in proficiency?''

2. English Education Goals of Tokushima University

The University of Tokushima has in its mission statement a main focus on fostering the autonomous learners in their pursuit of achievement. This matches the comments above of continuous learning. Hence, we must provide these opportunities for this achievement. Similarly, the Center for General Education, where the majority of the English classes are held, has the common pillars of autonomy on top of basic language proficiency as a main objective. There are three classes that all students are required to take during their first and second years: Basic, Thematic, and Communicative English courses. In the Basic English courses, students are required to attain accurate learning strategies to learn and further their proficiency in English. The Thematic English course allows students to choose a class based on the themes to suit their needs. Finally, the Communicative English course has a goal of acquiring the necessary skills for communicating using English. Instantly, the question arises: ‘What must the university do to facilitate students in acquiring these necessary goals?’ We must keep in mind Hato’s (2) evidence of the amount of time it takes to acquire a foreign language in which the current curriculum is drastically remote. (3)

A higher-learning institution should consider Einstein’s principles when he said: ‘I never teach my pupils, I only provide the conditions in which they can learn.’ Considering the copious amounts of information and what it takes to gain, comprehend and further this knowledge in today’s society, it must be the foremost goal that every institution of higher learning provide and maintain opportunities for meaningful learning to take place. Especially, in foreign language education, ‘What is more important than the opportunities to use the target language?’ Therefore, it should be a goal for institutions of higher learning to provide this situation. Furthermore, second language acquisition requires the suitable amount of time for authentic achievement. (4) In other words, a self-access language center, where students can use the language authentically must go hand-in-hand simultaneously with on-going courses throughout the semester and during the breaks to provide these opportunities and not de-motivate students.

3. Needs for Meaningful Learning

In learning, motivation ‘is a very important factor, if not the most important factor’. (5) Motivation is a favorable attitude to put persistent energy and effort into learning for the desire to achieve or reach a goal. (6) Learning Motivation, according to Rost’s (7) ‘Fundamental Principle of Causality’ suggests that learning starts with motivation which leads to effort which leads to results that in turn raises ability and motivates the learner further (Fig. 1). However, currently, with the on-going discussions on techniques, methods, and plans for motivating the unmotivated student (8), we cannot base our education on the ‘Fundamental Principle of Negativity’ (9) in which external motivation with forced effort leads to good short term results without any real gain in proficiency in turn leading to a negative attribution towards English which inevitably coerces the institution to use more external motivation techniques which gets heavy with each cycle leading us in the wrong direction (Fig. 2).

![Figure 1. The Fundamental Principle of Causality](image)

- 121 -
Finally, Competence, pedagogically speaking, is the feeling one has of their own ability to actually accomplish a task. If one feels they are not able to accomplish the task, motivation to apply oneself to the task will not arise. Benjamin Disraeli, the former British Prime Minister, sums it up best by suggesting that, 'the greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches, but to reveal to him his own.'

The findings of SDT have also been confirmed in a Japanese tertiary English education system by Hiromori (21), who had given us evidence that SDT is applicable to the English Education.

In addition to the three psychological needs, one necessary factor was needed in terms of ‘meaningful learning’ in an English language learning situation in a Japanese university. The factor of a Relaxed Environment is essential in a learning situation. (22)(23)

(24) Students at our university, as well, have been frustrated from their learning environments and in the relatedness of subject-matter taken up in class. (25)

Therefore, on top of the three psychological needs of SDT, it is the responsibility for learning institutions to provide their learners with learning environments that are relaxed giving the learner a sense of relatedness and which promotes autonomy and competence.

4. Establishing the English Support Room with Four Principles of Meaningful Learning

The aforementioned has motivated the Center for General Education of Tokushima University to establish an English Support Room (ESR) to assist students and faculty at all levels in their pursuit to achieve higher English ability in July of 2008. The initial implementation took a considerable amount of convincing and financial aid. After considering the four essential principles of the ESR, we had to decide what materials we needed as well as the layout of the room. Again, the ESR wanted to provide ‘something for everyone’. However, this philosophy ended us up in a bind when learners that visited for speaking practice frequently disturbed the self-study learners. Due to space limitations, having a speaking section
and a studying section in one room was out of the question. We decided that the ESR itself, would be a place to practice speaking and we borrowed another room which was next door, for those who wanted to study in peace and quiet. They would come over to the ESR to take a break, to practice speaking English, or if they had a question.

