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Teaching English in Japan

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Editorial

Hunter McEwan

This special issue of *Educational Perspectives* on teaching English in Japan was conceived during a four-week trip that I took as a visiting scholar to Bukkyo University, Kyoto in 2007. During my stay I was able to visit some schools and talk with a number of teachers and Bukkyo faculty regarding recent language teaching reforms mandated by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports (MEXT). These changes were controversial, as they required a departure from the usual practice of introducing English in the secondary schools. The new guidelines mandated forty-five minutes of English each week for students in the fifth and sixth grades. The aim of this reform was to get students used to conversing in English and to do it earlier in their schooling rather than later.

Several of the articles in this issue arose out of these discussions. The article by Ryoji Matsuoka clearly spells out the arguments on both sides of the debate regarding these reforms and raises concerns about access to foreign language instruction due to an opportunity gap between groups of students. Chie Ohtani's article also discusses these reforms, especially in regard to the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program. Her article was originally presented at the annual meeting of the Japan/United States Teacher Education Consortium (JUSTEC) held at the East-West Center, Honolulu in 2009. Ohtani's study involved a number of



Cover photo - Nishimoto Sensei's English class at Hirosawa Elementary School

in-depth interviews with and surveys of assistant language teachers (ALTs). Her article describes some of the problems inherent in the system and offers several valuable recommendations for its reform.

The aim of what is referred to as the "Rainbow Plan," the effort to introduce English instruction to elementary schools is, perhaps, less controversial. In effect, it is part of a larger plan to achieve a greater degree of competence among Japanese students in speaking and communicating in English. Government efforts at reform have been directed to bringing about a change in the dominant approach in

which English is taught as an examination subject requiring students to focus on written texts and the memorization of rules of grammar and vocabulary lists, much in the same way that Latin is often taught in the West—not as a living language, but as an object of study. The article by Minoru Shimizu provides an excellent historical account of the traditional approaches to language instruction in Japan and suggests how these deeply embedded traditions influence current practice. His narrative traces the story of language learning and teaching from its beginnings in the fifth century with the study of Chinese classics. He goes on to describe how these approaches were adapted to western languages and in general how language teaching has been

shaped by the desire of the Japanese to learn from other cultures and to adapt what they have learned to Japanese culture and circumstances.

In addition to discussing these issues with faculty during my stay, I had the good fortune to visit several classrooms and witness at first hand a number of innovative approaches to English instruction that were being implemented, notably at Hirosawa Elementary School and at Murasakino High School.

My visit to Naoko Nishimura's fifth grade classroom (pictured on cover) was especially enjoyable as I was able to see how the MEXT guidelines were being practiced at one school. I also had the memorable experience of meeting her students and holding short conversations in English with several of them. Ms Nishimura, ably assisted by an ALT from Australia (see cover photo), is an enthusiastic teacher of English, who worked in close collaboration with the ALT. Her students were eager to practice their language skills on me, and they all demonstrated that they had a much greater command of English than I have of Japanese.

During my visit to Murasakino High School, I was accompanied by Haruo Minagawa, the school's Director of Development and Public Relations, who introduced me to students in Murasakino's special English course. Murasakino High School aims to foster independence and individuality, and its English program is designed to provide enrichment opportunities in speaking English. The article by Minagawa in this issue provides a brief description of the school's philosophy and an informative account of the school's distinctive English program.

The aim of *Educational Perspectives* is to explore a single issue from a variety of perspectives, so I am also grateful to several other authors for their contributions, which help to explore the theme of English language instruction as it impacts students, teachers, programs, and curriculum. Two of the articles in this issue were presented at the annual meeting of JUSTEC in Honolulu in 2007. Shien Sakai and his co-authors report on a large, two-phase study of student autonomy in English language learning. Natsue Nakayama, Akiko Takagi, and Hiromi Imamura's article describes their work in conducting a survey of secondary school English teachers in Japan to determine their attitudes to a new certification system.

The article by George Weir and Toshiaki Ozasa takes a different perspective to the other articles in this issue by focusing on the textbooks that are used to teach English to Japanese students. Their approach employed the use of computer software to conduct a comparative analysis of three textbooks used in the teaching of English. One insight gained from their study is that a greater prominence is given to grammar than vocabulary in textbook design—a result consistent with the dominant approach to teaching that focuses on English as a subject of study rather than on language in use.

Finally, the article on the partnership between the College of Education at the University of Hawai'i and Bukkyo University in Kyoto, Japan provides a short account of the ten-year connection between our two institutions and the real benefits that have been realized for faculty and students at both institutions.

Japanese English Education and Learning: A History of Adapting Foreign Cultures

Minoru Shimizu

Introduction

This essay is a history that relates the Japanese tradition of accepting and adapting aspects of foreign culture, especially as it applies to the learning of foreign languages. In particular, the essay describes the history of English education in Japan by investigating its developments after the Meiji era. Although I am not an English education expert, I will address the issues from the perspective of scholarship on the adoption of foreign cultures in modern Japanese history.

From ancient times to the present day, the Japanese people have made persistent efforts to learn other languages and become acquainted with foreign cultures. Prior to the study of English, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, Dutch, and a number of other languages were actively studied in Japan. Thus, when they came to learn English, the Japanese approached the matter systematically according to the system that was already in place for learning Dutch, which had been established by Tekijyuku in Osaka, a famous privately owned cram school established in 1838 by Koan Ogata. Ogata specialized in the translation of works of Dutch medical science. This system was, in turn, based on earlier teaching methods for the study of the Chinese classics.

The Japanese began learning English when the British battleship “Phaeton” came to Japan in the early 19th century. And after the ports were opened to foreign trade, it was English that replaced Dutch as the new international language. Japanese intellectuals quickly started to master the English tongue.

From the Meiji era up to the present, two broad purposes have motivated the Japanese resolve to learn English. The first has been to understand and absorb a different culture. The second has been to communicate with English speaking people. And in this era of rapidly intensifying globalization, it has become increasingly important to speak a common language like English in order to understand differences among cultures, and to learn respect for others.

The language sociologist, Takao Suzuki, has argued that the largest problem facing English education in Japan has been a lack of specific goals. His view is that the goals for learning any foreign language can be classified according to three aims: “language as an end,” “language as a means,” and “language for communication.” “Language as an end” implies the study of a language for its own sake. For example, one acquires Spanish because one is interested in Spanish language and culture. “Language as a means” is learning a language to fulfill another purpose, such as gaining some part of the accumulated knowledge that is written in the language. For example, one studies German and French to study German philosophy or French biology. “Language for communication” is for international exchange. In the present situation, English has a high status as the language of international exchange, so Suzuki argues that Japan’s English education program should conform to this type of purpose. His idea is also useful because it is sensitive to the ways that English education in Japan has changed, according to the fashion of the times.

The History of the Study of Foreign Languages in Japan: Studying Dutch and the Methods of Teaching the Chinese Classics

Chinese and Korean were the two earliest foreign languages to be studied in Japan. Written Chinese characters were introduced to Japan through the Korean Peninsula around the fifth and sixth centuries. Since then, Japan has continued to make use of and adapt Chinese writing and the culture of China to its own purposes. At first, Japan established the writing systems of Kanji and Kanbun (Chinese classical writing). Japanese scholars created their own alphabets, Hiragana and Katakana, and expanded Japanese writing based on the original Chinese characters.

The study of Chinese and Korean constituted an important introduction to the two countries’ cultures and academic

disciplines. It was also invaluable in gaining information about them. Up to the Edo era, this process of employing language as a means of gaining knowledge from other cultures was regarded as very important. But at the same time, the learning of Chinese and Korean also fulfilled the other two other functions. Nevertheless, the stress was on learning language as a means, and the goal of learning language for the purposes of communication was not emphasized—unlike today. The conditions necessary to encourage learning foreign languages for international exchange were not present.

Westerners first came to Japan with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1543 in Tanegashima, an island to the south of Kyushu. At first, the principal European cultures and languages in Japan were Portuguese and Spanish. They introduced trade and Christian missionary work, and their presence had an abiding effect on Japanese language. This is evident in many Japanese words that exist to this day. Two examples are “castella,” a Japanese cake, which comes from the Portuguese “pao de Castela,” meaning “bread from Castile,” and Konpeito, a Japanese candy which comes from the Portuguese “confeito.” However, the inflow to Japan of Portuguese and Spanish culture and language stopped in 1639 when the Tokugawa Shogunate of the Edo period gave the order to close the door to foreigners.

After that, the Japanese took an interest in learning Dutch. It was studied throughout the entire Edo era, since Holland was the only Western country given permission to trade due to Japan’s adoption of a policy of seclusion from the outside world. Many words in Japanese come from Dutch—lamp, glass, gum, pump, cup, drop (a candy), cookie, beer, and coffee.

Two methods were employed in the learning of Dutch. One was to learn practical Dutch when interpreters needed to negotiate with the Holland trading spokesmen at the trading center on Dejima, an island in Nagasaki Bay. The other was to learn Dutch in order to study European academic disciplines like medical science. One interesting example of the positive academic outcome derived from this approach is a translated book called *Kaitai Shinsho* by Genpaku Sugita, a famous Japanese medical scholar, and Ryotaku Maeno in 1774. The book was based on *Ontleedkundige Tafelen*, which was originally translated from *Anatomische Kulmus* written by Johann Adam Kulmus in Germany.

During the Edo period, interest in learning Dutch did not just stay in Nagasaki or Edo, but spread to all parts of

the country. Genpaku Sugita’s pupil, Gentaku Otsuki, edited *Rangaku Kaitei*, a study of Dutch and of Western sciences written in 1783. In 1824, Philipp Franz von Siebold taught at Narutaki-juku in Nagasaki, a privately own school, and an environment that encouraged the learning of Dutch emerged. Edited Dutch dictionaries were published. Privately owned schools were open for the study of Dutch. Also, Hanko, schools located in each feudal domain, were established. Ogata Koan’s school, established in 1838, was considered a large scale Dutch language study center. Under these encouraging circumstances, teaching methods were established for the teaching of language that formed the basis for the future of English language education. In effect, the development of the study and methods of the teaching of Dutch became a preparation for the Japanese in the learning of other foreign languages such as English.

