

KONAN UNIVERSITY

## <Research Report > Konan Language LOFT's First Large-Scale User Survey : Results and Discussion

著者 (英)	Thomas Mach
journal or publication title	Language and Culture : The Journal of the Institute for Language and Culture
number	22
page range	221-244
year	2018-03-15
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.14990/00003094">http://doi.org/10.14990/00003094</a>

# Konan Language LOFT's First Large-Scale User Survey: Results and Discussion

Thomas MACH

## 1. Language LOFT Background

Opened in September 2015, the Language LOFT is a self-access center located at Konan University's main Okamoto campus. Its primary purpose is to provide stimulating opportunities for English language practice for all of our students in a beyond-the-classroom environment which supports a less-structured and more autonomous approach to language learning. In terms of physical layout, to call it a self-access "center" is a bit of misnomer since it is actually an open corner of a larger facility which we call *Global Zone Porte*. Our *Global Zone* is designed as a large multipurpose space where Konan students can intermingle with international students in various ways.

The LOFT constitutes one-quarter of the *Global Zone*, and rather than being enclosed by walls its borders are demarcated by moveable whiteboards, bulletin boards, potted plants, and a carpet color change. Another quarter of the space is our *Ajisai* Room, which serves as a sort of home base for our international students to work on their Japanese skills between and after their classes. The remaining half of the large room is a free-use space with an intercultural atmosphere known as *Global Learning Commons*. The *Commons* opens up to an attractive first floor patio featuring shaded seating areas, and this design principle which stresses ease of access above all else helps to draw students in so that they can comfortably explore the services offered in Language LOFT and *Ajisai* Room. Thus, while the primary goal of the Language LOFT is related to improving English ability, it is housed within a larger facility which aims to promote intercultural exchange and to provide direct ways of experiencing various aspects of global diversity. These layered and complementary purposes are evident in nearly all of the activities that we develop for the LOFT, and they have informed the types of questions we selected for this survey.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Survey Purpose and Administration

The Language LOFT is still a relatively new facility at just over two years old, and although we have been diligently collecting usage data from the very beginning, this survey represents the first coordinated large-scale attempt to solicit student perspectives on their usage experiences. This sort of survey would have been less necessary at an earlier stage because we were regularly modifying many aspects of the self-access center each term as the facility was still in its infancy and its shortcomings were more apparent to administrators. But by the spring term of 2017 (LOFT's fourth term of existence), we had finally settled into a system that we felt was working quite well for all involved as far as we could see, and so this sort of survey began to be seen as increasingly necessary since we felt it could help shed light on parts of the experience that are less visible. Also, as administrators we determined that we finally had the time to dedicate to this important process.

The questionnaire was administered in Japanese via our College English (CE) Speaking classes in July 2017 (see Appendix A for the actual Japanese version of the questionnaire). CE Speaking is a single-term required course for all freshmen on Konan's main campus, and with the cooperation of teachers we were able to collect survey data during the final week of the spring term. At the beginning of each term, CE Speaking students receive a 10-point Language LOFT stamp card which constitutes 10% of their grade for the course. Since an overall score of 60% or above constitutes a passing grade in the course, the stamp card is not actually a requirement for passing CE Speaking. Instead, the stamp card system was introduced primarily as an *incentive* to encourage freshmen to give our self-access center a try. The hope is that the sort of English learning environment we provide in the LOFT will appeal enough to a good number of students that they will become repeat users in the future with or without this sort of incentive. It should also be noted that a CE Speaking student does not have to complete the stamp card in order to hand it in to his or her teacher for credit at the end of the course term. For example, a card that gets submitted with 7 of the 10 stamp spaces marked still positively affects the student's overall course grade by providing 7% of the 10% set aside for this purpose within the teacher's overall grading rubric.

A total of 909 freshmen respondents filled out the questionnaire for us, but internal variation is evident since some respondents apparently passed on some of the questions. Each year, the size of Konan's freshmen class is slightly under

2,000 students. However, since each student takes their CE Speaking course in either the spring or fall term, this survey administered at the end of the spring term had a potential respondent pool of somewhat short of 1,000 students. Due to absences on the day of administration and various other uncontrollable factors, we were quite pleased with managing to get over 900 students to respond.

### 3. Analysis and Discussion

What follows is a preliminary question-by-question analysis of the questionnaire results, with commentary provided as necessary.

#### **Question 1: *What is your department?***

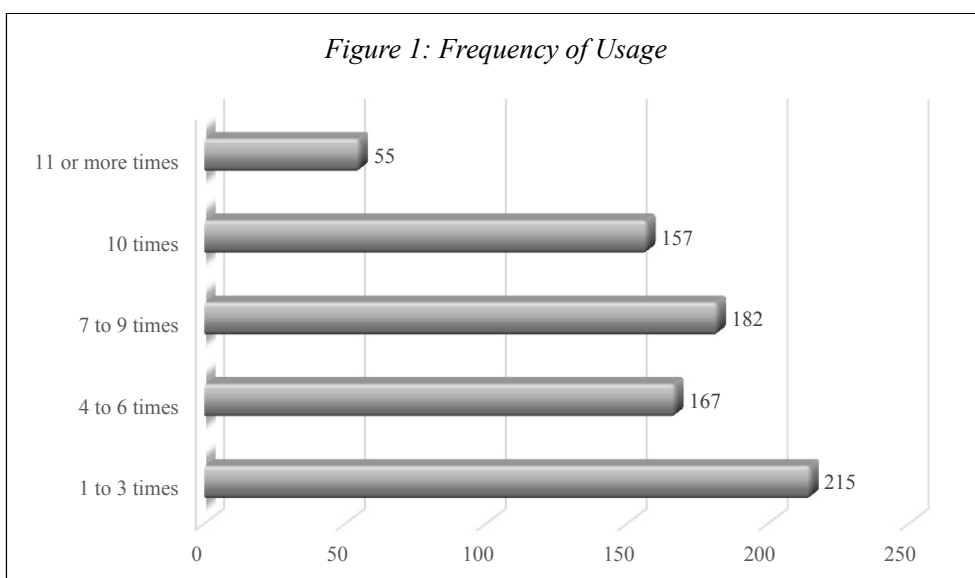
This question simply asks students which of the six main campus departments they belong to. There were no surprises in the data here, and the results do not inform this particular report in any way.

#### **Question 2: *Did you use the LOFT facility at all during the 2017 spring term?***

773 students (85.3%) responded affirmatively to this question, while 133 (14.7%) answered that they did not use the LOFT during their CE Speaking term. We are generally pleased with this usage rate. It suggests to us that a clear majority of freshmen feel enough incentive to visit the LOFT, but that students do not necessarily feel that they are forced to make use of the facility. We aimed for a stamp card system that encourages usage, but at the same time does not force uninterested students to come to the LOFT. This is primarily because staff and space at the LOFT are limited, and students who come with uncooperative attitudes may end up darkening the otherwise friendly atmosphere that we work hard to maintain at the facility. It is our view that the sort of learner autonomy that a self-access center promotes is unlikely to take root in students who only attend because they feel forced to do so. Question 5 below shows the reasons that LOFT users gave for visiting LOFT, whereas Question 16 displays the reasons that other students gave for not making use of the facility.

The questionnaire was designed so that only students who answered *Yes* to Question 2 were asked to complete Questions 3 through 15. Students who answered *No* were instructed to skip ahead to Question 16.