Thus far, we have seen an average of ten visitors a day (84 students in total) in the summer break, and over 20 visitors a day (over 120 students in total) since classes have resumed. The ESR has assisted over 900 students, and has an average of 20 regular visitors (as of February 1, 2008). The ESR has been viewed by students, staff, and teachers as a place to experience or practice English communication, study quietly in the self-study area, receive consistent peer and teacher facilitation, and receive guidance in learning strategies or study-abroad programs. The implementation of extra courses, such as 30-minute conversation course with native speakers and thematic courses, for instance, psychology in English, preparation courses for various tests, and various skills practice have been popular among the students.

The ESR, thus far, has provided results in the TOEIC test, sustaining motivation and interest, and fostering confidence in learning. Students who have taken advantage of counseling sessions to get advice on effective study habits have improved over 100 points on average on the TOEIC test in 3 months. Motivation and interest have been sustained by the number of visitors reaching more than 900 in total. Private interviews with students have shown a number of students gaining confidence in their skills, which in turn, sustains motivation as shown in the Fundamental Principle of Causality. Through these results we have also seen a great change in the campus atmosphere and an increased amount of English usage as a whole.

The ESR’s four principles are the three psychological needs of the SDT, in addition to, providing a Relaxed Environment. Students on their own initiative visit for counseling in various skills and goals. Some just come to ‘kill time’, and what not a better way to use down time than to listen or practice English in your free time. We have implemented an ‘only English Policy’ which necessitates the use of English and peer-teaching. Finally, we have attempted to provide ‘something for everyone’ to promote autonomous learning based on our 4 principles.

5. Achieving the Four Principles in the English Support Room

5-1 Method

To measure the effectiveness of the English Support Room, a questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered focusing on the ESR’s four principles of Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness, and Relaxed Environment (hereafter, Environment). The bilingual questionnaire surveyed four items for each principle. The questions for STD principles were based on Hiromori’s questionnaire and were modified to fit a language learning center to support content and concurrent validity. Questions were created for the Environment principle, however, construct and face validity were achieved through a title placed before questions concerning each principle and a proof-read of the questionnaire by another English instructor whose native language was English, and a fourth year English major. The questions were based on a 5-item Likert Scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. 11 students who frequently visit the ESR agreed to fill-out the questionnaire. They were students from the Engineering Department (5 students) and Integrated Arts and Sciences Department (6 students). The grades of the volunteers ranged from first year to fourth.

First, questions were grouped into the 4 constructs pertaining to the ESR’s principles of Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness, and Environment. Afterwards, the Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis was used to measure reliability for each construct using SPSS version 16.0. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 1 as alpha levels. We used .70 acceptability levels, which is often used as an
acceptability rate for survey research. After dropping a few questions, the three principles of Competence, Relatedness, and Environment demonstrated a high internal reliability with an alpha level of .70. As a result, we furthered our examination and discuss the principles after dropping those items. However, we had to exclude the principle of Autonomy altogether, and simply record the results of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Principle Reliability Analysis Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Cronbach α levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.703 (dropping Q5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatedness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.765 (dropping Q15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5-2 Results and Discussion

Questions 1 through 4 which measured how autonomous the students felt when asked the following. 1) I am able to choose what I learn at the ESR, 2) I am able to choose how I learn at the ESR, 3) the ESR gave me advice on how to learn, and 4) I am given a chance to express my opinions on my studies at the ESR. The results, in percentages, of Autonomy are recorded below (Table 2). More than 90 percent of the students said they did get advice on how to learn. At the ESR, there are usually two teachers that give advice in the direction of autonomous learning that best fits the learner after a few sessions of individual counseling. Some students get advice in the form of peer counseling, as well. There are many conversations among students on improving English in the ESR. However, due to the low alpha level of the Cronbach, further discussion of all questions will be discarded.

Table 2. Results of Autonomy Principle (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 6 through 8 (Q5 excluded) measured the Competence of the students in their English learning journey. The questions consisted of the following: 5) I am satisfied with the effort I put into my studies at the ESR. 6) The ESR has helped me improve my proficiency. 7) I can use English a lot at the ESR. 8) If I try I can do it at the ESR. The results are shown in Table 3. We can assert from the results that the ESR is a place where the students can practice their English (Q7). This is directly due to the fact of the English only policy. Interestingly, one student felt that they did not use English enough. The English only policy is not strictly enforced because we respect those students who are not confident, in spoken English, yet. However, as long as we can keep up the confidence level as in Q8, students’ motivation should be sustained producing gains in proficiency.

