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Who Is to Blame?: University Students' Perception of Lack of Improvement in Their English Ability

MORI, Setsuko
Kinki University

Abstract

Drawing upon Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1979, 1985, 1986, 1992), this survey research examined university students' perceived reasons why their English ability had improved or not improved after they took required English classes. More specifically, this study attempted to answer the following questions: 1) how first year university students perceive their improvement in English ability after one year of instruction; 2) whether proficiency and teacher factors play any part in the development of students' perceived improvement; 3) to what students attribute their improvement and absences of improvement; and 4) if there is any relationship between their attributional beliefs and proficiency. The results of the statistical analyses imply that the majority of the students felt their English ability had not changed or declined, especially in terms of grammar and vocabulary, and attributed internal factors such lack of effort, preparation for class, interest, and ability to absences of improvement. On the other hand, those who answered that their English ability had improved attributed external factors, especially their teachers, to the favorable results. These findings are in sharp contrast with two widely recognized psychological phenomena referred to as self-protective and self-enhancement biases.

Key Words: attribution theory, attributions, perceived causes for outcome, success/failure in language learning, expectancy for success

1. Introduction

There are people who can persevere in their efforts to accomplish extremely challenging and sometimes almost impossible tasks. However, most of us will not choose to engage in a task or continue a task if we repeatedly fail even if we may have some degree of interest in a task or prescribe value to a task. Based on our experience, we usually form a prospect of success at a task, which in turn influences our decision to pursue that task. In the field of psychology, this expectancy belief, therefore, is an integral part of many motivation theories (e.g., Bandura, 1993; Covington, 1992; Eccles, 1983; Eccles et al., 1989; Heckhause, 1977; Pekrun, 1993; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Eccles and Wigfield and their colleagues' expectancy-value model (Eccles, 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992), for example, claim that achievement behavior is predicted by two components: expectancy and value. Value in this model refers to four different kinds of value the individual attaches to a certain task, namely intrinsic value, extrinsic utility value, attainment value (perceived importance of a

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task), and cost (perceived negative consequence of engaging in a task). On the other hand, expectancy denotes an individual's beliefs about their future expectancy for success on a task. Wigfield and Eccels (1992) contend, based on their empirical research, that higher expectancies are positively correlated with all types of achievement behavior such as choice and persistence.

Given that expectancy belief can be a predictor of achievement behavior, it is helpful for teachers to understand how our students form such beliefs and what influences the development of these beliefs. Attribution theory, primarily proposed by Weiner (1979, 1985, 1986, 1992), attempts to answer this very question, though not necessarily limited to school settings. Attribution theory is built on the assumption that as individuals naturally try to figure out why things happen and why people do what they do, they search for causes when they fail or when they succeed.

According to Attribution Theory, those perceived causes of a certain outcome are influenced by two factors, environmental and personal. Environmental factors in this model include specific information, social norms and situational features whereas the personal factors include causal schemas, attributional bias, prior knowledge, and individual differences. Furthermore, Weiner (1986, 1992) proposes that those perceived causes can be categorized into three dimensions, stability, locus, and control. The stability dimension is concerned with whether the cause is stable or variable over time or according to the situation. Ability, for instance, is considered stable whereas effort is deemed unstable since the degree of effort varies depending on a lot of factors. The locus dimension refers to whether the cause is internal or external to the individual. Effort is normally categorized as internal while luck is categorized as external. The control dimension refers to how much control the individuals have over a cause. For example, effort is considered controllable whereas ability is usually considered uncontrollable. Table 1 shows how some perceived causes (attributions) typically found in school settings can be categorized based on those three dimensions.

Table 1. Dimensional classification scheme for causal attributions

		Dimension	
Attribution	Locus	Stability	Controllability
Ability	Internal	Stable	Uncontrollable
Effort	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Strategy	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Interest	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Task difficulty	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Luck	External	Unstable	Uncontrollable
Family influence	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Teacher influence	External	Stable	Uncontrollable

From Vispoel and Austin (1995), based on Weiner (1979)

Weiner (1992) argues that whether an individual's perceived attributions are internal or external, stable or unstable, and controllable or uncontrollable influences their expectancy for

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success, self-efficacy, affect, and eventually actual behavior. According to Weiner (1979, 1986), internal attributions (ability and effort) produce greater changes in affect than external attributions, stable attributions are more concerned with expectancy for success or failure, and controllable attributions are more closely connected with persistence than uncontrollable attributions. In recent years the use of factor analysis and multidimensional scaling has provided some support for their existence (Meyer, 1980; Meyer & Koelbl, 1982; Vispoel & Austin, 1995).