Tekijuku, the privately owned school of Ogata Koan, was based on three educational principles. First, the end of studying is not for oneself but for use in the service of others. Secondly, a student may receive advice from seniors, but he must study by himself. Thirdly, students would be tested six times a month, which suggests that competition was an important aspect of the educational methods of the period. Thus students were to learn Dutch so that they could read Dutch medical books in order to serve people in the field of medical science. The purpose of learning a language was clearly a means to other ends. Nearly one thousand people studied at the school. Yukichi Fukuzawa, who established Keio University, Masujiro Omura, who established the modern army of Japan, and Tsunetami Sano, who helped set up the Japanese Red Cross Society, are some of the famous graduates of the school.

As contact with Dutch people was extremely limited, and in the absence of Dutch speaking instructors, the study of Dutch aimed at the translation of Dutch scholarship and research. The study of Dutch began as the study of Dutch medical science; but as time went by, books in physics and astronomy were also translated into Japanese. The high degree of word-building capacity of Chinese characters had a formative influence on translations into Japanese. For example, the word for nerve (nerve means one of the thin parts like threads inside one’s body along which feelings and messages are sent to the brain) came from the translation using Chinese characters. Technical terms such as gravity, centripetal force, adjustment, spirit, mind, sense,

and perception are also Japanese words based on Chinese characters. Some of the words that Japanese commonly use today without being aware of where they came from were coined in this era. Yukichi Fukuzawa achieved his knowledge of Dutch based on the translation processes as it involved using Dutch and Chinese characters at the school of Koan Ogata. It is a famous story that on a trip to Yokohama, which had been opened up as a trading port after the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853, Fukuzawa first realized the importance of English as a language. The same circumstances and procedures regarding the translation of texts employed in the study of Dutch were used in the teaching of English. In fact, until 1887, studies of both Dutch and English were intermixed, and English was learned in the same way as Dutch.

The study of Dutch was also influenced by the teaching and learning methods employed in the learning of Chinese. Chinese classics and words were the first exposure of the Japanese to foreign languages. The methods used in understanding Chinese writing were developed many years before similar methods were used in the teaching and learning of Dutch. From the middle period of the Edo era, when students first began studying Chinese writing, they were required to learn *Sudoku*, a way to read Chinese writing that teaches that you do not think of the meanings of the writing but simply follow it with your eyes and read aloud. After students have mastered this method, they must learn *Kaidoku*, where a few people gather in one place and one person reads out the meaning of the Chinese writing and the listeners question him or her. This is a question-and-answer approach that takes place in a learning community—what we would now refer to as a reading circle or seminar. This *Sudoku*—from—*Kaidoku* way of studying gradually moved from the study of Chinese writing to the study of Dutch and eventually to the study of English. This method was used during the Shogunate in foreign language schools. At the beginning of the Meiji era, the same approach to language learning was followed at Keio University. The *Kaidoku* and *Yakudoku* (read and translate) procedures were followed in the first English conversation text called *Eibei Taiwa Shokei* (British and American Conversation Text) (1859), by Manjiro (John) Nakahama. Nakahama traveled to the United States and remained there studying English for ten years. In 1851 he returned to Japan. Notwithstanding the different languages, his text follows the traditional rules for the study of Chinese and Dutch writing.

The History of English Learning before the Meiji Era

In February 1809, the year after the arrival of the British Royal Navy ship, HMS Phaeton, at the harbor in Nagasaki, the Edo Shogunate ordered interpreters who were able to speak Dutch to learn English as a matter of national defense. They were also required to learn Russian for the same reason. This was Japan's introduction to learning English. French began to be studied half a year before the Phaeton Incident; and German, from the 1860's. How English instruction was practiced is unknown, but the first English teacher of interpreters was the assistant of the Dutch office of the trading firm, a Dutch man named Jan Cock Blomhoff. He employed oral teaching methods without the use of a text book.

Shozaemon Motoki, the chief Dutch interpreter under Blomhoff's tutelage, edited *Angeria-kogaku-shosen* (1811), which provided lists of words, idiomatic phrases, and examples of English conversational usage. Motoki also edited a book about English vocabulary in 1814. It is assumed that the original text of the two books is Willem Sewel's *Korte Wegwyzer der Engelsche* (1724). In both books, Motoki wrote English words as they would have been pronounced by the Dutch. They were written in *Katakana*, one of the Japanese alphabets used to express words from foreign countries. This form of notation influenced many succeeding Japanese foreign language textbooks, but it did make foreign language learning more familiar to Japanese.

In June, 1848, an American named Ranald MacDonald, came ashore on Rishiri Island off Hokkaido in defiance of the Japanese policy of isolation. He was caught and sent to Nagasaki for questioning. Fourteen translators who were proficient in Dutch were chosen to learn English from him. Each day for six months in front of MacDonald's cell floor, they lined up on tatami mats to learn English from him, after which MacDonald was sent back. Dutch translator, Einosuke Moriyama (who would later act as translator for Perry and Harris) was in charge of this task. They also asked MacDonald to pronounce words in the *Angeriagorintaisei*, which was published thirty-five years previously in order to correct the pronunciations of many of the words. MacDonald was, therefore, the first native speaker and teacher of English in Japan.

During the final days of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the first genuine English grammar book was published (1840—

41). This work, the *Eibunkan*, was translated by Hironao Shibukawa in the Department of Astronomy and revised by Tadashi Fujikawa. The *Eibunkan* was a translation of a Dutch translation (1822, 1829) of an English grammar entitled *English Grammar: Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners* (1795) by Lindley Murray, who is said to be the father of the study of English grammar. Later Manjiro Nakahama became one of the first Japanese to visit the United States. A fisherman whose boat was wrecked off the island of Torishima, he was rescued by an American whaling vessel and brought to the United States. He returned in 1851 after ten years, bringing home a copy of an English grammar (*The Elementary Catechisms: English Grammar* [1850, London]), which was translated into *Igirisu-bunten* (1857). It first appeared as a block-printed work, but it was later published, in 1862, as a lead-printed work. This was the first work of English grammar that was not based on an earlier Dutch translation.

Now that Japan was open to trade, the Tokugawa Shogunate had to deal with issues of foreign trade and diplomatic matters. Thus, in 1855 it established a school for the study of Western documents. This school was set up in the Department of Astronomy. In 1856, the school was renamed *Bansho Shirabesho*, the center for studying foreign books. This was the Shogunate's first foreign language school specializing in the translation of Western scholarship. Initially, the main focus was on the study of Dutch, and English was a minor area of interest. However, this soon changed and the center built an English department in 1860. French, German, and Russian departments followed in 1862. In the Meiji era, the center was called the Kaisei Gakko (Kaisei School). It finally became Tokyo Daigaku (the University of Tokyo) in 1877.

The Shogunate also established a school for the study of English in Nagasaki in 1858, and a Center for the Study of English (*Yokohama Eigaku Syo*) in 1861 in Yokohama for students who would become interpreters. The first group of eleven international scholars were sent to Holland in 1862. However, in the same year as many as sixty or seventy of the one hundred students at the center for studying foreign books in Yokohama were specializing in English. By 1866, that number had increased to three hundred—an indication of the popularity and importance of English at the time. Unfortunately, language instruction at the Center was

unchanged and the old methods employed in the study of Dutch and Chinese writing—Kaidoku (“questions and answers” learning) and Yakudoku (read and translate)—were routinely practiced.

The majority of students of foreign languages were now taking English instead of Dutch. Yukichi Fukuzawa, for example, one of the foremost scholars of Dutch, quickly shifted his attention to English when, on a visit to Yokohama immediately after the opening of the harbor to the world (1859), he was surprised to find that English was the principal language of the merchants and not Dutch. Fukuzawa recognized immediately that English would be an indispensable language for Japanese who wished to understand Western cultures. He immediately began to take up the study of English instead of Dutch. In 1868 his school became Keio Gijyuku, Keio University, which led to a golden age of the study of English in Japan.

Dictionaries also played an important part in the study of English. Some argue that the first English-Japanese dictionary was the above-mentioned *Angeriagorintaisei*. However, the first dictionary is probably *Eiwa Taiyaku Shuchin Jisho*, published in 1862 and edited by Tatsunosuke Hori. Hori was the main translator for Perry and a scholar at Kaiseijyo, which was to become part of the University of Tokyo. His dictionary was based on H. Picard's *A New Pocket Dictionary of the English and Dutch Language* (1843, 1857). This is a nine hundred and fifty-three-page book made on Western paper with a cover of Moroccan leather. It was Japan's first Western-style, covered book. The demand for the book was high, and it was reprinted in 1866.

During the Meiji era, this pocket dictionary continued in print, although the title was changed and the contents were revised and enlarged. Other versions were created and issued until the twentieth year of the Meiji period (1887). Japan's first Japanese-English dictionary, *Waei Gorin Shusei* (1867) was written by an American missionary and doctor, James Curtis Hepburn, who went by the name of “Hebon.” Ginko Kishida, a pioneer journalist, helped Hebon edit the book. Hebon's contribution was to create a Japanese orthography of the English alphabet. Hepburn developed a Romanized system by transcribing the sounds of Japanese words into the Latin alphabet. This approach has, until recently, been quite influential.

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, a number of important adaptations were made to the approach

to the teaching of English during the last days of the Tokugawa regime, and these changes had a powerful impact on English education and studies in the Meiji era.