Questions 9 through 12 asked the visitors how they felt in terms of Relatedness. The items on the questionnaire were as follows: 9) I feel I am part of a group at the ESR. 10) I can study together with my friends at the ESR. 11) There is a collaborating atmosphere at the ESR. 12) I am taking positive action by collaborating together with others at the ESR. The results are shown in Table 4. We can safely say that there is a sense of relatedness in the ESR. A strong request from many students was an atmosphere in which language learning can take place (30), and we feel that the ESR has achieved this as results shown in Q11, in which all students agreed. One student did not feel a sense of relatedness in the ESR. This
necessitates further inquiry. At the ESR we try to avoid grouping so that everybody will get along and enjoy their studies. However, how far this can be maintained in any social setting is a challenge for all.

| Table 3. Results of Competence Principle (in percentages) |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|             | N           | Q6          | Q7          | Q8          |
| Strongly Disagree | 11          | .00         | .09         | .00         |
| Disagree     | 11          | .00         | .00         | .00         |
| Neither      | 11          | .27         | .36         | .09         |
| Agree        | 11          | .27         | .36         | .45         |
| Strongly Agree | 11          | .45         | .18         | .45         |

| Table 4. Results of Relatedness Principle (in percentages) |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|             | N           | Q9          | Q10         | Q11         | Q12         |
| Strongly Disagree | 11          | .00         | .00         | .00         | .00         |
| Disagree     | 11          | .00         | .09         | .00         | .00         |
| Neither      | 11          | .09         | .00         | .00         | .36         |
| Agree        | 11          | .27         | .36         | .36         | .36         |
| Strongly Agree | 11          | .63         | .54         | .63         | .27         |

Questions 13, 14, and 16 (Q15 excluded) examined the concept of how positive the environment at the ESR was for students. The items consisted of the following: 13) I feel relaxed in the ESR. 14) I am able to use English without worry in the ESR. 16) I spend meaningful time in the ESR. The results are shown in Table 5. Importantly, all students feel they were relaxed and had a meaningful time when visiting the ESR. This is essentially the most important concept, not only for "meaningful learning" to occur, but to sustain motivation. This is an important factor when considering the goals at the university. The result from questions 14 displayed a few visitors who were hesitant of accuracy. However, overtime and with more experience in the room, students are likely to overcome this fear, as many have.

| Table 5. Results of Environment Principle (in percentages) |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|             | N           | Q13         | Q14         | Q16         |
| Strongly Disagree | 11          | .00         | .00         | .00         |
| Disagree     | 11          | .00         | .09         | .00         |
| Neither      | 11          | .00         | .00         | .00         |
| Agree        | 11          | .36         | .27         | .36         |
| Strongly Agree | 11          | .63         | .63         | .63         |

In sum, the ESR was initially established focusing on four principles of Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness, and Environment. The data above shows that three of the four principles seem to be maintained. The students especially felt they had an opportunity to try using English with confidence. The results suggest they did feel a positive atmosphere of collaboration. Furthermore, students felt the ESR was a place to relax and spend meaningful time to improve their English skills. The results do warrant further investigation on the principle of Autonomy. When examining the positive averages of ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Agree’ for each construct below, the ESR can be initially considered a ‘Meaningful Learning Center’ (Table 6). We mention ‘initially’ due to the fact that it has only been 6 months since our establishment, and the need to further investigate the principle of Autonomy. Moreover, just as in any educational situation in a state of flux, consideration of each student and situation is necessary. However, the maintaining of our four principles will ensure positive outcomes.

| Table 6. Results of Positives and Negatives Values of Each Principle (in percentages) |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Construct   | Positive    | Negative    |
| Autonomy    | N/A due to Cronbach |
| Competence  | .72         | .03         |
| Relatedness | .86         | .02         |
| Environment | .96         | .03         |

6. Future Objectives of the English Support Room

Despite the encouraging results of our initial investigation, a number of problems have arisen.
Due to the popularity of the ESR, manpower and demand has become an issue. Momentarily, we have two teachers and one teaching assistant handling the affairs of over 25 people a day. Furthermore, with the number of visitors increasing accordingly does the demand for various types of responses to the needs of each student. However, the status quo has not given us the opportunity to fulfill these needs as well as to further our research in this area. To attain a greater level of sophistication, our ESR requires development of staff and secured space to provide opportunities to support all language learners and sustain or increase their motivation. The development of the ESR should provide many learners with rich opportunities in all areas of language acquisition focusing on autonomy, test preparatory, and learning motivation that is essential as an institution of higher learning.