**Question 3: How often did you use the LOFT facility during the 2017 spring term? (Figure 1)**



As Figure 1 shows, there is a fairly even distribution of usage frequency except for the final (*11 or more*) category. If we interpret this data in terms of the 10-point stamp card that these respondents were using, however, it makes sense to combine the final two categories (*10* and *11 or more*) since both of them indicate a fully completed stamp card. If this is done, the newly merged *10 or more* category is roughly equal to the *1 to 3* category at the low end [212 (27.3%) and 215 students (27.7%), respectively]. In other words, the number of freshmen who made maximal use of the facility roughly equaled the number of those who tried it just a couple of times.

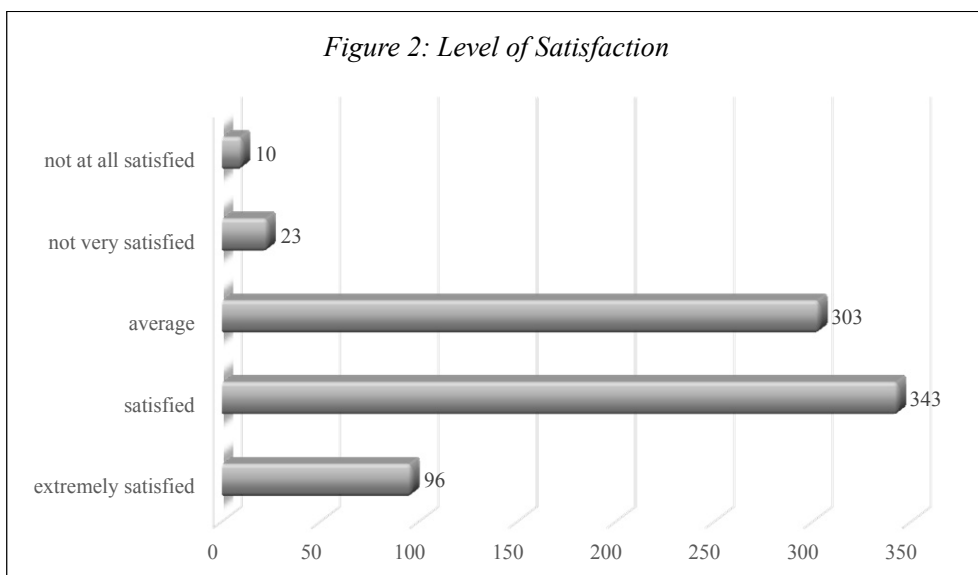
Unfortunately, the way that the categories were defined on the questionnaire does not allow us to say exactly how many students achieved a “passing” stamp card grade (that is, 6 or more stamps collected since 6 is equivalent to a passing score of 60% completion). But the data does allow us to say that 50.8% (394 students) did more than just pass – they completed 70% or more of their stamp card. At first glance, this figure might seem to suggest that our LOFT usage policy is overly strict since just over half of the LOFT users managed to get what would constitute a “passing grade” in this portion of their CE Speaking class. I tend to interpret this data more positively, though, because a major concern of ours was to avoid allowing the LOFT stamp card to be seen as an easy source of class points

that would automatically be awarded if students simply show up. It's not actually so easy: Depending on the purpose of their visit, students spend roughly one hour in the LOFT per stamp earned and often have to have a completed task checked by staff as an indication of efforts invested. (A more thorough explanation of the three major ways in which LOFT gets used by students is provided below in the discussion for Question 12.)

**Question 4: How satisfied are you with your LOFT usage experiences? (Figure 2)**

Figure 2 shows that students tilt heavily toward feeling satisfied with their English learning experiences in LOFT. Specifically, 56.6% (439 students) of students explicitly express satisfaction, while only 4.3% (33 students) report dissatisfaction.

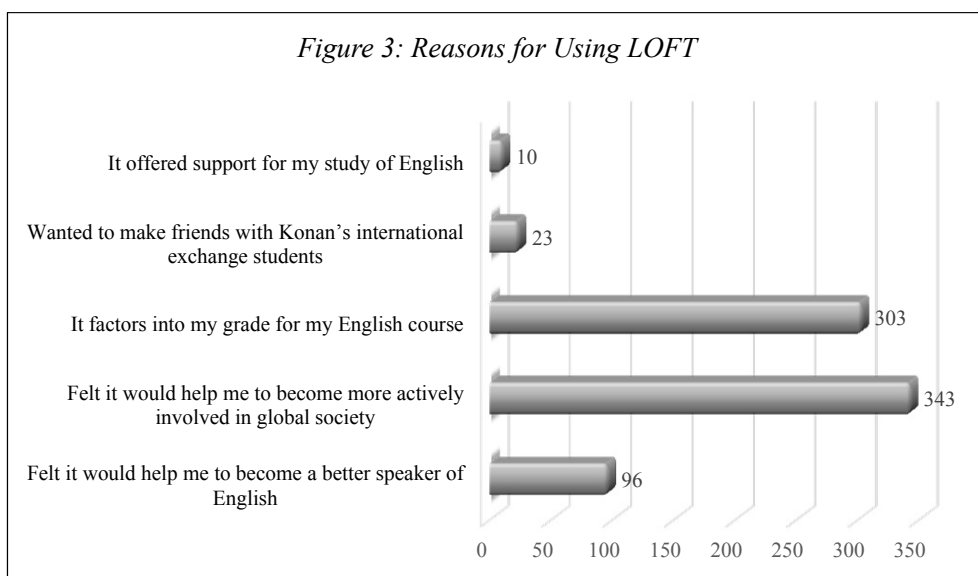
The second highest number of respondents chose the middle (*average*) category, and unfortunately it is difficult to interpret what this means with any confidence. The questionnaire design was perhaps flawed in regards to the ambiguity of this category. Did respondents interpret *average* as meaning they felt an average (i.e., non-remarkable) level of satisfaction, or as meaning that they felt neutral (i.e., neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) about their experiences? The latter meaning was intended during the questionnaire design process, but the precipitous drop in respondents between this category and the next one (*not very satisfied*) indicates to me that some respondents likely interpreted the *average* category in the former sense. A 4-point or 6-point scale that avoided this vague *average* terminology and replaced it with terms such as *somewhat satisfied* and *somewhat dissatisfied* would likely have yielded more reliable results.



In any case, despite the apparent ambiguity of the middle category, we can say with confidence that 95.7% of the freshmen who were surveyed did not expressly report dissatisfaction with their experiences in our self-access center. I believe LOFT administrators and staff can be very pleased with receiving that degree of positive feedback after only two years of operation.

**Question 5: *Why did you use LOFT?* (Figure 3)**

Students were allowed to choose multiple answers for this question, thus explaining the higher number of total responses (1,054). The second most popular response was related to the positive effect that LOFT usage has on their CE Speaking course grade via collecting stamps in their stamp card. This is essentially an extrinsic motivator, but we feel that it provides a gentle yet necessary nudge for a good portion of students (28.7%, or 303 of 1,054 responses) who probably would not have stepped foot into our self-access center if such incentive had not been provided. The hope is that if this sort of course grade motivation brings students into the LOFT to try it out, a number of them will discover that the services we offer actually appeal to them or match their learning styles, and their motivations for subsequent visits may become more and more intrinsic as their future career and life goals gradually take shape.