English Learning from the Meiji era up to the End of the World War II (1868–1945)

The use of such methods as Kaidoku (question and answer learning community) and Yakudoku (read and translate) in learning Dutch provided an antecedent model of foreign language instruction that could be quickly and effectively turned to the teaching of English. Thus, when Japanese teachers taught English to Japanese students little attention was paid to pronunciation and, instead, focus was placed on the reading of English characters and on reading comprehension. This was called “irregular” English. In contrast, American teachers and missionaries put more focus on pronunciation and on practice in speech. This was called “regular” English. As a result, two distinct methods of teaching English evolved. Public and missionary schools followed the regular method, and private and cram schools followed the irregular method. In each case, methods were connected to the purpose of learning English, whether it was to teach a form of textual translation or to communicate with English speakers.

In the Meiji era, the Japanese government made a conscious effort to learn from Western cultures and enthusiastically employed foreigners and sent Japanese students overseas. There was a widespread interest in learning from people from other countries. English learning became popular and the peak of this trend occurred around 1871–72. Western languages and, in particular, “regular English” education were regarded as very important. A new generation, referred to as the “Generation of Masters of English,” appeared. Kanzo Uchimura, Tenshin Okakura, and Inazo Nitobe, the author of *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (1900), were three of the better-known representatives of this movement. At the same time, it was felt that this enthusiasm towards Western cultures made people neglect their own language and traditional values. People grew alarmed at the disparagement of Japanese language by young Japanese. For example, one foreign diplomat who resided in the United States in 1972 claimed that the Japanese language was “weak and incomplete (and) makes it impossible to realize civilization and enlightenment. Thus, English language should be our national language.” This remark illustrates the

extreme point in a range of sentiments among the Japanese of the time that made light of their language and culture. But another more pragmatic approach was also influential. Yukichi Fukuzawa, the founder of Keio University, considered the English language as the principle international language, referring to it as “the common language for trade.” He regarded English as an important tool to help Japan catch up with Western developed countries.

In 1889, the Japanese Imperial or Meiji Constitution was enacted, and in the following year, the Imperial Diet was instituted with the aim of reforming Japan and making it a modern state on a par with other developed nations. Two victories in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 and the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–05 raised the passion of nationalistic and linguistic pride, which resulted in a lessening of the popularity of English. At this time, there was a semi-English Master Generation who learned English from Japanese teachers in Japanese but mastered reading and written English, in contrast to the English Master Generation who learned English from foreign native teachers.

Soseki Natsume and Ogai Mori, who belonged to the semi-English Master Generation, argued that “learning by ‘regular English’ method is like (Japan being) an India, under British dependency, and it is one type of shame.” Admiration for and copying of Western cultures was at an end. In this period, a great many of those employed as foreign professors left, and the teaching language became Japanese and “irregular” instead of English and “regular.” Such changes have had a considerable impact on the future of English education and learning in Japan.

In 1912, as Japan entered the Taisho era, a new trend, called Taisho Democracy, called for democratic reforms of the Japanese political system, and again this brought about an increase in the number of Japanese students who wished to study in Western countries. Nevertheless, doubts were raised about whether English should be mandated or not. Publications such as *Kyoiku Jiron* (Contemporary Opinions in Education) published every ten days by Kaihatsu Sha in 1916–17, debated the pros and cons of foreign language learning.

Ikuzo Ooka, the former Ministry of Education and ex-Speaker of the House of Representatives, insisted that “English as a compulsory subject is an education for a dependency. To educate people to have a sense of independence, it should be removed (as a compulsory subject).”

Kazutami Ukita, a professor at Waseda University agreed that foreign languages should not be a mandatory part of the curriculum. On the other hand, Tomoyoshi Murai, a professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, argued that “the purpose of foreign language education is for Japanese overseas expansion and advancement worldwide. English education teaches people the spirit of the Japanese in English.”

The question of whether English should or should not be a compulsory subject aroused immense controversy. The two positions that emerged can be summarized as language nationalism, on the one hand, and English learning as a tool, on the other. Since the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was terminated in 1921 and anti-Japanese immigration laws were enacted in the US in June 1924, proposals to abolish English language study became popular among the Japanese people. Language nationalism significantly intensified. Newspapers and magazines rallied to the cause of abolishing English language and strengthening Japanese as a national language. In the early years of Showa era (1926–1989), Tsukuru Fujimura, a professor at Tokyo Imperial University (today’s University of Tokyo), argued that English learning at middle schools should be abolished completely as such study would hinder children in developing a sense of pride in Japanese. In rebuttal, Waseda University professor, Riichiro Hoashi, and former Tokyo College of Education professor, Yoshizaburo Okakura, argued that English learning had practical and educational benefits. However, as time went by, English began to be regarded in the popular mind as an enemy language, particularly as hostilities increased during the China-Japan War and ultimately with the Pacific War. As a consequence, English disappeared from streets and signs, and foreign adapted Katakana words were switched into odd Japanese equivalents. English was banned at secondary girls’ school and business schools.

History of English Education and Learning after WWII (1945 to the Present)

In 1945, after Japan’s defeat, and with the American occupation, the practical value of English increased and English became extremely popular once more. English words became a familiar sight. They appeared on street signs, and many Japanese competed to learn the language. A Japanese-English communication booklet published by Seibundo Shinsha in 1945 became a best seller. *Come Come English*, a television

program by Nippon Hoso Kyokai, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, drew a large audience. American culture and the occupation force’s influence created a strong impression on the Japanese, who were struggling financially in the wake of the war and had a powerful effect on Japanese life. Japanese food, clothing, and housing became Americanized, and Katakana usage became prevalent.

The practice of borrowing heavily from Western cultures after the war parallels the situation at the beginning of the Meiji era. Arinori Mori had suggested in 1872 that English should be the national language of Japan. In the immediate aftermath of the WWII, Naoya Shiga, a famous writer, and Yukio Ozaki, known as the god of a constitutional government, similarly put the case for a national language other than Japanese. In 1946, Shiga modified Mori’s idea by insisting that French should become the national language. Ozaki favored the use of English. He also advocated in favor of banning Kanji and adopting the Roman alphabet in its place. A report, drawn up by the *American Education Mission* (1979), which laid down the lines of post-war-Japanese educational policies, also urged the abolition of *Kanji*, with the additional recommendation that orthography should conform more closely to spoken usage.

English education drastically changed after the war. It became a compulsory part of the curriculum. In middle schools, English was an elective course, but for all practical purposes it was required, as entrance examinations required skill in English. It is from these times that English started along the path of English as a school subject required to pass entrance examinations.

The first debate on English education after the war centered on the question of whether English should be mandated or not. Shuichi Kato, the critic and author, was an outspoken critic of English education reforms. He wrote, in an article in *Sekai*, that making English a compulsory subject did more harm than good and that methods of teaching English were also inappropriate for acquiring practical English communications skills. Yoshimi Usui, another critic of the reforms, agreed. Others argued that English should be considered one of the liberal arts. The debate intensified once again when a boom in the demand for English instruction occurred between the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 and the Osaka International Exhibition in 1970. This debate focused most directly on the way that English was being taught in the schools as a subject that was required in order to pass

entrance examinations. Wataru Hiraizumi, a member of the House of Councilors, initiated this debate with the elitist proposal that the top 5 percent of students should be selected for English. In support of his suggestion he pointed out that many middle and high school students did not show any benefits from their foreign language education. He presented his proposal in April, 1974 in a draft plan that outlined “the present state of foreign language education and the direction of the reformation.” In response, in 1975, Shoichi Watabe, a professor at Sophia (Jochi) University, made the claim that teaching English at school and for entrance examinations was beneficial and should be considered as a worthwhile intellectual exercise. This debate extended to seven issues of the magazine *Shokun!*, (*Gentleman!*), published by Bungei Shunju. The difference in aims of each author was clear—Hiraizumi wanted English to be a tool for communication; Watabe wanted it to be considered part of the liberal arts.

When Japan began to experience a higher level of economic growth and an increase in the standard of living, a new set of attitudes about language began to appear, or rather re-emerge. There was a reawakening of the sentiment expressed in the statement “Speak Japanese if you come to Japan.”

In the present *Heisei* era, which began in 1989, the view that English should become an official language has reappeared, as a result of the burst of the economic bubble and the long recession that followed.

Japanese feel that the study of English is important in maintaining Japan’s competitiveness and status in the international community, especially given the importance of modern information technology. It wants to encourage young people to become familiar with the language, and to this end sees a role for information technology in language instruction. In January 2000, the former prime minister, the late Keizo Obuchi, established an advisory body, Nijuisseiki Nihon no Koso Kondankai, the Prime Minister’s Commission on Japan’s Goals in the 21st Century. The committee proposed to make English a second official language in order to encourage Japanese to use English daily. This proposal was a controversial one. Generally speaking, the objections were that Japanese students should master Japanese first because many young Japanese cannot speak

and write proper Japanese. It was also urged that English is a totally different language that would be unsuitable as a tool for the expression of Japanese culture.

Later, in 2002, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) announced its proposal, Eigo ga Tsukaeru Nihonjin no Ikusei notameno Senryaku Koso, of a plan for communicative competence in English. In the following year, the plan was put into action. The plan aims to produce positive results in English education by providing schools with resources within the limits of the official curriculum guidelines: new goals set for people teaching English, for English to be taught in English, for improving the teaching skills of teachers, and for supporting English education at elementary schools. However, these ideas suggest that English education is only a matter of technical training. Little attention is paid to guiding principles—the purposes and goals of English education—in order to clarify how English should be taught.

Conclusion

It is no exaggeration to say that Japanese culture has been shaped by a continuous effort to learn from other cultures and to adapt these things to the requirements of the Japanese situation. English language instruction in modern Japan is considerably influenced by this long tradition of borrowing from and adapting the languages and knowledge of other cultures to Japanese needs. Thus, it was inevitable that English education and learning should be considerably influenced by earlier experience in learning from Kangaku (Chinese learning), Chinese writing, and the study of Dutch. Since the Meiji era, English education and learning has continually changed with the times.

