

Affective, cognitive, & conative aspects of L2 program experience: A retrospective cohort study (executive summary)

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Traditional views of mind have commonly described and investigated three aspects: what we know, feel, and – ultimately – do. For many researchers, the conative, or will to strive, links the affective (feeling) and cognitive (knowing) together. Although it is rarely discussed in the L2 research, the conative domain is an important one, and studies from L1, which have included explorations of volition, choice, engagement, and perception, among others, show why conation is a critical issue for language programs to focus on.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss all three aspects of mind using a retrospective cohort study approach. This method takes a longitudinal look at a group of participants who share a common experience (such as a language program), and is known for its usefulness when multiple outcomes (instances include proficiency, study abroad experience, and job-hunting results) are to be expected.

Specifically, we detail the situation surrounding the cohort who graduated from the English Communication Course in April 2016, and include data that highlight their affective, cognitive, and conative conditions during the years spent as language learners at University.

The forthcoming paper will be divided into two parts, with the first presenting quantitative data related to student outcomes and the curricular context of the 2016 cohort. The second paper highlights qualitative aspects of the cohort's affective, cognitive, and conative experience within the program, and then examines the social and educational significance of the data from both parts 1 and 2 of the paper.

Key findings of part one will show that the students who graduated in 2016 made proficiency gains above both the Japanese national average for the TOEIC, as well as the international average for their age group on the same exam. The cohort maintained stable GPAs across time, and 100% of the

students found employment upon graduation.

Part two discusses the implications of instructors' attempts to create a systematically supportive learning environment in which language learners can not only improve their L2 proficiency across the curriculum, but also reach their post-graduation goals. Key findings will include the centrality of student satisfaction as a non-customer service paradigm and the importance of the conative domain in L2 program-level outcomes.

Key Words: *English communication, student experience, trilogy of mind, retrospective cohort study.*

Executive summary

A 2014 report released by Educational Testing Services shows that the average TOEIC score for test takers in Japan is 512 points, and the average for college students around the world is 623 (ETS, 2014). Data from students in the 2016 cohort who took the TOEIC test independently, or as reported by the Language Education and Research Center at KSU show that the English Communication Course performs strongly on the TOEIC. Collectively, the 2016 cohort took the TOEIC test 14 times (N=8). On their first attempt, they scored below the national average for Japan (473), but by the time they graduated their score (543) was above the Japanese average. In addition, the 2016 students who sat the TOEIC twice or more (N=3) all scored above the international average for college students (M=693).

With regard to their academic performance, the students' GPAs were relatively stable over time. One finding worth noting is the difference between the GPAs of those students who now work in the private sector (2.346) in comparison to those employed in public service sectors (3.018).

As for their post-graduation outcomes, 100% of the 2016 cohort entered the workforce directly after graduation (this figure is above the Japanese national average of 97.3%, as reported by The Japan Times), and this result is especially good in light of the fact that three out of four students in the cohort was female.

Parts 1 and 2 of this paper will examine the experiences of the 2016 cohort as it progressed through the program offered by the English Communication Course at

Table 1. *Quantitative Summary of 2016 Outcomes.*

<u>ID</u>	<u>Enter</u>	<u>Exit</u>	<u>GPA 1</u>	<u>GPA 4</u>	<u>Industry</u>
A	126	460	2.944	2.525	Private sector
B	144		1.550	1.543	Private sector
C	140	560	3.063	3.211	Medical
D	140		3.182	3.370	Private sector
E	164		3.500	3.417	Public service
F	495*	635	2.445	2.292	Private sector
G	116	325	2.833	2.792	Public service
H	124		1.955	1.688	Private sector
I	142	470	2.591	2.500	Private sector
J	146	450	3.182	3.354	Education
K	130		2.636	2.522	Private sector
L	148	630	2.600	2.550	Private sector
M	146		1.444	1.696	Private sector
N	154		2.300	2.318	Education
O	154	815	3.000	3.167	Private sector
P	134		1.800	1.955	Private sector

Notes:

ID = A - L female; M - P male

* denotes TOEIC at the end of first grade

Enter = TOEIC Bridge score at the end of first grade

Exit = final TOEIC test score.

GPA 1 = end of first grade; 4 = at graduation

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https://www.ets.org/s/toEIC/pdf/ww_data_report_unlweb.pdf

Kyodo News. (2016, May 1). Record 97% of university graduates land jobs. *The Japan Times*.

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