It is pleasing to see that the most popular response at 32.5% (343 of 1,054 responses) is the one related to the desire to become a more globally-minded person, since this fits in well with the intercultural aspect of our facility's overall

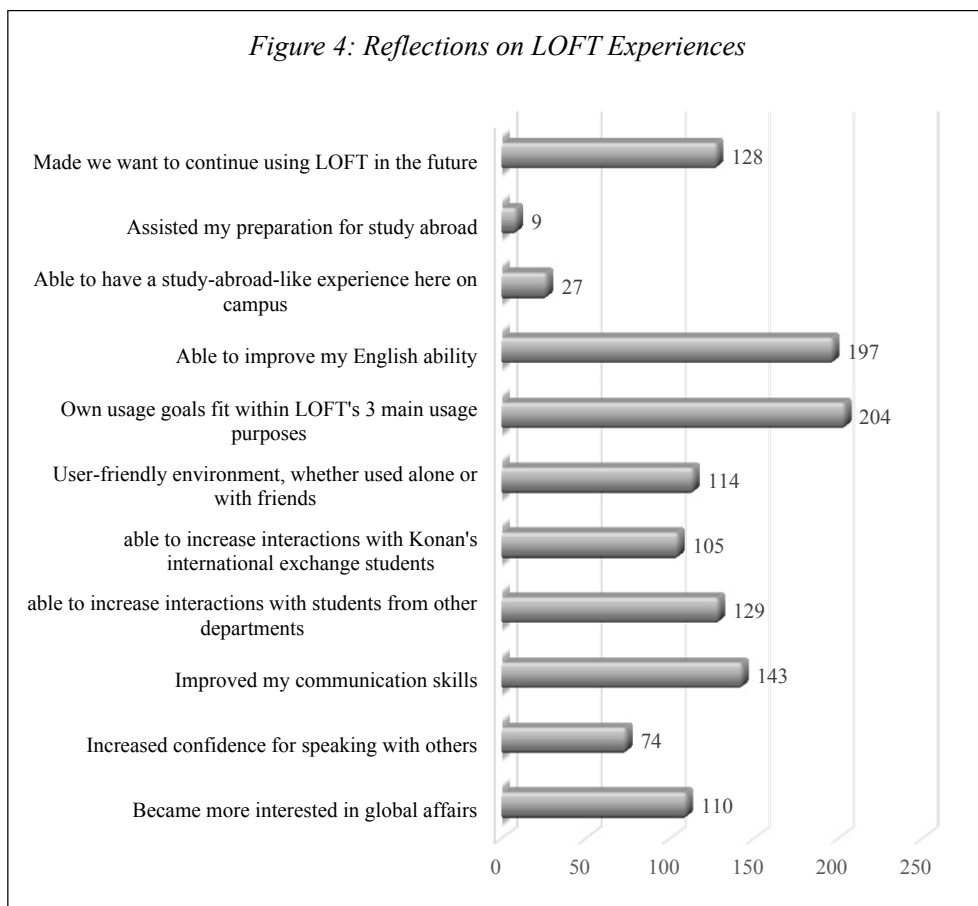
mission as well as the founding principles of the university. The first and last response categories can both be said to relate specifically to improving English language skills, and yet if we combine the results the total still seems rather low at 10.0% (10 + 96 of 1,054 responses). For those of us involved in teaching English and supporting students' efforts to improve, these results may at first come across as somewhat disappointing. However, the discussion of results for the following question points out an apparent evolution in the way students talk about the English-learning aspect of LOFT that turns out to be rather intriguing.

**Question 6: *What are your opinions about your LOFT usage?* (Figure 4)**

Like the previous question, Question 6 (represented in Figure 4) also specified that multiple answers are acceptable, and the number of responses turned out to be even higher (1,240). The most popular response at 16.5% (204 of 1,240 responses) serves as evidence that the main services we offer at LOFT line up well with students' own goals. (See Questions 12 and 13 below for a more thorough discussion of how students perceive the primary services provided by LOFT.) The second most popular response at 15.9% (197 of 1,240 responses) is directly related to a perceived improvement in English ability thanks to LOFT usage. This is quite a bit higher than the 10% (as reported in the results of Question 5) who specifically chose English improvement as a reason for using LOFT. In other words, it appears that even some students who were not at first imagining LOFT as a place where real English improvement can occur were noticing upon reflection that indeed they were becoming better English speakers.

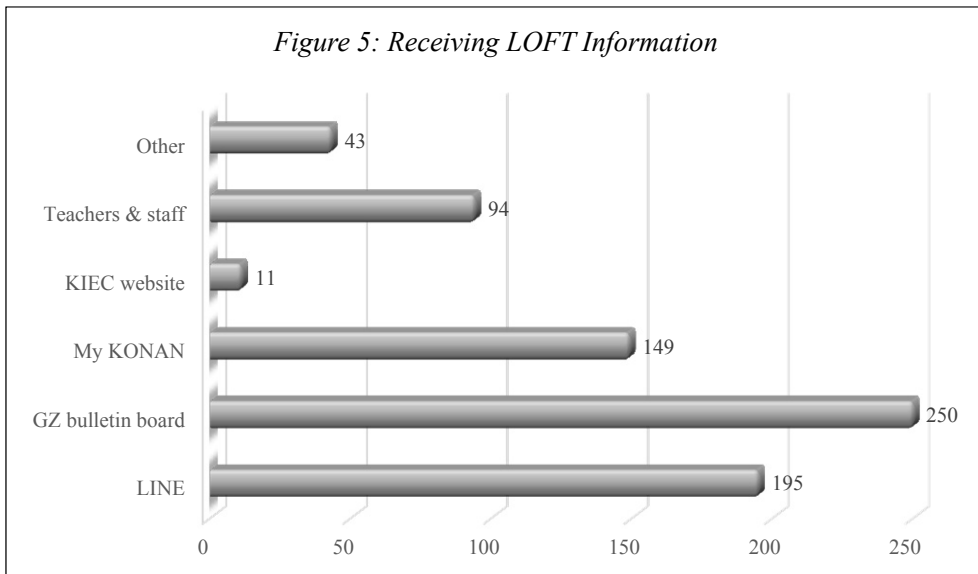
This trend becomes even more dramatic if we add the result categories in Figure 4 that address improved English ability in less direct ways. The third most popular response overall at 11.5% (143 of 1,240 responses) was about improved communication skills; and a further 6.0% (74 of 1,240 responses) pointed to becoming increasingly confident speakers thanks to LOFT experiences. While neither of these categories mentions *English* specifically, the fact is that student participation in LOFT happens primarily in English. They may feel that LOFT has helped them to become more confident and better communicators in their native Japanese as well, but respondents are almost certainly referring to at least their English ability upon answering this question and choosing these particular responses. So, if we add together the results for the three response choices that are all related either directly or indirectly to aspects of improved English ability, the new total is 33.4% of all responses.





Again, compared to the 10% of respondents in the previous question who cited improving English skills as a reason to use LOFT, this figure of 33.4% shows a rather remarkable shift in opinion. The data presents a gratifying before-and-after picture of how students viewed the English usage aspect of the LOFT experience: only one in ten initially chose improving English ability as a reason for visiting LOFT, but roughly one-third of all of them later felt that their experiences in LOFT helped them to improve their English upon reflection. I imagine that this noticeable three-fold change is at least partly due to the novelty of the English learning services that we offer at our self-access center. Up to this point of entering our university, many students simply had not had much experience with the types of English learning opportunities that LOFT provides, and so perhaps they could not fully anticipate how valuable these sorts of realistic target language practice activities can be until they had a chance to experience our services directly.

**Question 7: What did you rely on most for getting information about LOFT? (Figure 5)**



The results represented in Figure 5 shed a good deal of light on the relative effectiveness of our promotion strategies. Of the three main visitation purposes, *Visits* and *Tasks* do not actually require any sort of planning ahead since those services are always available. *Events*, however, need to be advertised so that students are aware of what sort of presentations and workshops are being scheduled on an ongoing basis.