In these days of globalization in which daily international exchanges occur with increasing frequency, it is imperative that people should have the language skills necessary to function effectively as global citizens. Therefore, it is important to give priority to promoting communication skills in English as a common language. Secondly, it is important to practice cultural pluralism, which recognizes the value of every culture and of the value of learning about other cultures and ethnic groups, in terms of their own values and not simply from the perspective of one’s own group.

Promoting Learner Autonomy: Student Perceptions of Responsibilities in a Language Classroom in East Asia

Shien Sakai, Akiko Takagi, and Man-Ping Chu

Literature Review

With the advent of communicative language teaching in East Asia, the idea of learner autonomy has become a topic of discussion and a goal among language teachers. The idea of autonomy raises important questions that need to be further explored, particularly in terms of students' taking responsibilities for learning. Autonomy has been characterized in different ways by researchers, but Littlewood (1999, p.71) summarizes two main features of learner autonomy included in the definition proposed by previous researchers:

- ♦ Students should take responsibility for their own learning. This is both because all learning can in any case only be carried out by the students themselves and also because they need to develop the ability to continue learning after the end of their formal education.
- ♦ 'Taking responsibility' involves learners taking ownership (partial or total) of many processes which have traditionally belonged to the teacher, such as deciding on learning objectives, selecting learning methods, and evaluating process.

It is often said that the concept of learner autonomy is Western, and does not fit in the Asian context. For example, Healey (1999, p. 391) mentions that "learner self-direction and autonomous learning are Western concepts that fit smoothly in the US culture in particular." However, Littlewood (1999) claims that, with proper learner training, East Asian students have the same capacity for autonomy as their counterparts in Western countries, and language teachers should create environments that encourage learner autonomy. Holden and Usuki (1999) point out that Japanese students simply do not have adequate opportunities to develop their autonomy because they usually learn English in teacher-centered classes. The results of their study revealed that students prefer teachers who play non-traditional roles rather than teachers who simply lecture or transmit their

knowledge. East Asian students are not less autonomous than other learners, yet educational and behavioral norms in Japan simply discourage their autonomy. Chan's (2001) study which investigated students' readiness, willingness, and capacity to learn autonomously at Hong Kong University also shows how educational and behavioral norms prevent learners from developing their autonomy. Based on the students' opinions, she suggests that teachers need to help students become autonomous learners by raising the students' awareness and re-adjusting the learning approaches that have discouraged them from learning autonomously.

Dam (1995) points out that a gradual move from teacher-centered teaching to a learner-centered class is required in order to enhance learner autonomy in the classroom. Cotterall (1995) adds that learners have beliefs about teachers and their roles as well as learners themselves and their roles, and these beliefs affect learners' receptiveness to ideas and activities in language classes, especially when the students have not experienced the approach before. While examining the English teaching and learning milieu in Japan and Taiwan, the researchers of this paper argue that students are unlikely to be able to realize learner autonomy if their teachers still take the whole responsibility in a teacher-centered way and/or students fail to practice their ownership of learning processes. It may not be easy for the students to adjust to their new role as autonomous learners in a learner-centered class. Thus, we first need to fully understand both students' current wishes for learner autonomy and teachers' implementing activities to correspond to their needs in order to gradually enhance their autonomy.

Gender difference was also a focus in the present study, because female students were anecdotally better performers in English language learning (Redfield *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, if some elements of learner autonomy that separate good performers and bad ones are discovered, they might suggest some pedagogical implications. However, there is little research on the connections between gender

and autonomy in East Asia, although some research on learning strategy is concerned with gender difference. Goh & Foong (1997), after analyzing Chinese students' learning strategies, stated that although female students reported using all six groups of strategies more frequently than their male counterparts, the difference was significant in the means of only two categories: compensation and affective. Kato (2005) examined Japanese students and reported that female students used all six groups of strategies more frequently than males and there was a significant gender difference on affective and social strategies. Maeda (2003), examining 1584 high school students' learning strategies, stated that the factor mean (strategy use) differed remarkably: controlling for proficiency female learners use more strategies than males do.

Our Team's Previous Study

In 2006, a study was carried out to investigate university students' perceptions of learner autonomy in English learning in the East Asian region (Sakai *et al.*, 2008). The purposes of the study were to find out whether subjects from three different language areas in East Asia could be surveyed about learner autonomy using one set of questionnaires, and to discover whether there were any common factors related to learner autonomy with regard to the subjects' perceptions of responsibility and English learning activities outside of class. One hundred and seven Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese students were asked to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire items were generated from Chu (2004) and Spratt *et al.* (2002). It contained three sections: perceptions of responsibilities toward learning, responsibilities toward learning in the past and the future, and English learning activities outside the class. After analyzing the data, the authors identified three factors: "class management, study outside the class, and past regret." We also found the existence of a factor that may inhibit students from developing learner autonomy. The results of the study proved the appropriateness and reliability of the questionnaire, although the questionnaire had some room to be revised. Based on the results, we decided to investigate in more detail students' perceptions of teachers' responsibilities toward learning in classes as well as their own responsibility as to whether they would like to get involved in future classes.

Research on the promotion of East Asian students' autonomy in language classes has been conducted by

practitioners; but further study should follow up on students' perceptions of autonomy. It would therefore be useful for practitioners to understand what kinds of perceptions East Asian students have before they implement activities to enhance learner autonomy in class, particularly as teachers' assumptions may be inconsistent with students' real perceptions. It is hoped that this study offers some advice to practitioners who are willing to promote learner autonomy in their classes in the East Asian context. Although these results supported the value of the questionnaires to some extent, we found that some revision of the instruments was necessary. In addition, we learned that we needed to explore the questions of students' perceptions of their role in learner autonomy more deeply. Thus, for the present study, the authors revised the questionnaires and conducted a survey with a larger number of students to improve the reliability of the questionnaire.

Objectives

There were four objectives in this study. The objectives of phase one were

- ❖ to discover whether the instrument of our research team can be used for a large number of students,
- ❖ to discover what students in Japan and Taiwan think about learner autonomy with regard to their responsibility in learning English,
- ❖ to discover what aspects would separate female students from male students in their attitudes toward English learning, and
- ❖ to discover how students would like to be involved in class management.

Phase One (Quantitative Research)

Revision of the Questionnaire

The policies for the revision of the questionnaire were to delete the items that had turned out to be unnecessary in the previous study. The previous instrument had ninety items but twenty-five of them were deleted. They were 1) the items with the ceiling and floor effects, 2) the items that asked students "how much responsibility should teachers take for class management?", and 3) the items that had a weak relation to any of the factors.

The items in the second group were deleted because, among the factors that were extracted by factor analysis

of the previous study, Factor I, “class management (by teachers)”, was so strong that it may have inhibited students from developing their autonomy. In other words, most of the students seemed to think it natural that teachers were in charge of class control. We cannot discover how students should be encouraged to take responsibility for class management by quantitative research. Therefore, we deleted the part that asked students how much responsibility teachers should take for class management.

There are five scales in the Phase One questionnaire: Recognition of Responsibility for Learning (RRL), Responsibility for Past Learning (RPL), Responsibility for Future Learning (RFL), Past Learning outside Classroom (PLC), and Future Learning outside Classroom (FLC). As the subjects were students who study English as a foreign language, the questionnaire items were given in their native language in order to avoid misunderstanding them.

Subjects

Sets of the modified questionnaires (Appendix 1) were given to four hundred and fifty-three male subjects and four hundred and forty-nine female subjects in January 2007. There were seven hundred and sixty-nine students from fifteen universities in Japan and one hundred and thirty-three students from one university in Taiwan. The authors used stratified random sampling with students from various university colleges (Table 1).

Results

Reliability and Relationship Among the Scales

Table 2 shows the obtained coefficients among the scales. These levels of coefficients were satisfactory. Therefore, the reliabilities of these scales were confirmed. Table 3 shows the correlation of all the scales. The scores of all the scales correlate significantly with each other. Students who feel responsible for their own learning also feel a sense of responsibility for their own past and future learning.

The Ceiling Effect and the Floor Effect

Prior to the factor analysis, the ceiling effect and the floor effect were checked. There was no item that showed the ceiling effect. On the other hand, three items had a floor effect. They were “To read English newspapers—until now,” “To practice speaking English with your

friends—until now,” and “To attend a course and seminar provided by a university until now.” These three items were not used to conduct factor analysis.

Factor Analysis

After the first factor analysis, as Figure 1 shows, sixty-two factors emerged. To reduce the number, the differential between the two succeeding numbers was focused on. A differential between the ninth factor and the tenth was .24 but the differential between the tenth and the eleventh was less than .01. Therefore, a gap was found between the ninth factor and the tenth: nine factors were identified.

After the second factor analysis with Promax Rotation, two items were found to have a weak correlation with any of the nine major factors ($>.35$). The two factors were “To keep record of your studies such as assignments, attendance and test scores—from now on” and “To prepare and review for classes—until now.” They were not used in the third factor analysis.

All the items’ factor loading are attached to Appendix 2. Table 4 shows all the names, means, SD, Chronbach’s coefficients and the number of the items of all the nine factors.

Regarding Gender Difference

In order to find out the differences of awareness between male students and female students in English learning, all the nine factors were t-tested. The results were Factor I, $t(900)=9.75$, $p<.01$; Factor II, $t(900)=4.45$, $p<.01$; Factor III, $t(900)=4.96$, $p<0.01$; Factor IV, $t(900)=5.17$, $p<0.01$; Factor V, $t(900)=2.56$, $p<0.05$; Factor VI, $t(900)=3.39$, $p<0.01$; Factor VII, $t(900)=5.64$, $p<0.01$; Factor VIII, $t(900)=4.46$, $p<0.01$; Factor IX, $t(900)=3.93$, $p<0.01$. As a result, female students’ values had a significant difference from those of male students.

Discussion

The Instrument

This instrument used a total of 902 subjects from various colleges in a number of universities in Japan and Taiwan. As a result, Table 2 shows that the reliabilities of all the scales turned out to be satisfactory. Table 3 shows that all the scales were significantly related to each other. Therefore, this instrument can be used as a tool to measure college students’ learner autonomy in Japan and Taiwan.