Notes:


Hato (2005) gives us insight into the amount of time it takes to acquire a foreign language. A look at time and goals of the US’s ‘Time Requirement for Foreign Language Achievement’ (Cleveland, Magone, and Adams 1960 cited in Hato 2005) the minimum time required for American adult learners of Japanese to attain sufficient proficiency in speaking for traveling is either (a) nine months with a one-hour class per day plus two hours of practice drills performed in a language laboratory with the aid of instructors, a total of 810 hours, or (b) six months with two-hour class per day plus four hours of drills, a total of 1080 hours. The researchers (ibid) also estimated that the minimum time required from the same type of learners to obtain fluency and accuracy in speaking and sufficient vocabulary to meet any ordinary requirements is either (a) 30 months with one-hour class per day plus two hours of drills that amount to 2700 hours, or (b) 24 months with two-hour class per day plus four hours of drills, a total of 4320 hours.

(3) ibid

(4) ibid


(8) Fukuda (ibid)

(9) ibid

(10) Deci & Ryan (ibid)


(12)ibid


(20) Gardner & Miller (ibid)
(21) Hiromori (ibid)
(24) Fukuda (ibid)
(26) Rost (ibid)
(28) Hiromori (ibid)
(30) Matoba (ibid)

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Measuring the Efficiency of the English Support Room

This is a questionnaire to measure how you feel about the English Support Room and how we can improve the learning environment. Please answer truthfully as possible. Read each sentence and indicate how much it is like you by circling the number that best describes you. There is no right or wrong answers. (このアンケートは英語サポートルームに対してどのような考えを持っているのかを調査し、学習環境を良くすることを目的としたものです。以下の質問に真実に答えけて下さい。自分の気持ちに一番近いものに丸で囲んで下さい。答えに関して正解・不正解はありません。)
1=Strongly Disagree （全くそう思わない）
2=Disagree （そう思わない）
3=Neither （どちらともいえない）
4=Agree （そう思う）
5=Strongly Agree （非常にそう思う）

A. Autonomy（自律性）

1. I am able to choose what I learn at the ESR. (E S Rで学習する内容は、すべて自分で決めている。)

B. Competence（有能性）

5. I am satisfied with the effort I put into my studies at the ESR. (E S Rで自分の頑張りに満足している。)

C. Relatedness（関係性）

9. I feel I am part of a group at the ESR. (E S Rで一緒に学習している友達とは、仲が良いと思う。)
10. I can study together with my friends at the ESR.
   (ESRで友達と協力して学習できていると思う。
   1-2-3-4-5)

11. I can study together with my friends at the ESR.
   (ESRでは、友達間で学びあう雰囲気があると思う。
   1-2-3-4-5)

12. I am taking positive action by collaborating together with
    others at the ESR.
   (ESRで自分が協力的に取り組んでいると思う。
   1-2-3-4-5)

D. Environment (学習環境)

13. I feel relaxed in the ESR. (ESRはリラックスした雰
    囲気だと思う。)
   1-2-3-4-5

14. I am able to use English without worry in the ESR. (ESRで
    心配なく英語を使えると思う。
    1-2-3-4-5)

15. I am able to use English without the fear of mistakes at
    the ESR.
   (ESRで間違いを恐れずに英語を使えると思う。
   1-2-3-4-5)

16. I spend meaningful time in the ESR. (ESRで有意義な時
    間を過ごしていると思う。
   1-2-3-4-5)

E. Link to the Near Future (目先の目標との
    順接)

17. The ESR has helped me with my goal in the near future.
   (ESRが目先の目標をサポートしてくれている。
   1-2-3-4-5)

18. The ESR has given me a clear view of my goals. (ESR
    が私の目標を明確にしてくれたと思う。
   1-2-3-4-5)

19. The ESR has helped me take small steps to achieve my goals.
   (ESRが私の目標を一歩ずつサポートしてくれる。
   1-2-3-4-5)

20. The ESR has shown me how to take small steps to achieve
    goals. (ESRで英語の上達のために近い将来の目標を決めること
    が大事と理解させてくれた。
   1-2-3-4-5)

F. Background Information (背景調査)

1. How did you start going to the ESR?

2. What is the main reason for going to the ESR?

3. Has your ideas of English learning changed in anyway? If
   yes, in what way?