Despite the fact that the significance of attributions in school settings has been well documented and recognized, there is not much research done on attempts to undercover students' attributional beliefs in the field of SLA. Some of the exceptions include Heikkinnen (1999), Isomöttönen (2003), Kalaja (2004), Tse (2000), Ushioda (2001), Williams & Burden (1999), Williams, Burden & Al-Baharna (2001), and Williams, Burden, Poulet & Maun (2004). Unlike traditional psychological research in this area, all of those studies mentioned above are qualitative in nature using mainly open-ended questionnaires, interviews and autobiography. For instance, in two studies on foreign language learning in the UK, Williams and Burden (1999) and Williams et al (2004) identified over 21 attributional categories, with the major reasons for doing well cited as effort, strategy, ability, teacher, interest, task, and peers. They also found clear differences in attribution for success and failure based on gender, year groups, and language studied. In the United States, Tse's (2000) study of 51 undergraduate and graduate foreign language students suggested that main attributions for success in foreign language learning were teachers' willingness to help students, a positive classroom environment, family or community assistance from target language speakers, and motivation to learn. Attributions for failure included lack of study or insufficient motivation, and mixed-level classes. Ushioda (2001), in her qualitative study of university learners of French, cited four attributional patterns among the learners noting that these attributions may act as a filter through which the learner views positive or negative experiences in such a way as to maintain a positive self-concept.

Although these studies undoubtedly provide us with a valuable source of insight, the number of attributions and attributional categories uncovered varies greatly, and there is little consistency in findings among those studies. Such a wide range of attributional categories does not help researchers investigate how these attributions are related to achievement behaviors, since the large number of variables serves only to obfuscate any significant correlations. Therefore, although recognizing the merits of qualitative inquiry, the present study limited the number of attributions by using a quantitative technique, rather than following the general trend in attributional research in FLL. Specifically, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do first year university students perceive their improvement in English ability after one year of instruction?
2. Do proficiency and teacher factors play any part in development of students' perceived improvement?
3. To what do students attribute their improvement (success) and absences of improvement (failure)?
4. Is there any relationship between their attributional beliefs and proficiency?

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2. Methods

2.1 Participants

The participants in the study were 522 first-year university law majors in 16 different required English classes taught by 16 different instructors (eight Japanese and eight native speakers of English). At this faculty, all first year students take two English classes, English 1 with more focus on reading and writing taught mainly by Japanese instructors and Communicative English 1 with more focus on speaking and listening taught by native English speaking instructors. English 1 meets twice a week and Communicative English 1 meets once a week, and the classes were coordinated in the way the two instructors could team teach the same students using the same materials. The students were placed in their classes based on their performance on the placement test (TOEIC Bridge). Their proficiency widely ranges from 76 to 166 on the TOEIC Bridge and from 165 and to 905 on the TOEIC.

2.2 Procedure

All first year students in this faculty were required to take the TOEIC in the end of second semester (in December), which would be 20% of their grade for English 1. After they took the TOEIC and before the results came out, the participants answered the attribution questionnaire in their English 1 class. When answering the questionnaire, the students were instructed to think of their overall English learning experience over the last year. The questionnaire was completed within 15 to 20 minutes. Although strict anonymity is recommended for this type of research, it was necessary to have the students write their ID numbers in order to compare their attributional responses and their TOEIC scores. The instructions were given in Japanese by their instructors.

2.3 Attribution Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed drawing upon Attribution Theory and modified so that the content would match the contexts where the study was carried out (see Appendix for an English translation of the questionnaire). The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first part (questions one to three), the students were asked to rate the degree of their English improvement over the year on a five point Likert scale from "Declined" to "Improved," and also asked which skills had declined or improved the most. In the second part (questions 4 to 25), those who answered that their English proficiency had declined, slightly declined or not changed rated the 11 causes for their unsuccessful outcome on a six point Likert scale whereas those who answered their English proficiency had slightly improved or improved rated the 11 causes for their successful outcome.

