

STUDENT MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING ENGLISH BIBLE

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ABSTRACT

Students in Hokusei Women's Junior College's English Bible classes responded to two surveys which sought to shed light on their motivation for this study. The results indicate that the largest number of students wanted to improve English skills (particularly in speaking and listening). The second largest group wanted to learn religious things ("about God," "about the Bible," etc.), they said. The third largest group indicated a desire to learn culturally-related things (about Western society, for example).

要 約：

北星女子短期大学におけるイングリッシュバイブルクラスの学生は、こうした勉強をする動機を明確にするための二つの調査に回答した。

結果が示すのは、もっとも多人数の学生が、英語のskills（とくにspeakingとlistening）の上達をのぞんでいたことである。次に人数の多いグループは、宗教的な事柄（「神について」「聖書について」等）を勉強したいとこたえた。第三番目のグループは、文化的に関連すること（例えば西欧社会）について学びたいという意志を示した。

INTRODUCTION

Although perhaps impossible to measure with great accuracy, one vital factor in the success or failure of any class is the motivation students bring into it. Hokusei is a Christian school which exists for the purpose of helping students develop not only intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially but also spiritually through introducing to them the teachings of Jesus Christ. Yet the vast majority of students who come into this educational program are not Christian and do not indicate a desire to learn spiritual or religious things as a reason for their entering Hokusei.

This apparent gap in the motives of the teacher and student for being in the classroom calls for an investigation of exactly what students do want to receive from the Christian school which they, their parents, or others choose for them to enter. For this purpose, students in all first year English Bible classes received on their first day in class a series of questions about themselves. As the larger purpose of the first survey was to familiarize the students and teacher with each other, various questions unrelated to motivation for study were also in the questionnaire (e.g., about the student's family members and hobbies). After completing the first year of English Bible study, students again received a questionnaire regarding their wishes for this class, which would continue the following school year.

Surveys of this type involve obvious limitations in accuracy due to the fact that students are responding to the person from whom they will receive their grade. Also, participants in the first survey must write their names on the questionnaires along with their answers. Although the teacher encouraged students to be honest and write "nothing" if they wanted nothing particular from this class, only one student responded in this way. Although

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students in the second survey were free to answer without writing their names to identify themselves, it would be highly presumptuous to assume their responses reflect completely their true wishes or that their responses came after deep and thorough contemplation of the questions. Nevertheless, their responses are not without value and can provide significant information helpful in determining the way of structuring this course.

FIRST SURVEY

Students first heard the teacher explain the questions in English and Japanese and then answer them for himself. The questions were written only in English. Students took class time to fill in answers and ask any questions they had. Those who did not finish in class time did so later, and students turned in their written responses the next time they came to class. 185 of 200 total students turned in questionnaires.

Several questions related to the students' backgrounds. One was "Have you ever studied the Bible before, either in Japanese or English? If so, where?" To this, 21.6% responded that they had studied before. Of those who had, 57.5% had studied in high school. 10.0% had been taught in kindergarten and 2.5% in junior high school. Only 7.5% had learned the Bible in church. The others either learned alone or did not indicate where they had studied.

Another question was "Do you have any formal religion?" The teacher explained the question by saying that perhaps everyone believes something, but some people's beliefs are particularly religious and some people's are not. He asked students to categorize theirs in this way. 19.4% said they had a formal religion (a figure which likely does not reflect accurately whether students had personal faith or simply indicated something such as their families'

traditional religions). Of those saying they had a formal religion, 86.1% said they were Buddhist. 5.5% indicated they were Christian (Catholic and Protestant) and 2.7% Shinto.

Answers to the question "Have you ever been to church before?" showed that 39.4% of all students had been and thus were not totally unfamiliar with Christian things. Yet only 3.8% said they were currently attending church.

The primary question about students' motivation to study was "What would you like to receive from this class?" A separate part of the questionnaire asked students to write any comments or things they would like to talk about in or out of class. Responses to both these questions overlapped considerably. The largest number wanted to improve their English. 53.0% indicated this. Of these, 48.0% specified that they wanted to increase their speaking abilities. 33.7% showed a desire for better listening skills, 14.3% for better reading, and 11.2% writing.

Nearly half the students (48.1%) said they wanted something related to religion, for example to know about God, the Bible, Jesus, Christianity, or religion. These answers did not attempt to show what part of the expressed desires were for intellectual knowledge and what part for more spiritual knowledge.

A smaller portion of the students (9.7%), however, did show a desire for more personal spiritual growth. These responses included desires to "polish myself," "receive a warm heart," "receive guidance and advice," "live a Christian life," and "learn the relationship of the Bible to my life." Other students said they wanted to learn about "death," "loneliness," "the meaning of life," "beauty of living," "joy," and "helping people."

The third largest percentage of students (26.5%) indicated they wanted to learn about culture through English Bible class. This category included wishes to learn of cultures other than their own (15.7% of all students), to know the teacher, to better know

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other individual Christians with whom they were acquainted, to learn history, and to better understand literature through studying the Bible. None of these final four represented as many as 5% of all students.

Some of those responding to the survey (4.9%) indicated a desire to simply enjoy school life through their experience in this class. A few (3.8%) expressed desires to grow socially. These included desires to learn about boys, friendship, marriage, etc. They also included students who wanted to make friends through this class.