TABLE 1 Faculties the Subjects Belong to n(%)

Faculty	Male	Female	Total
Law	68(70.8)	28(29.2)	96(100)
Literature and Foreign Language	97(86.9)	224(69.8)	321(100)
Science and Information	53(86.9)	8(13.1)	61(100)
Commerce and Management	182(76.8)	55(23.2)	237(100)
Education	35(43.8)	45(56.3)	80(100)
Humanities and Liberal Arts	18(16.8)	89(83.2)	107(100)
Total	453(50.2)	449(49.8)	902(100)

TABLE 2 Means, SD, Chronbach's coefficient Alpha, and the Number of the Items that Composed of the Factors.

	Mean	SD	α	Scores (obtained by averaging)
RRL	30.50	6.60	.79	total of items #1 to #10.
RPL	31.48	10.14	.91	total of items with odd numbers among the items #11 to #35
RFL	39.25	10.18	.90	total of items with even numbers among the items #12 to #36
PLC	32.14	8.41	.84	total of items #37 to #49
FLC	46.87	14.79	.93	total of items #50 to #65

TABLE 3 Mean, SD (Standard Deviation), Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, and Scores of Each Scale

	RRL	RPL	RFL	PLC	FLC
RRL	—	.508**	.594**	.274**	.264**
RPL		—	.651**	.349**	.223**
RFL			—	.309**	.346**
PLC				—	.603**
FLC					—

**p<.01

TABLE 4 Correlations Between Five Scales

Factor	Label	Mean	SD	α	#
I	Future English learning	46.87	14.79	.94	16
II	Past class management	26.33	8.86	.90	11
III	Future class management	19.10	6.24	.88	7
IV	Past English learning	15.70	4.81	.73	6
V	Awareness of class management	13.51	4.19	.83	5
VI	Awareness of one's English learning	20.31	4.45	.77	6
VII	Past English learning in school	8.15	2.78	.80	3
VIII	Awareness of class evaluation	10.06	2.93	.76	3
IX	Awareness of study evaluation	46.87	14.79	.75	4

Concerning the Factor Analysis

Although there were nine factors, they were categorized into three distinct themes: “English learning,” “Class management,” and “Evaluation.” The strongest factor, “Future English learning,” belonged to the “English Learning” category, indicating that the respondents felt willing to study English more from now on.

The second category was class management. There were three factors in this category: Factors II, III, and IV. However, comparisons between Factor II (past) and III (future) can help to explain the respondents’ ideas about class management. As Factor II was much stronger than Factor III, students’ feelings of past regret was much stronger than their future desire to be involved in class management. Our interpretation of this result was that students did feel regretful at not being involved in class management, but they felt less willing to do so in the future. This interpretation was also supported by the fact that of the number of the items that composed both factors, Factor II was composed of four items more than Factor III. The reasons why students’ past regret was stronger than their future will was not so complicated. Examining the items that were composed of both factors, most of the strong items turned out to involve complaints about teachers’ teaching styles. They may have wanted to complain about them. However, in order to have responsibility for one’s study in the future, one should have a strong desire to manage his or her learning. That’s why students felt reluctant to be involved in class management. This result illustrated that the subjects are not ready to take responsibility for their learning. According to Little (1995), the basis of learner autonomy is to accept responsibility for one’s own learning. Therefore, they were not autonomous learners yet but they had a will to be so. Therefore, teachers’ help would be necessary.

The third category was evaluation, which was composed of two factors: evaluation of the course and evaluation of the students’ own study in the course. Students’ evaluation of the course they had taken was conducted in many universities but not all. That meant that some colleges gave the students opportunities to evaluate their course but others did not. It is natural that students wanted to have the right to assess the course. However, concerning their evaluation of their own study in these courses, students indicated that they were aware of the importance of assessing their study, but they also felt that evaluation of students’ work was the teachers’ job. Therefore, this factor came ninth.

Gender Differences

As we stated above, we did a t-test on gender difference. The results showed that female students were significantly more autonomous learners in every point. However, this present study has some limitation. The questionnaire was conducted in classes of teachers who offered their cooperation with this study group. Therefore, Table 1 shows that female students who major in foreign language and/or English literature outnumbered the male students. In reality, departments of English language and English literature usually have had more female students than others. This fact itself proves that female students are more willing to study English language. In our further study, we should try to investigate the differences between both genders’ attitudes toward English learning under the condition of a well-balanced ratio of both genders.

Phase Two (Qualitative Research)

Towards Phase Two

A quantitative study shows the status quo of the respondents; it does not tell why they think what they do. In phase one, the factor analysis showed that the analyses on “English learning” and “evaluation” did not require a complicated interpretation. On the other hand, the analysis of “class management” needed to be explored more thoroughly. Therefore, in order to examine the interpretation and discover what efforts teachers should make to have students get involved more deeply in class management, we needed to conduct a qualitative research inquiry that would ask respondents why they had chosen class management in their responses.

Subjects

Among the respondents of phase one, seventy-three (forty-four Japanese and twenty-nine Taiwanese) university students also joined phase two. All of them studied English as a foreign language. Twenty-eight were males and forty-five were females. Forty-four were freshmen, twenty-five were sophomores, and four were junior students.

Instruments

The questionnaire was developed (Appendix 3) based on the questionnaires used by Chu (2004), Sakai, *et al.* (2008), and Spratt, *et al.* (2002). The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In Section One, there were twenty-six question items adopted from Section One of the previous research.

According to the same reason described in the instrument of phase one, items concerning teachers' responsibilities for class management were deleted. The objective of phase two, which was also different from phase one, was to discover students' perceptions of class management. Thus, all eleven items concerning class management were retained. The students were asked their perception of their responsibilities towards learning using a Likert-type five-level scale. They were also asked to write down the reasons in an open-ended format if they chose level four (Mostly) or level five (Totally). In Section Two, the students were asked to choose the five items they would like to get involved in most in English classes, if they were given opportunities. They were given a total of thirteen items to choose from, which were the same question items as the ones in Section Two of phase one. They were also asked to write down, in an open-ended format, the reasons why they had chosen them. The questionnaire was distributed to the students during class by two of the authors. It took about fifteen to twenty minutes to answer the questions.

Methods

As for the items the students chose in Section Two, the numbers of each item were counted and descriptive statistics

were used to see which items the students would like to take responsibility for most in the English classes. The written comments on the reasons were content-analyzed for themes (Mayring, 2000), and each theme was labeled. Two authors checked if the theme was appropriate for triangulation. Although students were asked to write down the reasons for their choices in Section 1, few students wrote the reasons, so this section was excluded from the analysis.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 shows the items the students would like to get involved in most in class. Five themes were mentioned by more than 30 percent of the respondents.

Reasons Why the Students Chose Items 1, 5, 3, 8, and 9

Of the three hundred and eleven items that the students chose in total, two hundred and ninety-three comments included written explanations of why they had chosen the items. The themes that resulted from a content-analysis are shown here. We analyzed most of the themes in items in which more than 30 percent of the students indicated that they would like to get involved (Items 1, 5, 3, 8, and 9).

Table 5 Items the Students Would Like to Get Involved in Most in English Classes (N=79)

Question Items	n (%)
1) To decide your goal of study in one semester	38(48.1)
5) To decide the textbook and materials you use in class	33(41.8)
3) To check how much progress you make	31(39.2)
8) To decide the type of classroom activities, such as individual, pair and group work	29(36.7)
9) To decide the amount, type and frequency of homework	28(35.4)
6) To decide topics and activities you learn in class	23(29.1)
13) To evaluate the course	21(26.6)
4) To keep record of your studies such as assignments, attendance and test scores	15(19.0)
2) To decide your class's goal of study in one semester	15(19.0)
7) To decide the pace of the lesson in one lesson	16(20.3)
12) To assess your study	16(20.3)
10) To decide classroom management, such as seating and class rules	16(20.3)
11) To decide ways of assessment, such as attendance, essay and self-evaluation	14(17.7)

**Reasons why the students chose Item 1
(To decide your goal of study in one semester)**

Item 1 produced thirty-eight written comments, and six themes emerged (Table 6). The first theme is “having a clear focus.” Students feel that they can have a clearer focus once they set their own goal. The second theme is “considering individual difference.” The third theme is “being motivated.” The fourth theme is “participating in class actively.” The fifth theme is “making an effort.” The sixth theme is “planning.” One student said, “I think if I can decide my goal for this semester, I could have enough time and a better plan for the whole semester.”

**Reasons why students chose Item 5 (To decide
the textbook and materials you use in class)**

Item 5 produced thirty-three written comments, and two themes emerged (Table 7). The first theme, mentioned by more than 45 percent of the students, is “considering individual difference.” Students wish to choose a textbook suitable for them in level, content, and purpose of their learning English. The second theme is “being motivated.” Other than those two themes, various reasons were mentioned.

**Reasons why students chose Item 3 (To check
how much progress you make)**

Item 3 generated twenty-nine written comments, and three themes emerged (Table 8). The first theme is “reflecting on learning.” Checking progress gives the students an opportunity to reflect on their learning. The second theme is “making a future plan.” Checking progress enabled the students to adjust their learning and help them to make a future study plan. The third theme is “being motivated.”

**Reasons why students chose Item 8 (To decide
the type of classroom activities, such as
individual, pair and group work)**

Item 8 generated twenty-nine written comments, and three themes emerged (Table 9). The first theme is “individual preference.” Some students mention their own preference for specific types of activities, and indicated a preference for specific types of class activities. The second theme is “students’ ability and the right to choose types of activities.” Students felt that they have the ability or right to choose types of activities by themselves. The third theme is “knowing better than a teacher.” Students think that they know better than a teacher which activities are suitable.