*GZ bulletin board* refers to the Global Zone bulletin boards and posters that are located at the entrance to the facility. Despite the digital era we live in, this most traditional way of promoting our *Events* schedule was chosen by 33.7% (250 of 742 respondents) and thus appears to be the most effective. This is likely in part due to the prime location that LOFT occupies on campus: It is centrally located on the ground floor of one of the main campus buildings and therefore gets a good deal of foot traffic passing by.

LINE, Japan's most popular SNS app, comes in second place at 26.3% (195 of 742 respondents) and it is gratifying to see that it too is heavily relied upon. This is because we accepted a budgeting risk<sup>2</sup> in our second term of operation in the belief that LINE would prove to be our most effective digital means of broadcasting information, and Figure 5 suggests that indeed it is. Thus far, 1,212 students have "added" us on LINE (761 currently active members), and this means

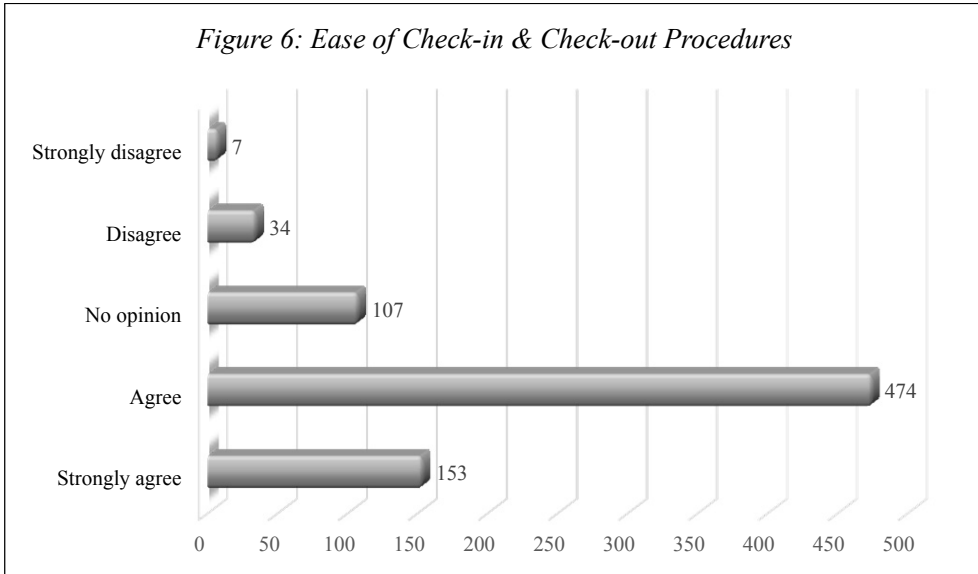
that all of those students are getting messages delivered from us at a pace of roughly twice per week in order to stay informed of updated scheduling and other timely news.

As for the remaining categories, My KONAN refers to the university-wide online course management system that students are used to using for enrolling in classes, checking syllabi, and almost everything else related to their studies. The KIEC website refers to the regularly updated site of our International Exchange Center which mainly oversees the day-to-day management of LOFT.<sup>3</sup> Note the dismal results here: Only eleven students report relying mostly on the website for information. This, I believe, is important data to share with other universities since a good number of them that have similar self-access learning facilities seem to be relying primarily on websites for online dissemination of information. Simply posting updates on a website puts the retrieval burden on the students as they have to proactively seek the posted information, making this sort of online tool categorically different from the messages they receive from us regularly via LINE.

Finally, teachers and staff seem to be playing an adequate role in helping to keep students informed. The results for Question 11 (below) show us that students generally think their teachers are keeping them well informed, and so it would probably be unrealistic to expect teachers to do even more than they already are. The results here for teachers and staff may be comparative low (12.7%; or 94 of 742 respondents) simply because they are generally just orally reminding students of what is available at LOFT, whereas the updates that students actually see with their own eyes via other categories naturally tend to be more effective when it comes to planning one's personal schedule.

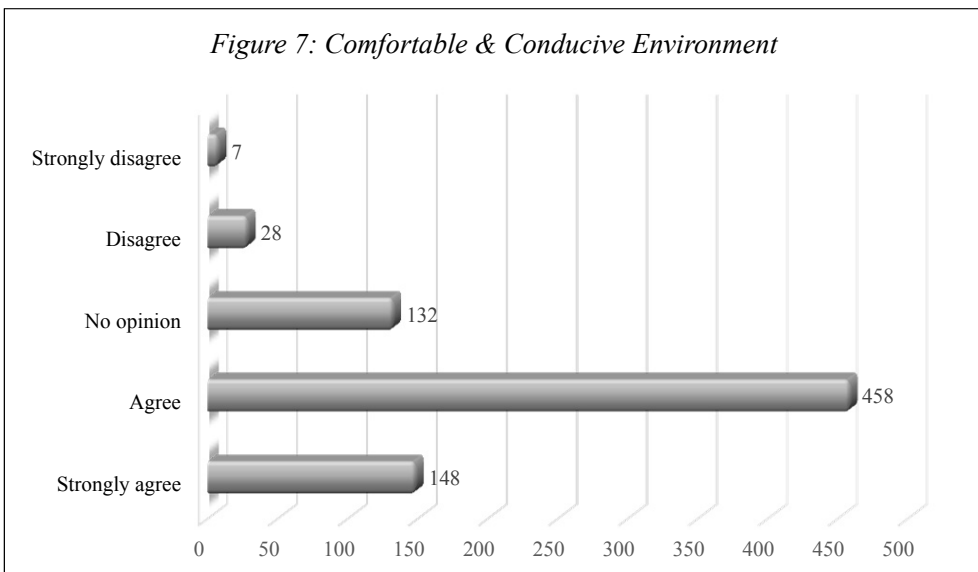
**Question 8: *Was the check-in & check-out process at the LOFT reception counter smooth?* (Figure 6)**

When the Global Zone and in particular its Language LOFT were in the planning stages, we carefully deliberated the necessity of a reception counter in the facility and the role that it would play. The fundamental concept of the overall space, with its glass doors on one entire side opening up to a terrace, promotes a sense of easy access and openness. The reception counter does not strictly control the flow of facility users, but for students who want to earn credit in their stamp card for LOFT usage, checking in and out at the reception area is necessary. We had worries that this process could be confusing, and that delays caused by such confusion could possibly create unwelcome bottlenecks especially during busier times.