3. Results

3.1 Research Questions One and Two: Perceived Improvement, Proficiency, and Teacher Influence

While approximately 30% of the students answered that their English proficiency had

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somewhat improved (27.2% slightly improved and 3.2% improved), almost 70% said their proficiency had not improved (16.3% declined, 23.6% slightly declined, and 29.5% not changed). Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of students' perception of improvement on a five point Likert scale.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of perceived improvement in proficiency

N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
521	2.78	1.12	-0.12	-0.97

In order to see whether teacher factor and participants' proficiency level played any part in students' perception of improvement, the participants were divided into three groups based on the TOEIC scores, High (905 - 410), Mid (405 - 330), and Low (325-165). A 8 x 3 ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of teachers and proficiency on students' perception of improvement. The means and standard deviations for perceived improvement as a function of the two factors are presented in Table 3. Please note that although there were 16 teachers involved in this study, they were treated as pairs as they taught the same students. The ANOVA indicated no significant interaction between teacher and proficiency, $F(13, 470) = .85$, $p = .60$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, and no significant main effects for proficiency, $F(13, 470) = 2.64$, $p = .07$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$, but significant main effects for teacher, $F(13, 470) = 4.62$, $p = .00$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. The teacher main effect indicated that perception of improvement varied significantly depending on the teacher.

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for perceived improvement with teacher and proficiency as the independent variable

Teacher Pair	Proficiency	Mean	Std. Deviation
A	Low	3.03	0.95
	Mid	2.88	1.17
	High	3.14	1.35
B	Low	2.43	1.04
	Mid	2.25	1.11
	High	2.47	1.17
C	Low	2.80	1.11
	Mid	3.28	1.02
	High	3.63	0.97
E	Low	2.79	1.05
	Mid	2.59	1.12
	High	3.14	1.42
F	Low	2.86	1.35
	Mid	2.53	0.94
	High	2.75	1.04
G	Low	2.00	1.04
	Mid	2.70	0.92
	High	2.82	1.17
H	Low	2.77	1.07
	Mid	3.25	1.00
	High	3.12	1.05
I	Mid	2.50	1.00
	High	2.54	1.17

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Table 4 shows that across proficiency levels, the majority of the students felt that the skill that declined the most was either grammar (30.6%) or vocabulary (38.6%). On the other hand, many (35%) felt that their listening ability had improved, followed by their reading ability (16.6%).

Table 4. The results of questions two and three

Skills	Q2: Declined		Q3: Improved	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Vocabulary	199	38.60%	31	6.00%
Grammar	158	30.60%	17	3.20%
Listening	23	4.40%	181	35.00%
Reading	41	7.90%	86	16.60%
Speaking	16	3.10%	50	9.60%
Writing	30	5.80%	39	7.50%
None	48	9.30%	112	21.70%

3.2 Research Questions Three and Four: Attributional Beliefs and Proficiency

Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations of the attribution category scores based on student responses on the six-point Likert scale. Note that of the 22 success and failure attributions, only eight fell above the scale midpoint of 3.5, implying that most attributions were not considered as possible reasons for success or failure. However, comparing failure and success attributions, the descriptive data implies that the students tend to attribute more to success than to failure.

In rank order based on the total sample means, the five most endorsed failure attributions are effort (4.66), strategy (4.06), preparation (3.90), interest (3.21), and ability (3.11). It is interesting to note that these failure attributions are all internal attributions. On the contrary, the five most endorsed success attributions are teacher influence (4.42), class level (3.89), study strategy (3.54), interest (3.51), and classroom atmosphere (3.50), three of which are external and uncontrollable attributions. It is also interesting to note that teacher influence stands out as a reason for improvement. These results are almost perfectly in congruence with results of previous study (Gobel & Mori, 2007).