**Reasons why students chose Item 9 (To decide
the amount, type, and frequency of homework)**

Item 9 generated twenty-eight written comments, and three themes emerged (Table 10). The first theme is “deciding suitable amount.” Students would like to decide the amount of homework suitable for them. The second theme is “deciding suitable contents.” Students think that if they can decide about the homework, they can choose which kind of homework they prefer. The third theme is “making a better schedule.” Students think that they can make a better homework schedule if they choose by themselves.

Discussion

Setting Goals and Reflecting on Learning

The results of phase two show that students would like to get involved in various aspects of decision-making in class. All the items were chosen by more than 20 percent of the students. On the six items that over 30 percent of the

TABLE 6 Reasons Why the Students Chose Item 1 (N=38)

Theme	Number of the comments
1. Having a clear focus	8
2. Considering individual difference	6
3. Being motivated	5
4. Participating in class actively	4
5. Making an effort	4
6. Planning	3
7. Others	8

TABLE 7 Reasons Why the Students Chose Item 5 (N=33)

Theme	Number of the comments
1. Considering individual difference	15
2. Being motivated	5
3. Others	13

TABLE 8 Reasons Why the Students Chose Item 3 (N=29)

Theme	Number of the comments
1. Reflecting on learning	10
2. Making a future plan	6
3. Being motivated	3
4. Others	10

TABLE 9 Reasons Why the Students Chose Item 8 (N=29)

Theme	Number of the comments
1. Individual preference	9
2. Students' ability and right to choose types	4
3. Knowing better than a teacher	2
4. Others	14

TABLE 10 Reasons Why the Students Chose Item 9 (N=28)

Theme	Number of the comments
1. Deciding suitable amount	10
2. Deciding suitable contents	6
3. Making a better schedule	6
4. Others	6

students chose, the first ranked item was “(1) To decide your goal of study in one semester” (Table 5). This item is related to the third ranked item “(3) To check how much progress you make” (Table 5). This implies that the subjects had not been given enough opportunities in the past to set their own goals and reflect on their learning.

Chan (2001) points out that autonomous learners are expected to develop their ability to take charge of every stage of their own learning. Two of the six stages that she discusses, “Setting learning goals” and “reflecting on learning,”

correspond to Items 1 and 3. Cotterall (2000) also mentions that learners should be encouraged to set personal goals, monitor and reflect on their performance, and modify their learning in class because reflection is a crucial element in the courses designated to promote learner autonomy. Thus, teachers should provide students with such opportunities. For instance, Thanasoulas (2000) suggests that activities such as diaries and evaluation sheets can be used for this purpose. Diaries offer students the opportunity to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning, and evaluation sheets allow students

to gauge whether or not their expectations of a course at the beginning are achieved at the end.

Making Choices

The other three items (Items 5, 8, and 9 in Table 5) that more than 30 percent of the students had chosen were all related to making choices. In other words, students would like to get involved in decision-making in class. Providing learners with choice is essential for getting the students actively involved in their own learning (Lee, 1998). Littlewood (1999) points out that students in East Asia are not provided with enough opportunities to make their own choices and develop individual, proactive autonomous behavior because educational tradition in East Asia has promoted a high degree of teacher authority and control. In fact, according to a study of forty-one English teachers' views on autonomous learning in Hong Kong (Chan, 2003), no teachers reported that they ever asked their students to choose their materials, activities, and learning objectivities. According to her study, teachers' perceptions are that students view decision-making as the teachers' job. However, we should keep in mind that students' perceptions are not consistent with those of teachers, as the results of our study show. Thus, we conclude that teachers should give students more choice in such decisions as the selection of textbooks and materials; types of classroom activities; the amount, type, and frequency of homework; and topics and activities in class.

Being Motivated

When we look at the reasons why the students chose the items, we notice that "being motivated" is a theme that frequently arose in several items (Item 1 in Table 6, Item 3 in Table 8, Item 5 in Table 7, Item 2, Item 6, and Item 11). Dickinson (1995, p. 165), reviewing the literature on motivation, and shows that "learners' active and independent involvement in their own learning (autonomy) increases motivation to learn and consequently increase learning effectiveness." Interestingly, students in our study do seem to be aware that involvement in some aspects of learning in class increases their motivation to learn a language.

Individual Differences

Another theme that arose with some frequency is related to individual differences. "Considering individual

differences" in Item 1 (Table 6), "choosing a textbook suitable for the individual" in Item 5 (Table 7), and "personal preference" in Item 8 (Table 9) indicate that students hope that individual differences or preferences are taken into consideration in class. This implies that individual students would like to take responsibility of their own learning. In other words, they are ready and willing to act more autonomously. Asian students usually learn English in a teacher-centered class where students do not have enough opportunity to develop autonomy. Since individual differences tend to be less emphasized in a teacher-centered class, teachers should take them into consideration by providing opportunities for decision-making in a learner-centered class.

Pedagogical Implications

In the discussion section of phase one of the study, we stated that "the students felt reluctant to be involved in class management." In order to explore the deeper reasons this reluctance, we carried out the second study, phase two, as a follow-up study. The results of this study revealed that students wanted to be involved in class management tasks such as "setting goals and evaluating the lesson," and "making choices." However, the study also revealed that they had not been taught how to do them sufficiently well. Class management activities need experience in order to do them well. That is probably why the subjects lacked confidence in this area.

In *Language learning strategy: What every teacher should know* (1990, p. 20), Oxford identifies these actions as meta-cognitive strategies. She adds, "Though meta-cognitive strategies are extremely important, research shows that learners use these strategies sporadically and without much sense of their importance" (pp.137–138). The results of our research imply that the main reason why students feel reluctant to manage class is that they are not trained properly in using these strategies with skill. In addition, our previous study (Sakai *et al.*, 2008) showed that the students in East Asia tended to express a strong belief that their teachers should have the responsibility of class management. This also explains why subjects felt reluctance to take a role in classroom management.

For the purpose of facilitating students' awareness of the importance of meta-cognitive strategies, and in order to develop these abilities, teachers should implement

instructional activities, such as scaffolding activities, that encourage their development (Bruner, 1980). Scaffolding enables adults to maximize the growth of the child's intra-psychological functioning (Clay and Cazden, 1990). With regard to the relationship between reflection and autonomy, Mizuki (2003, p. 151) states that "by reflecting on presentations, the students are able to review their performance and be more critical of them. I believe this heightens their awareness of being independent learners and can lead to a better management and responsibility for their learning." Oxford (1990, p. 138) concludes: "Obviously, learners need to learn much more about the essential meta-cognitive strategies."

One way to use meta-cognitive strategies such as scaffolding to develop autonomy is as follows: During the first lesson of the semester, teachers discuss the goals of the class with their students and show them some textbooks that might be use in the classroom. The teacher then asks the students to select one and state their reasons. After a few lessons, once students know the pace of their teachers, let them

ponder whether it is the right pace for them to improve their learning. After half of the semester, teachers might then have them check whether the textbook has helped them develop their English proficiency. At the end of the semester, have the students evaluate the textbook—has it improved their ability to reflect on their studies? At other times, teachers should encourage students to reflect on activities. Similar methods can be applied to decision making regarding the amount of homework. Cotterall (1999) has written, in support of such practical recommendations, that "Teachers need to allocate class time and attention to raising awareness of monitoring and evaluating strategies, as well as to provide learners with opportunities to practice using these meta-cognitive strategies."

Our next research project seeks to ask whether students understand the importance of meta-cognitive strategies in learning. In addition, we want to ask how students manage their classroom learning and how they use meta-cognition to improve autonomous learning.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Phase One

(In the first of the questionnaire, personal information was asked.)

II Learner Autonomy

Section 1—Perception of responsibilities toward learning

When you are taking classes, how much responsibility should you take concerning the following items?

- | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Not at all | Hardly | To some extent | Mostly | Totally |
| 1) To decide your goal of study in one semester | | | | |
| 2) To check how much progress you make | | | | |
| 3) To decide the textbook and materials you use in class | | | | |
| 4) To decide topics and activities you learn in class | | | | |
| 5) To decide the pace of the lesson in one lesson | | | | |
| 6) To decide the type of classroom activities, such as individual, pair and group work | | | | |
| 7) To decide the amount, type and frequency of homework | | | | |
| 8) To decide ways of assessment, such as attendance, essay and self-evaluation | | | | |
| 9) To assess your study | | | | |
| 10) To evaluate the course | | | | |

Section 2—Responsibilities toward learning in the past and the future

(Until now) To what extent, have you got involved in the following items in the English classes you have taken since you entered the university?

(From now on) To what extent, would you like to get involved if you are given opportunities in the future? (to items with odd number, students were asked “until now”, to items with even number, “from now on”)

- 11), 12) To decide your goal of study in one semester.
- 13), 14) To decide your class’s goal of study in one semester.
- 15), 16) To check how much progress you make.
- 17), 18) To keep record of your studies such as assignments, attendance and test scores.
- 19), 20) To decide the textbook and materials you use in class.
- 21), 22) To decide topics and activities you learn in class.
- 23), 24) To decide the pace of the lesson in one lesson.
- 25), 26) To decide the type of classroom activities, such as individual, pair and group work.
- 27), 28) To decide the amount, type and frequency of homework.
- 29), 30) To decide classroom management, such as seating and class rules.
- 31), 32) To decide ways of assessment, such as attendance, essay and self-evaluation.
- 33), 34) To assess your study.
- 35), 36) To evaluate the course.

Section 3—English learning activities outside the class

Questions 37–49

How often have you done the following English learning activities voluntarily since you entered the university?

Questions 50–65

How often would you like to do this from now on?