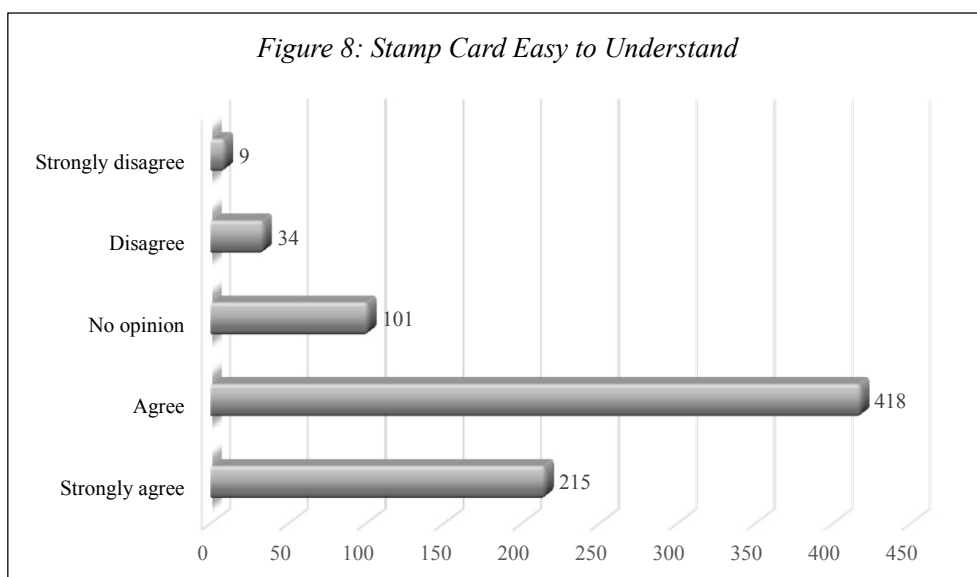
The data shows that students generally feel that the procedure is easy enough and not a cause for major concern. Only 5.2% (41 of 775 respondents) expressed any degree of dissatisfaction, and this is perhaps a better result than we had anticipated since the lines do indeed tend to be long at the busiest times.<sup>4</sup> At any rate, the results to this question suggest that a revision of the procedures for checking in and checking out need not be considered a top priority.

**Question 9: Does LOFT provide a comfortable environment that is conducive to English usage? (Figure 7)**



Given our mission to help students to become more self-motivated and autonomous in their English study, the necessity of providing a welcoming and learning-conducive environment is one of the main concerns that underlies nearly every management decision we make. Because of this, the results presented in Figure 7 are particularly gratifying: Only 4.5% of LOFT users (35 of 773 respondents) expressed actual dissatisfaction with the environment that the LOFT provides. Students are not monolithic in their learning needs and goals, and of course individuals tend to have their own predilections regarding ideal learning space design. Given that no environment could possibly please everyone, the fact that roughly 19 of 20 students who use our facility have nothing negative to say about the atmosphere provided is probably about the best result that we could hope for.

**Question 10: *Was it easy to understand how to use your yellow stamp card?***  
**(Figure 8)**



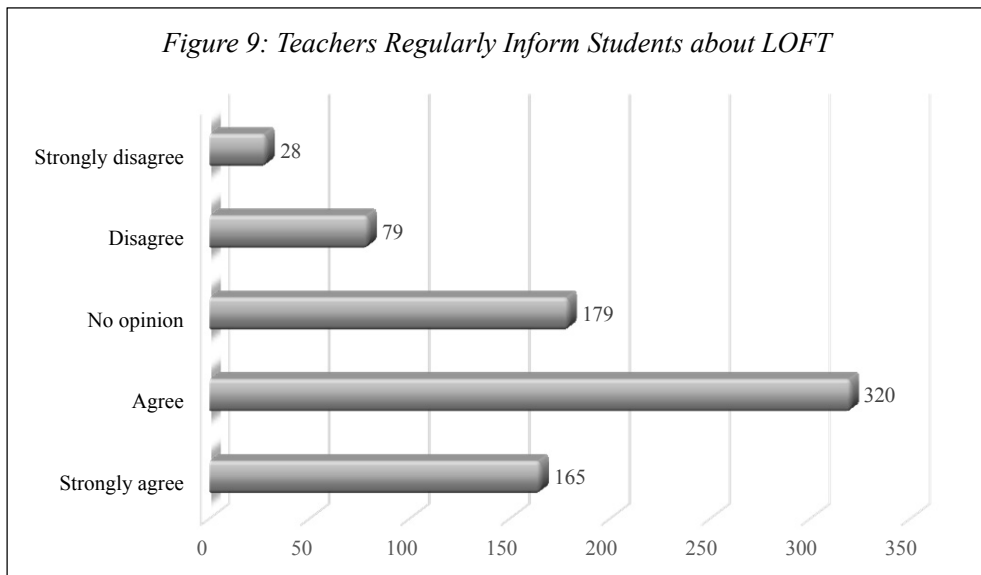
As previously mentioned, all of our freshmen students are using a stamp card in conjunction with their required CE Speaking course. The yellow card that we use for this is modified each year as we strive to improve the system, but whenever we make any such modifications we are always conscious of treading a fine line between offering a simple design with minimal information and instructions on the one hand, and a more verbally dense design that provides lots of information but sacrifices simplicity on the other. The version of the card used in 2017 at the

time that this survey was conducted leaned somewhat toward verbal density compared to the previous year's version, and yet the results shown in Figure 8 suggest that students generally find the stamp card easy to use (see Appendix B to view the template for the 2017 stamp card). In fact, only 5.5% (43 of 777 respondents) reported that the card was difficult to use in any way.

**Question 11: *Did your English teacher regularly remind you to make use of LOFT?* (Figure 9)**

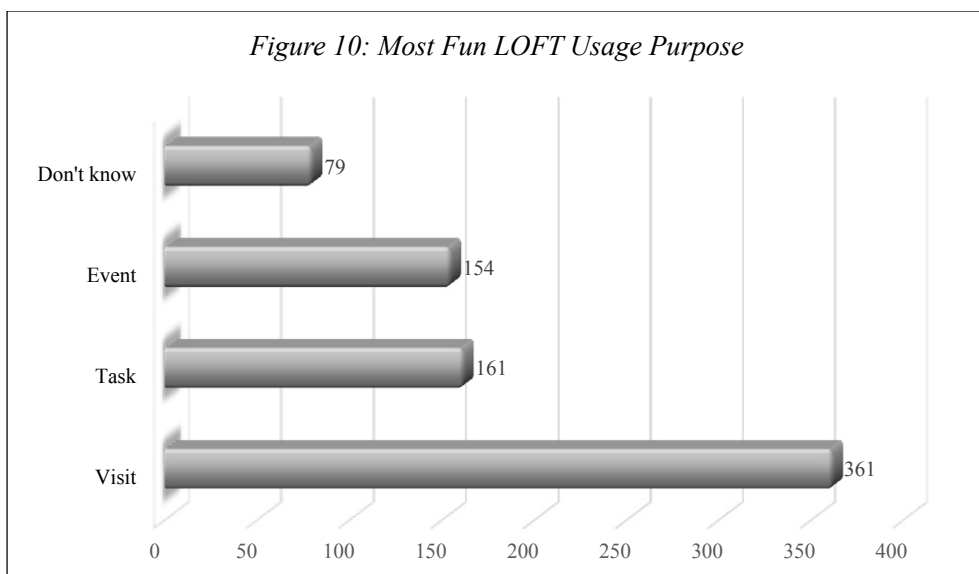
As usage of the LOFT constitutes 10% of the grade students receive in their CE Speaking course, the teachers of this course are asked a few times each semester to regularly remind their students of this requirement and to encourage them to make maximal use of our self-access facility. In the semester that this survey was conducted, there were a total of 46 CE Speaking classes taught by 18 native-speaking teachers of English. The results in Figure 9 suggest that, while a few of the teachers may be neglecting to provide reminders on a regular basis, students generally feel that their teachers are keeping them informed of what the LOFT offers. 13.6% (106 of 779 respondents) reported that their teachers are not keeping them as well-informed of LOFT activities as they could be, and so there is probably some room for improvement here.