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Table 5. Failure attribution scale means and standard deviations (n=369)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ability	3.11	1.53
Effort	**4.66**	1.22
Study strategy	**4.06**	1.33
Interest	3.21	1.49
Teacher influence	2.18	1.20
Task difficulty	2.80	1.40
Class atmosphere	2.15	1.21
Interest in grades	2.97	1.45
Preparation	**3.90**	1.44
Likes	2.93	1.49
Class level	2.46	1.26

Table 6. Success attribution scale means and standard deviations (n=154)

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ability	2.55	1.26
Effort	3.35	1.23
Study strategy	**3.54**	1.16
Interest	**3.51**	1.41
Teacher influence	**4.42**	1.16
Task difficulty	2.29	1.30
Class atmosphere	**3.50**	1.41
Interest in grades	3.39	1.33
Preparation	3.14	1.27
Likes	3.37	1.43
Class level	**3.89**	1.33

In order to examine whether failure attribution ratings differ significantly according to proficiency, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed with three proficiency levels as an independent variable and the 11 failure attributions (ability, effort, strategy, interest, teacher, task, class, interest in grade, preparation, likes, and level) as dependent variables. Significant differences were found among the three proficiency levels on the dependent variables, Wilks's $\Lambda = .81$, $F(2, 332) = 3.26$, $p<.00$. The multivariateη^2 based on Wilk's Λ was .10. Table 7 contains the means and the standard deviations on the dependent variables for the three proficiency levels.

Analysis of variance on each dependent variable was conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA. Using the Scheffe method, each ANOVA was tested at the .25 level. The ANOVAs on ability, interest, task difficulty, and likes were significant, $F(2, 332) = 21.97$, $p<.00$, $\eta^2 = .11$, $F(2, 332) = 12.47$, $p<.00$, $\eta^2 = .07$, $F(2, 332) = 6.61$, $p<.00$, $\eta^2 = .04$, and $F(2, 332) = 10.46$, $p<.00$, $\eta^2 = .06$, respectively whereas the ANOVAs on the other seven attribution scales were

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nonsignificant.

Post hoc analyses of the univariate ANOVA for the attributions consisted of conducting pairwise comparisons to find to which proficiency level affected failure attribution ratings most strongly. Each pairwise comparison was tested at the .025 divided by 3 or .008 level. The low proficiency group scored significantly higher on ability, interest, task difficulty, and dislikes in comparison with either of the other two groups (see Table 7). This result implies that the low proficiency group had a stronger tendency to blame lack of ability and lack of interest in English, difficulty of studying English and dislikes of English to absences of improvement.

Table 7. Analysis of variance of failure attributions with proficiency as the independent variable

Attributions	Proficiency	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ability	Low	121	3.66	1.49
	Mid	122	3.20	1.57
	High	103	2.35	1.21
Effort	Low	121	4.83	1.12
	Mid	122	4.61	1.29
	High	102	4.55	1.21
Study strategy	Low	121	4.27	1.30
	Mid	122	3.89	1.41
	High	103	3.98	1.26
Interest	Low	119	3.65	1.54
	Mid	122	3.25	1.48
	High	103	2.65	1.30
Teacher influence	Low	120	2.12	1.13
	Mid	122	2.33	1.24
	High	103	2.11	1.20
Task difficulty	Low	121	3.07	1.49
	Mid	122	2.91	1.37
	High	103	2.42	1.27
Class atmosphere	Low	121	2.22	1.29
	Mid	122	2.16	1.07
	High	103	2.08	1.28
Interest in grades	Low	121	3.11	1.50
	Mid	122	2.89	1.45
	High	103	2.96	1.45
Preparation	Low	121	4.08	1.41
	Mid	122	3.90	1.50
	High	101	3.64	1.42
Likes	Low	121	3.33	1.52
	Mid	122	2.93	1.49
	High	103	2.41	1.32
Class level	Low	119	2.39	1.27
	Mid	121	2.47	1.18
	High	101	2.54	1.37

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A one-way MANOVA was also performed to examine the effect of three proficiency levels on the 11 success attribution scales, ability, effort, strategy, interest, teacher, task, class, interest in grade, preparation, likes, and level. Significant differences were found among the three proficiency levels on the dependent variables, Wilks's $\Lambda = .67$, $F(2, 138) = 2.54$, $p<.00$. The multivariateη^2 based on Wilk's Λ was .18. Table 8 shows the means and the standard deviations on the dependent variables for the three proficiency levels.

Analysis of variance on each dependent variable was conducted as follow-up tests (Scheffe tests) to the MANOVA. The ANOVAs on ability, study strategy, task difficulty, interest in grades, and likes were significant, $F(2, 138) = 11.81$, $p<.00$, $\eta^2 = .15$, $F(2, 138) = 7.80$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .10$, $F(2, 138) = 6.67$, $p<.00$, $\eta^2 = .09$, $F(2, 138) = 5.06$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2 = .07$, and $F(2, 138) = 14.15$ $p<.00$, $\eta^2 = .00$, respectively whereas the ANOVAs on the other six success attribution scales were nonsignificant.