1 Never	2 Seldom	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Usually
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- 37) To read English newspaper
 - 38) To read web pages in English
 - 39) To watch and listen to English learning TV and radio programs
 - 40) To watch and listen to TV and radio programs in English
 - 41) To listen to English songs
 - 42) To watch English movies without subtitles in your language
 - 43) To talk to foreigners in English
 - 44) To practice speaking English with your friends
 - 45) To learn English grammar
 - 46) To learn English vocabulary words
 - 47) To prepare for proficiency tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and STEP
 - 48) To prepare and review for classes
 - 49) To attend a course and seminar provided by a university
 - 50) To read English newspapers
-

- 51) To read magazines and books in English
- 52) To write an e-mail in English
- 53) To keep a diary in English
- 54) To watch and listen to English learning TV and radio programs
- 55) To watch and listen to TV and radio programs in English
- 56) To watch English movies without subtitles in your language
- 57) To talk to foreigners in English
- 58) To practice speaking English with your friends
- 59) To practice English in an English conversation school
- 60) To learn English grammar
- 61) To learn English vocabulary words
- 62) To prepare for proficiency tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and STEP
- 63) To learn in a self-study center at a university
- 64) To attend a course and seminar provided by a university
- 65) To go to see your teacher in order to discuss your work

Appendix 2: Factor Loadings
Table 11
Items that Have Strong Correlation with

FACTOR I	FL*
To learn in a self-study center at a university.	.80
To attend a course and seminar provided by a university.	.79
To go to see your teacher in order to discuss your work.	.78
To practice English in an English conversation school.	.77
To learn English vocabulary words—from now on.	.74
To practice speaking English with your friends.	.71
To talk to foreigners in English.	.69
To learn English grammar.	.68
To keep a diary in English.	.66
To prepare for proficiency tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and STEP.	.64
To write an e-mail in English.	.61
To watch and listen to English learning TV and radio programs.	.60
To read magazines and books in English.	.60
To watch and listen to TV and radio programs in English.	.56
To watch English movies without subtitles in your language.	.54
To read English newspapers.	.50

(All the items are asked "from now on") *FL means factor loading

FACTOR II	FL
To decide the textbook and materials you use in class.	.83
To decide the pace of the lesson in one lesson.	.79
To decide topics and activities you learn in class.	.78
To decide the amount, type and frequency of homework.	.73
To decide ways of assessment, such as attendance, essay and self-evaluation.	.70
To decide classroom management, such as seating and class rules.	.68
To decide the type of classroom activities, such as individual, pair and group work.	.68
To assess your study.	.62
To decide your class's goal of study in one semester.	.56
To keep record of your studies such as assignments, attendance and test scores.	.55
To check how much progress you make.	.48

(All the items are asked "until now")

FACTOR III	FL
To decide topics and activities you learn in class.	.80
To decide the pace of the lesson in one lesson.	.76
To decide the textbook and materials you use in class.	.65
To decide the type of classroom activities, such as individual, pair and group work.	.65
To decide the amount, type and frequency of homework.	.59
To decide classroom management, such as seating and class rules.	.49
To decide your class's goal of study in one semester.	.45

(All the items are asked "from now on")

FACTOR IV	FL
To watch and listen to TV and radio programs in English.	.68
To watch and listen to English learning TV and radio programs.	.61
To watch English movies without subtitles in your language.	.61
To read web pages in English.	.56
To talk to foreigners in English.	.49
To listen to English songs.	.44

(All the items are asked "until now")

FACTOR V	FL
To decide topics and activities you learn in class	.71
To decide the pace of the lesson in one lesson	.62
To decide the textbook and materials you use in class	.61
To decide the amount, type and frequency of homework	.58
To decide the type of classroom activities, such as individual, pair and group work	.52

FACTOR VI	FL
To decide your goal of study in one semester	.67
To decide your goal of study in one semester—from now on	.60
To check how much progress you make	.57
To check how much progress you make—from now on	.52
To decide your goal of study in one semester—until now	.49
To check how much progress you make—until now	.41

FACTOR VII	FL
To learn English grammar—until now	.81
To learn English vocabulary words—until now	.76
To prepare for proficiency tests such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and STEP—until now	.54

FACTOR VIII	FL
To evaluate the course—until now	.76
To evaluate the course—from now on	.66
To evaluate the course	.52

FACTOR IX	FL
To decide ways of assessment, such as attendance, essay and self	.51
To decide ways of assessment, such as attendance, essay and self—from now on	.50
To assess your study	.46
To assess your study—from now on	.46

Appendix 3: Questionnaire for Phase Two

(In the first of the questionnaire, personal information was asked.)

II Learner Autonomy

**Section 1—Perception of responsibilities toward learning
(please choose one of the five choices): When you are taking classes,
how much responsibility should your teacher take?**

- | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Not at all | Hardly | To some extent | Mostly | Totally |
| 1) To decide your class’s goal of study in one semester | | | | |
| 2) To keep record of your studies such as assignments, attendance and test scores | | | | |
| 3) To decide the textbook and materials you use in class | | | | |
| 4) To decide topics and activities you learn in class | | | | |
| 5) To decide the pace of the lesson in one lesson | | | | |
| 6) To decide the type of classroom activities, such as individual, pair and group work | | | | |
| 7) To decide the amount, type and frequency of homework | | | | |
| 8) To decide classroom management, such as seating and class rules | | | | |
| 9) To decide ways of assessment, such as attendance, essay and self-evaluation | | | | |
| 10) To assess your study | | | | |
| 11) To evaluate the course | | | | |

If you choose 4 or 5 in the above questions, please write the reasons why you think so:

**Section 2—Responsibilities toward learning in the future:
To what extent would you like to get involved in the following items in the English classes
if you are given opportunities in the future? Choose the five items which you would like
to get involved in most and write down the reasons why you chose them.**

(There are thirteen question items in this questionnaire sheet. All the items are the same as ones in the section 2 of Phase One.)

The five items you would like to get involved in most and reasons why you chose them

Items	Reasons

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Teacher Certification Renewal System: An Analysis Based on a Nation-wide Survey of Japanese Teachers of English

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Background

In October 2007, three education bills, including the Revised Teacher's License Law were approved by the Central Education Council in February and submitted to the Diet. The purpose of the Revised Teacher's License Law was "to ensure teachers systematically acquire up-to-date knowledge and skills to maintain the professional competencies necessary for today's educators, teach with confidence and pride, and gain respect and trust from the public." Until this revision in the Teacher's License Law, teachers in Japan were granted a permanent license after completing their induction training. However, due to this revision, teachers' licenses are now issued for ten years. In addition, in order to renew the license, teachers are required to take license renewal courses totaling over thirty hours of instruction over a two year period prior to the date of license expiry¹.

The three education bills leave a number of issues unresolved once they are put into effect. It is possible to attribute the reasons to the following two points. First, not enough time has been devoted in the planning of these bills to considering their implications. As the Mainichi Newspaper (June 20, 2007) reports the three education bills "were approved in a speed-before-quality situation although Prime Minister Abe had the initiative." Secondly, these bills only set frameworks and do not present clear, concrete guidelines. Beginning in 2008, accredited universities started to provide pilot training programs. However, the government still has not presented a concrete standard necessary for the teacher license renewal process, such as standards on "qualities and capabilities of teachers," concrete contents of a license renewal course and the standards of completion and approval, and so on. The Teacher Certification Renewal System (TCRS) was scheduled to take effect in April 2009.

In response to this policy development, we conducted a survey of secondary school teachers of English to determine their attitudes and opinions toward the new system. The basic stance of the research project is that it is imperative to

make the TCRS implementation process inclusive. If the renewal system was not perceived by the classroom educators as beneficial to them, it would not be successful in the long run. Therefore, the research took a bottom-up perspective to ensure that the views of teachers were adequately represented. By reflecting on the opinions of in-service teachers, we hoped to make some useful suggestions on the necessary actions to be taken prior to the implementation of the TCRS and to make recommendations for the restructuring of the teacher education system in Japan.

Finally, in order to make concrete and constructive recommendations, we believed that the survey research should be conducted in our specialist field of English education. The results of meaningful research in one field can, we feel, be generalized to all teachers. From this starting point, we decided to conduct a nation-wide project to survey English teachers.

Objectives

The objective of this research was to examine the opinions of English teachers in secondary schools regarding the TCRS and teacher education to

- (1) identify the preconditions for the successful implementation of the TCRS, and
- (2) establish what concepts and designs of the license renewal training curricula would be accepted. As a result, we wish to
- (3) suggest the necessary actions prior to the implementation of the TCRS and make recommendations for the restructuring of the teacher education system in Japan.

Procedure

Questionnaire Design

Questionnaire items were designed based on the results of two surveys. One was the survey taken in the previous year on the related revised education law. The other was a pilot survey of the present study conducted for the participants

in the Kanto Koshin-etsu English Education Conference in August, 2007.

The questionnaire included eight items concerning improvement of the conditions of the TCRS, and sixteen items concerning plans for the TCRS. Respondents had a choice of five options for each item. Option “Other” permitted respondents to contribute additional comments, if desired. For the complete version of the questionnaire, see the appendix.

Timeframe of the Project

This survey was conducted from October to December, 2007. Of 9,458 sets of the questionnaire that were sent to secondary schools around Japan, 2,897 (30.6 percent) were returned.

Respondents’ Personal Data

Levels of schools

With respect to the levels of schools studied, 50.3 percent of the respondents were from junior high schools, 34.4 percent from senior high schools, and 11.1 percent from 7–12 high schools. One of the reasons why more than half the respondents were from junior high schools seems to be that we sent more questionnaires to teachers in junior high schools.

School types

Regarding the type of schools, 80.6 percent of the respondents were from public schools, 18.3 percent from private schools, and 0.6 percent from national schools. One of the reasons why more than 80 percent of the responses were from public schools could be that more questionnaires were sent to public schools than to private schools.

Teaching experience

As for the periods of teaching experience, the distribution is balanced. Six hundred and thirty-one respondents (21.8 percent) were teachers whose teaching experience is less than five years. This is the largest group. Groups ranging from five to ten years and from twenty to twenty-five years of experience accounted for about 15 percent each. After that, the number of respondents with more than 25 years experience decreased.

Age of Respondents

In terms of age of the respondents, the largest number, nine hundred and seventy-seven (33.7 percent), were in their forties. The next largest number, nine hundred and two (31.1 percent), were in their thirties.