However, when interpreting the results of this question, it is important to contextualize any conclusions within the results already discussed for Question 7 (see Figure 5). In responding to that question, students showed that their reliance on information about LOFT provided by teachers ranks quite low compared to the other means that they make use of to stay informed. In fact, only 12.7% (94 of 742 respondents to Question 7) reported that their teacher is the source of LOFT information that they rely on most. Of the five categories (or six categories if we consider *Other* to be a true category), *Teachers and staff* ranks fourth, rather far behind the *Global Zone bulletin board* and *LINE* categories. Thus, rather than persistently demanding that teachers make better efforts to keep their students informed of LOFT, our efforts are probably better spent in making sure that the information we provide to students via bulletin boards and LINE is eye-catching, timely, and effectively targeted.



**Question 12: Which purpose for using LOFT was most fun for you? (Figure 10)**

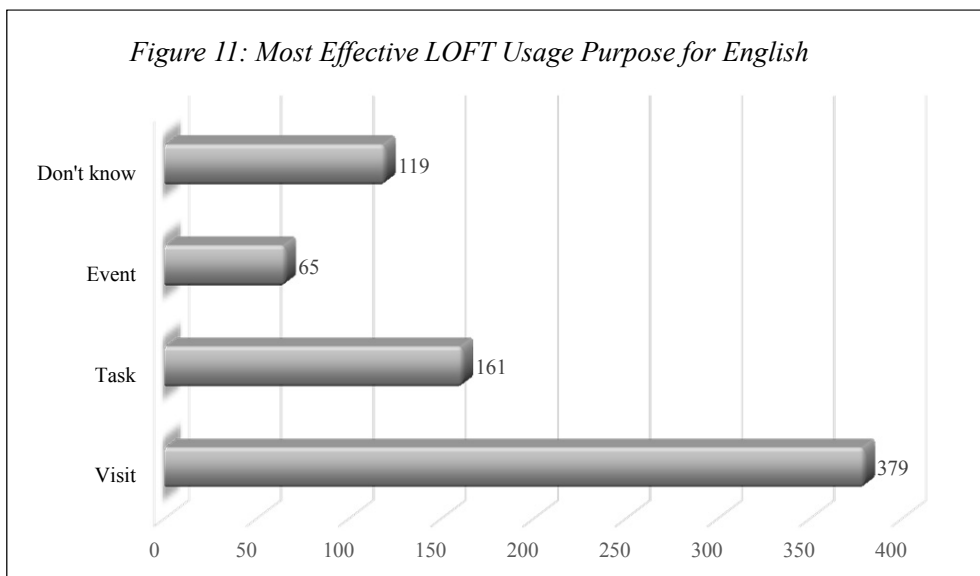
As previously mentioned, purposes for visiting LOFT are divided into three main categories. The results in Figure 10 show that *Visits* are the clear favorite in terms of being considered enjoyable, whereas *Tasks* and *Events* are roughly tied in a distant second place.



*Visits* are our least structured and most conversationally-focused usage purpose.

*Events* are essentially mini-presentations and workshops whereas most *Tasks* are worksheet-based English learning activities that can be completed alone or with friends. Students tend to be familiar with worksheet activities and short English presentations since they are likely exposed to variants of these learning activities in their actual English classes, and so such activities may be less likely to be perceived as unique LOFT services. *Visits*, on the other hand, which tend to focus on playing games in English and interacting casually with LOFT Tutors and Assistants, are arguably the most original type of service offered from the students' perspective. This and the simple fact that playing games and chatting tend to be perceived as more “fun” regardless of the setting are probably the major reasons which give rise to this set of results.

**Question 13: Which purpose for using LOFT did you feel most helped you to improve your English ability? (Figure 11)**



Whereas Question 12 focused on how enjoyable each of the three LOFT usages purposes are perceived to be, Question 13 looks instead at their perceived educational effectiveness. Yet the results for the two questions are surprisingly similar. Mirroring Figure 10, Figure 11 also shows *Visits* to be the clear favorite. More precisely, 52.0% (379 of 724 respondents) chose *Visits* as the most useful category for improving English ability, and this is even slightly higher than the result of the previous question in which 47.8% (361 of 755 respondents) reported that *Visits* are the most enjoyable of the services offered. That is to say, students

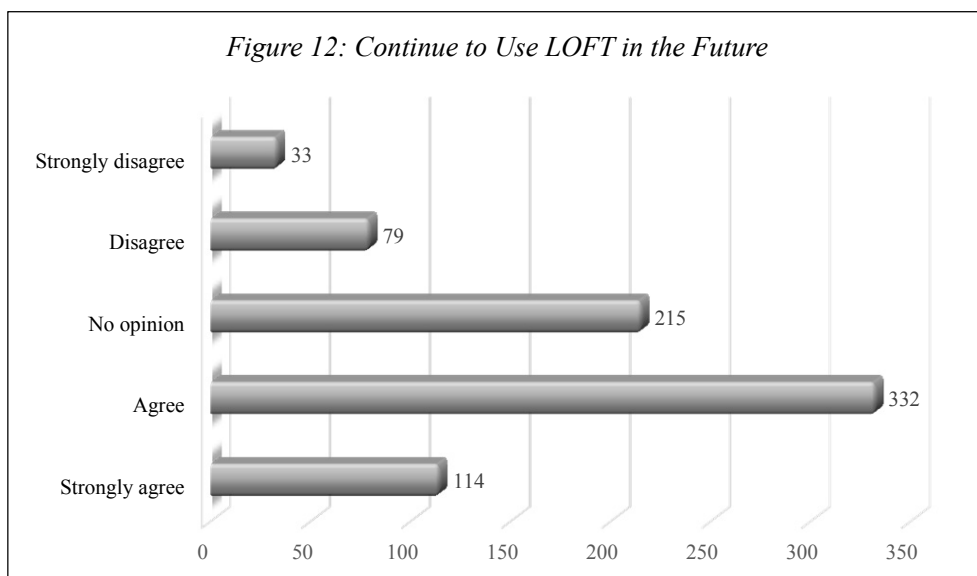


generally feel that conversing and playing games in English are not only fun and unique activities, they also feel that this is the sort of beyond-the-classroom English practice that is most effective for them.

This particular point, I believe, is one of the most important lessons that educators and administrators managing similar self-access centers in any setting can glean from our survey results. Providing opportunities for students to converse with native speaking peers (our LOFT Tutors) as well as with Japanese peers who happen to have impressive English skills (our LOFT Assistants) while also providing just a little bit of structural support (e.g., ice-breaker activities, game introductions) to get the ball rolling may not seem like a revolutionary idea, but it is precisely the sort of experience that makes the English language come alive for our students and makes their cumulative study efforts seem worthwhile. As the contours of the services we offer inevitably evolve over the years, those of us who manage the LOFT need to always keep in mind that *Visits* are really the cornerstone of our self-access center, and proper attention ought to be paid to maintaining the sort of materials, staff, and atmosphere that are consistently conducive to facilitating productive *Visits*.