Post hoc analyses of the univariate ANOVA for the attributions were performed to discover which proficiency level affected success attribution ratings the most. The results show that the high proficiency group scored significantly higher on ability, study strategy, task difficulty, interest in grades, and likes in comparison with either of the other two groups (see Table 8). This implies that the high proficiency group tended to attribute ability, appropriate use of study strategy, ease of studying English, strong interest in grades, and enjoyment of English to improvement more than mid and low proficiency groups did.

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Table 8. Analysis of variance of success attributions with proficiency as the independent variable

	Proficiency	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ability	Low	39	1.92	1.13
	Mid	43	2.40	1.09
	High	59	3.05	1.20
Effort	Low	39	2.90	1.14
	Mid	43	3.05	1.13
	High	59	3.76	1.24
Study strategy	Low	39	3.33	1.33
	Mid	43	3.60	1.12
	High	59	3.59	1.07
Interest	Low	39	3.10	1.48
	Mid	43	3.40	1.37
	High	59	3.85	1.26
Teacher influence	Low	39	4.28	1.15
	Mid	43	4.40	1.03
	High	59	4.51	1.22
Task difficulty	Low	39	1.74	1.07
	Mid	43	2.23	1.15
	High	59	2.68	1.41
Class atmosphere	Low	39	3.26	1.41
	Mid	43	3.47	1.18
	High	59	3.56	1.53
Interest in grades	Low	39	2.87	1.36
	Mid	43	3.56	1.20
	High	59	3.69	1.32
Preparation	Low	39	2.85	1.18
	Mid	43	3.09	1.13
	High	59	3.32	1.36
Likes	Low	39	2.59	1.23
	Mid	43	3.23	1.36
	High	59	4.02	1.35
Class level	Low	39	3.79	1.45
	Mid	43	4.05	1.15
	High	59	3.88	1.37

4. Discussion and Conclusion

At the institution where this research was carried out, a new more integrative English program was launched last year with an increased number of English classes. Despite the efforts to enhance the program, unfortunately, the majority of the first year students who participated in the research said that their English ability has not improved after one year of instruction. This finding is certainly discouraging, yet it is not that surprising as it corresponds to what we constantly hear from our students who seem to believe their English ability peaked when they passed the entrance examination. The fact that most of the students

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indicated that their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary has declined the most also seem to reflect the reality where previous language education focused more on grammar and vocabulary in preparation for entrance examinations.

However, although the new program attempts to improve students' communicative ability, that does not discourage instruction on grammar or vocabulary. On the contrary, the materials used in those classes include grammar and vocabulary that are supposed to be useful in real conversation. Since these types of grammar and vocabulary could look simpler and easier than what they learned in high school, there is a possibility that some students may feel that they did not add to their repertoire. If that is the case and our goal continues to be to improve our students' communicative ability, we should make an extra effort to help them shift their views of effective grammar and vocabulary instruction by introducing materials that are more convincing to them.

The results of further statistical analyses implied the students across all proficiency levels have a clear tendency to attribute internal factors such effort, study strategy, preparation for class, interest, and ability to absences of improvement in their English ability. On the other hand, when it comes to success, many of them give external factors, especially their teachers, credit. These findings contradict widely recognized phenomena referred to as a self-protective or self-enhancement bias. The self-protective bias is a tendency that individuals blame others when they fail whereas the self-enhancement bias is a tendency that they attribute internal factors such as effort and ability when they succeed. However, most of the studies supporting the existence of these biases were conducted in Western contexts, and the results of previous studies done in Asian countries (e.g., Heine & Lehman 1995, Kitayama & Markus 1995, Kitayama, Markus & Matsumoto 1995) all showed absence of self-protective and self-enhancement biases among Asians.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) claim that this discrepancy is due to differences between two broadly different cultures: many Western cultures such as North America promote the independence and autonomy, and many non-Western cultures such as Japan emphasize the interdependence and connectedness among individuals. In a society where independence and autonomy is encouraged, the independent self engages in self-enhancing biases to promote the image that the person is a self-sufficient and worthy. In contrast, the interdependent self considers her/himself as part of an encompassing social unit, and is motivated to adjust into meaningful social relationships (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto & Norasakkunkit, 1997). In an interdependent culture such as Japan's, modesty is the accepted response and it is not wise for one to stand out or explicitly express confidence in one's ability.