ANALYSIS OF FIRST SURVEY

Several questions arise from the above information. First, were students who had studied the Bible before entering these classes any more or less likely to want to learn things related to religion or to their personal spiritual lives? Of ones who had studied before, 60.0% showed a desire to learn something religious from this class. This is somewhat higher than the 48.1% of all students who showed such a desire. 25.7% of the ones who had studied before showed a desire to receive something related to their personal spiritual lives, whereas only 9.7% of all students showed such a desire. Having studied English Bible before, therefore, appeared to influence significantly these students' motivation to both learn religious things and achieve personal spiritual growth.

Second, did those with a non-Christian formal religion have any propensity to want to (or not want to) learn religious-related things or find growth in their personal spiritual lives? Of those with a non-Christian religion, 47.0% showed a desire to learn something religious. This was almost the same as the percentage of all students showing such a desire (48.1%). 8.6% of students

with a non-Christian religion showed a desire for personal spiritual growth through these classes. This was only slightly lower than the percentage of students wanting this (9.7%), indicating no aversion to or particular desire for study related to a religion different from their own.

Third, were students who had been to church before any more or less likely to want to learn things related to religion or their personal spiritual lives? Of those who had been to church before, 48.6% indicated a desire to learn religious things. This is almost equal to the percentage (48.1%) of all students indicating the same desire. 12.3% of those having been to church before said they wanted to grow in some part of their personal spiritual lives. This figure is only slightly higher than the one (9.7%) for all students, suggesting that experiences at church had little or no impact on interest in learning English Bible.

Fourth, what were the characteristics of those students who did express desires for personal spiritual growth through English Bible study? 31.6% had studied the Bible before (10.0% higher than the percentage of all students). This suggests a slight tendency for students' desires for personal spiritual growth to be fed by their previous exposure to the Bible. While 9.7% of all students said they had a desire for personal spiritual growth through these classes, only 1.1% of students with a formal non-Christian religion said so. Having a non-Christian religion of their own appeared to slightly decrease the likelihood of students to seek personal spiritual growth through these classes. 47.4% of those indicating a desire for personal spiritual growth had been to church before. This is only 8.0% higher than the percentage of all students who had been to church before, suggesting no especially strong relationship between these students' experiences at church and their desire to grow spiritually through English Bible classes.

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SECOND SURVEY

This survey attempted to detect any changes in motivation of students who had completed one-half of their two years in English Bible study. 113 responded to the questionnaire, which again urged students to make honest, even if critical, responses. Students answered two questions: "what would you like to receive from your second year of English Bible study?" and "if improving your English is a goal for you in this class, what aspect would you like most to improve?"

As in the first survey, the most common response showed a desire to learn English. 69.0% of those who responded indicated this. Of those wanting better English, the largest portion specified a desire to improve listening skills (73.1%). The second most common want was better speaking ability (46.2%). 19.2% indicated they would like improved pronunciation. Only 2.6% showed they would like to read better, and only 3.9% said they wanted to upgrade their writing skills.

Again, the second largest group (27.4% of all responding) said they would like to learn religious-related things: A small group (8.0%) revealed a desire for personal spiritual growth. The third largest group this time (13.3%) said there was nothing special besides class credits which they wanted. Only 6.2% indicated a desire to learn about culture-related things through English Bible study. Less than 2% showed they hoped to enjoy school life through this class, and no one showed the desire to grow socially.

ANALYSIS OF SECOND SURVEY

The larger number of students wanting nothing or class credits only is perhaps an indicator of greater freedom to respond honestly in this survey. It could, of course, indicate a decreasing

desire to learn English Bible. The two most common responses continued to be about desires to learn English and religious things, in that order. But in the second survey those wanting English rose from 53.0% to 69.0%. Those wanting to know about religious things fell from 48.1% to 27.4%. Those wanting personal spiritual growth were about the same, down from 9.7% to 8.0%. Those wanting to learn about cultural things fell from 26.5% to 6.2%. Those wanting to grow socially and those wanting to enjoy school life, while already small in numbers, both fell. Thus, with the exception of improved English, students showed they wanted less from this course after one year than when they first began.

The aspects of English they wanted to improve also were considerably different in the second survey. The rise in number of students wanting improved listening (up to 73.1% of those wanting improved English from 33.7%) may be related to the fact that they have already spent a large part of their first year English Bible class time in listening exercises. The same is true for the 19.2% who said they wanted better pronunciation (none specified this desire in the first survey).

CONCLUSION

Certainly there are many other factors a teacher may consider in determining how to structure a course a course such as this. But to the extent to which the course's purpose is to provide students with something they want to learn, English Bible needs to emphasize heavily oral and aural English skills. To simply communicate Bible content or to teach primarily reading or writing would go against what students indicate they want to learn.

Also, this survey reveals a clear desire on the part of many students to know not only English but about the Bible itself.

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Although part of a society often termed "non-religious" and "apathetic toward religion," these students demonstrate that it would not be accurate to therefore conclude they have no curiosity or desire to consider the Bible's teachings as they are growing intellectually and forming the spiritual paths their lives will take.