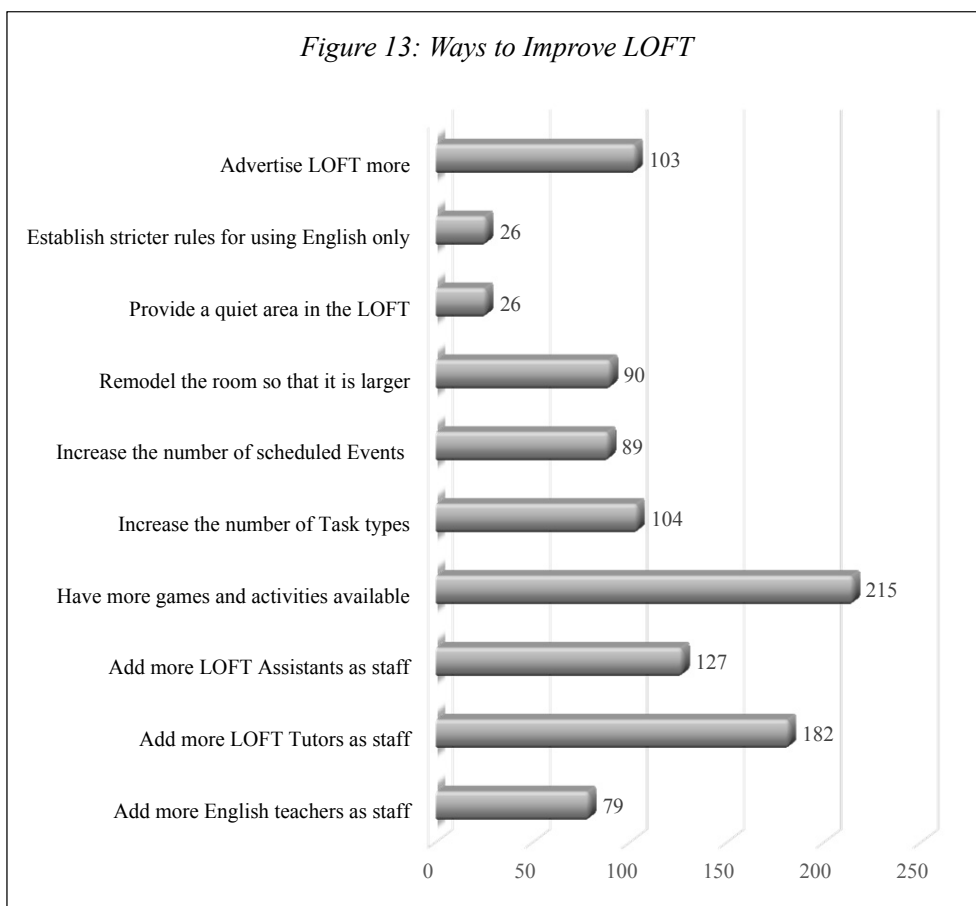
The second-place results for *Tasks* are essentially the same in Figures 10 and 11 (21.3% and 22.2% of respondents, respectively), whereas the percent of respondents who chose *Events* as the most educationally effective service (9.0%) is less than half of those who chose it as the most enjoyable of the three purposes offered (20.4%). I believe we have made some major progress in making our *Events* more participatory each term with the introduction of listening/feedback worksheets, orientation tips for speakers on how to make presentations more interactive, and other such modifications; but the general preconception students tend to have that being a member of an audience is essentially a passive experience is perhaps not so easily overcome. On a positive note, as previously mentioned, the mission of our Global Zone isn't just about improving English skills: Learning about other cultures and being exposed to a broad range of ideas and ways of thinking are equally important. LOFT *Events* tend to be the most obvious conduits for these more culturally-focused learning experiences. If we had included a question that asked specifically about which of the three services is most conducive to learning about other cultures, I suspect that the results would look quite different from what we see in Figure 11.

**Question 14: Do you think you will continue to use LOFT in the future?  
(Figure 12)**



When asked if students believe they will continue to use the Language LOFT after their CE Speaking class is finished, well over half of them agreed that they would (446 of 773 respondents; or 57.7%). Only 14.5% of them reported that they likely would not, and 27.8% of them are apparently undecided. Of course, these sorts of survey questions which ask respondents to report likelihood of future behavior tend not to be so reliably predictive of actual future behavior, but these results do at least suggest a predominantly positive disposition toward the LOFT at the point in time when the survey was conducted. Actually, even if only 20% or so of the respondents do in fact continue to use LOFT in the future, that sort of usage rate among non-freshmen will likely keep the facility consistently at or over capacity. LOFT is still a relatively new facility, and at this point none of the current 4<sup>th</sup>-year students and only half of our 3<sup>rd</sup>-year students were introduced to the LOFT through CE Speaking orientations and the stamp card system associated with that course. Once the 2019 academic year gets underway, all of our undergraduate students will have experienced our structured system for encouraging LOFT usage as freshmen, and when we enter that phase then possible further studies that take a more longitudinal look at LOFT usage from entrance to university until graduation will serve as a welcome addition to our growing pool of LOFT usage data.

**Question 15: Which of the following statements do you agree with? (Figure 13)**



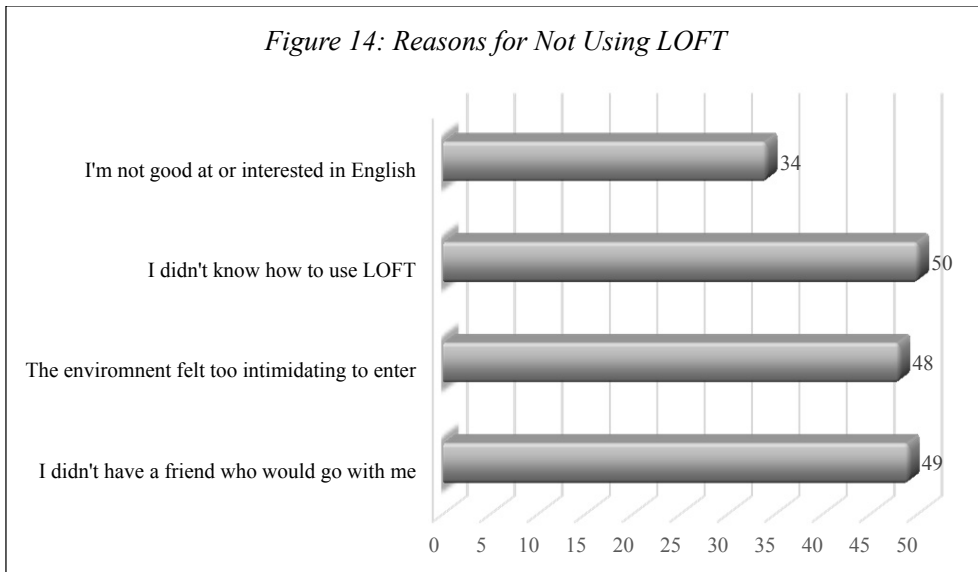
As with Questions 5 and 6, this question also specified that multiple answers are acceptable, and so the total number of responses (962) reflects this. The results of Question 12 suggested that *Visits* are by far the most popular of the main LOFT services offered, and if we look at the three most popular categories shown here in Figure 13, we see further evidence for the popularity of *Visits*. As the most popular answer, 22.3% (215 of 962 responses) are telling us that we ought to provide more games and activities, and these are the sorts of materials that generally get used during *Visits*. The next two most often selected responses are telling us that we ought to increase our LOFT Tutor and LOFT Assistant staff. These are the student workers, international and Japanese respectively, whom we rely on heavily for both *Visits* and *Events*. Yet it is the *Visits* in which we rely particularly on our Tutors to lead discussions and introduce games to visitors, whereas *Events* rely on

Tutors and Assistants equally. The fact that quite a few more of the responses are asking for Tutors (18.9%, or 182 of 962 responses) than asking for Assistants (13.2%, or 127 of 962 responses) suggests that it is indeed the popularity of *Visits* compared to *Events* that is partly driving this data as well.

At the other end of the spectrum of responses, the two least popular categories (both at 2.7%, or 26 of 962 responses) are the only ones that are directly related to changing the usage rules of the facility. Students seem to be generally uninterested in the ideas of more strictly enforcing English usage or in demarcating an area in which some sort of quiet zone rules are established. With such evidently meager support from our student body for these sorts of changes, it seems that our efforts to improve LOFT are best focused elsewhere.