Although this self-critical tendency is identified with students with all proficiency levels, the low proficiency group has a greater propensity for blaming lack of ability and interest, difficulty of the task, and dislikes for absence of improvement. It is interesting to note that they did not attribute lack of effort to failure as much. In other words, they seem to feel that their English proficiency has not improved because they are not good at English, English is too difficult, and they have little interest in studying English in spite of the fact that they put a certain amount of effort into studying the language. It can be assumed that based on their unsuccessful learning experience they formed an undesirable causal schema that lowers their expectancy for success, and ultimately influences their performance. If stable attributions are

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more closely linked to expectancy for success or failure, and controllable attributions are more strongly related with persistence than uncontrollable attributions as Weiner (1992) claim, their tendency to attribute lack of ability and task difficulty to failure is especially problematic. The results of this study once again remind us of the importance of introducing materials that are manageable and interesting so that students, especially less proficient students, have the chance to boost their confidence.

Furthermore, the results of this study show that students' perception of improvement changes depending on teachers, regardless of students' proficiency. This finding also suggests that teachers can play an important role in forming students' attributional beliefs. Although altering university students' attributional patterns is not an easy job, the benefits of helping students view their language learning process in a positive light can be a worthwhile challenge.

Note

This study, under the same title, was orally presented at JALT CUE (The Japan Association for Language Teaching, College and University Educators) 2008 Conference held at Kinki University on July 5th and 6th, 2008.

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Appendix

A Translation of the Attribution Questionnaire

[1] Do you think your English ability has improved over the past year?

A Declined B Slightly declined C Not changed
D Slightly improved E Improved

[2] Which skill do you think has declined the most? Choose only one.

A Vocabulary B Grammar C Listening D Reading
E Speaking F Writing G None of the above

[3] Which skill do you think has improved the most? Choose only one.

A Vocabulary B Grammar C Listening D Reading
E Speaking F Writing G None of the above

If you answered that your English ability has declined or not changed (choosing A, B, or C for Question [1] above), please answer the following questions [4] to [14]. (If you answered your English ability has improved (choosing D or E for Question [1] above), go on to the reverse side:

Why do you think your English ability has declined or not changed? Look at the following list of reasons, read each statement and mark the letter to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

A Strongly disagree B Disagree C Somewhat disagree
D Somewhat agree E Agree F Strongly agree

[4] My English ability has declined/not changed because I have weak skills in English.

[5] My English ability has declined/not changed because I didn't try very hard.

[6] My English ability has declined/not changed because I used wrong study or practice methods.

[7] My English ability has declined/not changed because I had no interest in studying English.

[8] My English ability has declined/not changed because the teacher's instruction was

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inappropriate.
[9] My English ability has declined/not changed because English is difficult.
[10] My English ability has declined/not changed because didn't like the atmosphere of the class.
[11] My English ability has declined/not changed because I had no interest in getting a good grade.
[12] My English ability has declined/not changed because I was ill-prepared for class.
[13] My English ability has declined/not changed because I don't like English.
[14] My English ability has declined/not changed because the level of the class was inappropriate.

If you answered that your English ability has improved (choosing D or E for Question [1] above), please answer the following questions [15] to [25]:

Why do you think your English ability has improved? Look at the following list of reasons, read each statement and mark the letter to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

A Strongly disagree	B Disagree	C Somewhat disagree
D Somewhat agree	E Agree	F Strongly agree

[15] My English ability has improved because I have strong skills in English.
[16] My English ability has improved because I tried very hard.
[17] My English ability has improved because I used the right study or practice methods.
[18] My English ability has improved because I had interest in studying English.
[19] My English ability has improved because the teacher's instruction was appropriate.
[20] My English ability has improved because English is easy.
[21] My English ability has improved because I liked the atmosphere of the class.
[22] My English ability has improved because I had interest in getting a good grade.
[23] My English ability has improved because I was well-prepared for class.
[24] My English ability has improved because I like English.
[25] My English ability has improved because the level of the class was appropriate.

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