The final two questions below were answered only by the students who answered *no* to Question 2. That is to say, these are the students who did not use the LOFT facility at all during the semester that they were enrolled in our CE Speaking course.

**Question 16: *Why did you not use LOFT?* (Figure 14)**

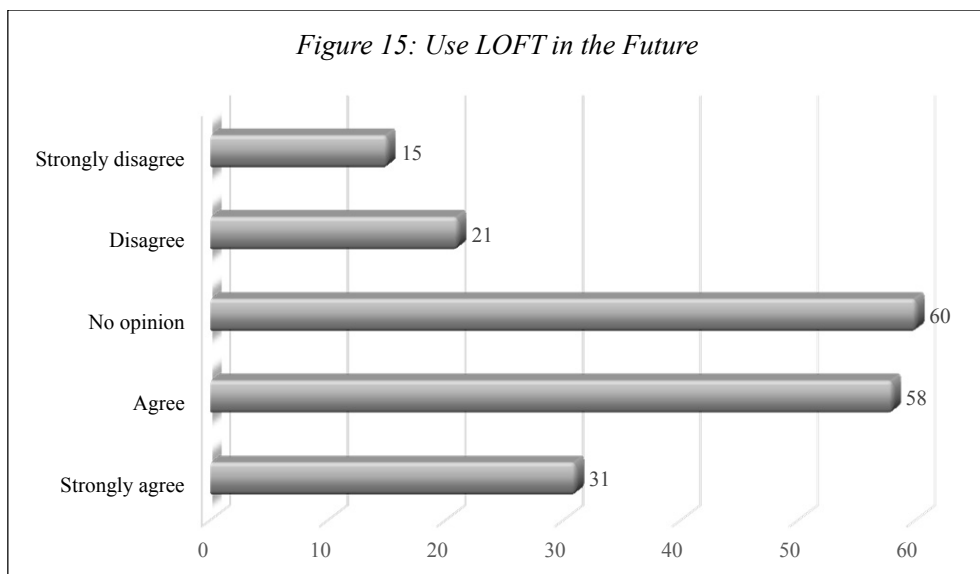


For Question 16, we selected four response categories that we felt were most likely causing LOFT avoidance among this subset of students. As Figure 14 shows, the distribution of responses was remarkably spread out among the four categories. This tells us that there is no single overwhelming reason for this group of students to not use LOFT, and so as administrators of the facility we need to

continue to chip away at whatever we feel is causing each of the reasons for avoidance. However, we should also keep in mind that any particular improvement we might make in any one of the categories is not likely to lead to a very noticeable dent in the overall non-usage numbers since the data in Figure 14 is so evenly distributed.

**Question 17: Do you think you will use LOFT in the future? (Figure 15)**

Question 17 focuses on predictions of future LOFT usage, and closely mirrors Question 14. The major difference, of course, is that Question 17 was answered by students who chose not to use our facility even when it would have helped their course grade, whereas all respondents to Question 14 did make use of LOFT. Thus, we might expect the results shown in Figure 15 to be remarkably different from Question 14's results (shown in Figure 12), but surprisingly the two sets of results are not all that dissimilar. Nearly half of the respondents (48.1%, or 89 of 185 respondents; and compared to 57.7% who answered Question 14 in this way) reported that they will probably use LOFT in the future. 19.5% of them reported that they likely would not (compared to 14.5% for Question 14), and 32.4% of them are undecided (compared to 27.8% for Question 14). In other words, as expected, students who had not used LOFT yet at the time of the survey reported being less likely to visit the facility in the future compared to students who had already made use of LOFT, but the gap between the two groups in this regard was not very wide at all.



These peculiar results suggest to me that generally speaking the students who did not avail themselves of what LOFT offers when given encouragement and an incentive to do so are not strongly opposed to the concept of using a self-access center to improve their English ability and intercultural opportunities. Instead, for some reason or other (see the leading reasons again displayed in Figure 14) each of these students was not able to muster up the will to make use of LOFT during their first term at the university, but they understand LOFT's door is still open to them and many of them still believe they may visit us in the future. Again, a non-binding question such as this one about predicted future behavior will not necessarily yield accurate results about actual future usage, but the fact that many of these students are at least open to the idea of using our facility in the future is a testament to the inviting atmosphere that LOFT staff members continue to provide and is probably about the best result we can hope for at this point with this subset of students.

#### 4. Conclusion

The overall message that we LOFT administrators take from these survey results is that we feel we are mostly on the right track regarding the services we provide for our students in our self-access center, and the ways in which we provide them. Some of the particular data points begin to suggest ways in which we might make some gentle tweaks here and there in order to improve the facility, but at this point it seems that no major overhauls are called for. Among the many helpful lessons made observable through the data collection, our survey results serve as an important reminder that from the students' perspective *Visits* really are seen as the cornerstone of the self-access services we provide at the Language LOFT.

#### Notes

- 1) In this sentence and elsewhere in the report, I have used plural pronouns (*we, us, our*) even though I am writing this article as a single author. Like any large-scale project, I have not been alone in developing and managing the Language LOFT. To the contrary, much of the daily management of the facility is handled by office staff members in our Konan International Exchange Center. Foremost among this team is Shari Yamamoto, whose tireless oversight of our self-access center has been absolutely indispensable for its success thus far. Tenga Nakamori has also taken on an important role in this survey project and in other LOFT-related projects, and all projects are undertaken under the extremely supportive oversight of Kumiko Mima in her role as office manager. I'm deeply grateful to all of them for their continued cooperation and support for the LOFT endeavor.

- 2) Typical individual use of LINE is a free service, but we have an official company account for Language LOFT which allows us to send messages en masse to all of the students who “friend” us. We pay ¥64,800 (roughly US\$600) annually for the account, and the data presented in the results to Question 7 suggest to us that the investment is well worth it.
- 3) While the Konan International Exchange Center (KIEC) generally oversees and provides staffing for the daily operation of Language LOFT as well as the entire Global Zone, Konan’s Institute for Language and Culture is primarily responsible for introducing ways to promote English language education at LOFT. This deep level of cooperation between two independent divisions within our university arguably gives rise to much of the creative managerial energy and original approaches evident at our self-access center. The URL for the Global Zone page of the KIEC website referred to in Question 7 is as follows: *www.konan-u.ac.jp/kiec/hop/globalzone*
- 4) Because the yellow LOFT stamp card used as part of the CE Speaking course has monthly deadlines for collecting stamps (e.g., 3 of the total 10 stamps must be collected in June), the last few days of each month tend to be particularly crowded due to student procrastination. The other especially busy time is the lunch hour since no classes are in session, and food and drink are welcome in the Global Zone. So, lunch times during the last week of any month can occasionally become so busy that the check-in line snakes all the way outside the door.

Appendix A
Actual Questionnaire Form in Japanese

Landbridge! LOFT利用アンケート
Konan Language LOFT (以下「LOFT」)において、ぜひ皆さんからの意見を聴かせてください。
今後LOFTが皆さんにとってよりよい場所となるよう、アンケートに協力をお願いします。
国際交流センター
国際言語文化センター
それぞれの選択肢の右隣のマーク欄を執筆で黒く塗りつぶしてください。 記入例：.....●
1 所属している学部をマークしてください。
15 LOFTについて次のうち、あなたの考えに合うものを選んでください。【複数回答可】
17 今後利用しようと思いませんか。【1つ選択】