The Follow-up Survey Design

The number of responses reached two thousand on November 14, 2007, at which point the data was analyzed. Then on December 17, 2007, we sent one hundred and thirty-eight sets of the new questionnaires to the teachers who had written their names and addresses on the return envelopes.

First, we asked the new respondents to make comments on items in which ceiling effects were observed. These three items were “To clarify the standards for English teachers’ abilities,” “To evaluate teachers synthetically by several factors such as English proficiency, holistic educational competence, training records, and teaching records,” and “To let the teachers take course subjects freely.”-

A second questionnaire was designed to ask the reasons for one item in which floor effects were observed. This item was “Attending the teachers’ license renewal course should be for about one year.” As a result of this follow-up survey, forty-eight teachers submitted their comments. In addition, ten secondary school English teachers from two prefectures were invited to make comments on the results of the first phase. A total of fifty-eight items were carefully analyzed.

Results

Preconditions for the implementation of the Teacher Certification Renewal System

Of the eight items prepared for this category, five were supported by more than 65 percent of the respondents, who judged them as “somewhat important” and “important.” These five items could be considered as the items that were considered to be most important by a majority of the in-service teachers as preconditions of the implementation of the TCRS (See Table 1).

Concerning the free comments, two hundred and sixty-one teachers (9 percent) contributed personal comments. Although the rate of response was low, the comments were revealing in offering an understanding of teachers’ concerns related to the TCRS. The comments can be broadly divided into three areas: (1) concerns about the needs for appropriate standards for Teacher performance assessment including assessor’s standards, (2) needs for the adjustment to workload, and (3) needs for appropriate standards including teachers’ pedagogical competence, English proficiency, and graduating teacher standards in the induction period.

TABLE 1. Preconditions considered important by a majority of respondents

Items	Percentage of the sum
h. The deliberations of the license renewal evaluation committee should be made public.	81.5%
g. Standards of approval and assessment for license renewal should be based upon consultations with in-service teachers and should be publicly accessible.	80.8%
b. Appraisals of teachers of English should be based on diverse criteria, including English ability, pedagogical competence, past record of professional development, and classroom and job performance.	78.7%
a. Professional competencies or standards for teachers should be concrete.	77.9%
c. Adjustment to the workload should be implemented for those requiring license renewal-related training and have other professional development needs.	65.9%

Summary of the Follow-up Survey

A follow-up survey was conducted on the following two items:

- (a) Professional competencies or standards for teachers should be concrete, and
- (b) Appraisals of English teachers should be based on diverse criteria, including English ability, pedagogical competence, past record of professional development, and classroom performance.

Regarding item (a), in 2004 the Japan Association of College English Teachers' Special Interest Group (hereafter JACET SIG) on English Education (2005) identified fifteen items as necessary qualities for teachers of English based on survey data gathered by twenty-one supervisors in charge of employment at local boards of education (Table 2). In the present research, we asked the respondents to determine if they agreed with the list of qualities described by the JACET SIG that prospective English teachers should possess and with their rankings. Respondents were also asked to list additional qualities, if any.

The survey found these fifteen items acceptable and agreed with the rankings. Additional qualities were not

collected. However, one respondent commented that if teachers of other subjects were involved in the study the set of qualities might be significantly different from the one in the table. Others suggested that the ability to communicate effectively with parents and community members, the ability to set goals and demonstrate leadership, and the ability to show professionalism in various teaching environments were important qualities.

Regarding item (b), a research project conducted by Teacher Education Research Group (2004) identified the qualities of "pedagogical competence" of junior and senior high school teachers (Table 3). In this follow-up research project, respondents were asked if they agreed with the benchmarks. In addition, respondents were asked to describe possible perspectives on "training records" and "job performance".

Most respondents agreed with the list of pedagogical competencies. They also made some suggestions for items to be added such as "ability to develop students' reading comprehension, summarizing, and rapid reading," "ability to create a lesson according to the lesson plan," "ability to enhance interest in other cultures," "effective use of teaching materials including education technology," "ability to promote autonomous learning," and "ability to prepare the students for the entrance exam."

TABLE 2. Qualities of prospective English teachers necessary for employment (JACET SIG on English Education, 2005)

1. enthusiasm for the profession
2. ability to present material clearly in an accessible manner
3. ability to create effective communicative activities
4. teamwork
5. ability to understand students' needs
6. ability to provide clear instructions
7. ability to sustain interaction in class
8. ability to identify and develop topics of interest to students
9. possess linguistic knowledge of the English language
10. clear and loud voice
11. possess knowledge of major English teaching methodologies and theories
12. possess knowledge of the "Course of Study"
13. possess knowledge of the linguistic and cultural differences between Japanese and English
14. familiarity with testing and evaluation formats
15. willing and active participation in extra-curricular activities

TABLE 3. Possible benchmarks of pedagogical competencies for secondary school teachers

Possible benchmarks of pedagogical competencies for junior-high school teachers
❖ Use English effectively for giving instructions and directions on activities.
❖ Use English and interact with students on greetings and familiar topics.
❖ Engage students in communicative activities using taught grammar and vocabulary.
❖ Utilize visual aids to introduce new material.
❖ Teach reading by using English effectively.
❖ Teach reading through memorizations.
❖ Activate students' self-expression by developing read aloud skills.
Possible benchmarks of pedagogical competencies for senior-high school teachers
❖ Enhance students' communicative skills.
❖ Activate students' background knowledge on topical content in the introduction of new material by mainly using English.
❖ Use both English and Japanese according to the teaching content.
❖ Encourage students' read aloud activities (or voice-reading activities).
❖ Activate students' self-expression by using newly acquired grammar, and vocabulary.

TABLE 4. System design supported by the majority of in-service teachers

Items	Percentage of the sum
d. Successful completion of the Course should be contingent on the participant's regular attendance.	65.2%
g. The course should focus on practical teaching knowledge and skills useful in everyday classroom context.	83.3%
k. Participants should be able to choose from a variety of courses.	78.4%

Design of the license renewal course

Of the sixteen items in this category in the questionnaire, the following three items were supported by more than 65 percent of the respondents, who chose to either “agree” or “to some extent agree” (Table 4).

Of the 2,897 respondents, two hundred and eighty-two (9.7 percent) added personal comments. These responses can be divided into two main categories of concerns:

- (1) concerns about increased workloads, and
- (2) ‘wish list’ items.

These can be further subdivided into the following five categories:

- (1a) the need for workload adjustments for those undergoing license renewal training coursework, which would include a review of the current leave system,
- (1b) the need for system flexibility which suits each teacher's needs,
- (2a) the need for curriculum flexibility,
- (2b) the need for license renewal training staff from a range of professionals, and
- (2c) the need for fair standards.

Summary of the results of the follow-up research

The follow-up research focused on the following two items:

- (b) The course should be conducted over an extended period of time, e.g. one year, and
- (k) Participants should be able to choose from a variety of courses.

Regarding item (b), almost 60 percent of the teachers disagreed with item (b). This rate was unexpectedly high. Thus, in the follow-up survey, respondents were asked why they thought so many people disagreed. Respondents indi-

cated that they were mainly concerned about the increase in the workload and about being away from the work place for a long period of time. This was consistent with the results observed in the nation-wide survey. Teachers were not opposed to the training *per se* but were concerned about the reality of pursuing training and performing other duties at the same time.

Seventy-seven percent of the teachers agreed with item (k). So, the follow-up research asked the in-service teachers what areas they would find most useful among the following subject areas listed in Table 5.

The responses showed that over 50 percent of the teachers showed interest in EFL courses as ways to develop their own English language skills, in learning new teaching methods that develop students' four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in English classes, and in multi-media courses (Table 5). The comments in the open-ended section indicated that the teachers would also be interested in courses on team-teaching with Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs).

Factor analysis results

A factor analysis on twenty-four question items was conducted in order to measure variability among the responses. Five factors were identified. Table 6 shows the names, components, loading values of factors, and Cronbach's coefficients of the items of all the five factors. Numbers in the bracket of components section show the question item numbers (see appendix for the question items).

Results of cross tabulation

Cross tabulation was conducted to investigate whether significant differences exist among regional responses, school types, school levels, teaching experience, and age. As for regions, a multiple comparison was conducted to check

TABLE 5. Subject areas

a. Teaching of the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening),
b. teaching of pronunciation,
c. Assessment,
d. Ways to motivate students,
e. teaching of vocabulary,
f. Teaching of grammar,
g. SLA theory,
h. Material design,
i. Cross-cultural understanding,
j. Early childhood English teaching theory,
k. EFL course,
l. multimedia resources, and
m. Other

significant differences statistically. However, the results of the survey showed minor regional variation.

As for school types, school levels, teaching experience, and ages, items that showed more than a 10 percent difference were extracted. The results indicated that the following three points should be addressed to policy makers as general tendencies observed as a differences in terms of school levels, school types, teaching experience, and ages:

- (1) Regarding the school level, teachers in junior high and combined lower and upper secondary schools are more willing than senior high school teachers to acquire practical knowledge and skills through demonstration lessons and class observation to improve their teaching techniques.
- (2) In terms of the types of schools, teachers in private, as opposed to public schools, indicated a willingness to engage in renewal training courses, if they were related to their classroom responsibilities.
- (3) Regarding the age of the respondents, younger teachers put more emphasis on the acquisition of hands-on

knowledge and skills, and the improvement of their English ability.

Recommendations for the Implementation of TCRS

Standardize teacher education.

The Revised Local Education Administration Law approved in June 2007 gives the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) the authority to task local boards of education to take corrective action with the Teacher Certification Renewal System, if such is needed. On the other hand, MEXT plans to monitor the standards of approval regarding management of non-performing teachers set by each local education board and present nationwide, comprehensive guidelines. This action was prompted by the belief of policy-makers in the central government that the processes currently in effect vary greatly among local education authorities and a nationwide systematic policy has to be articulated to assure the quality of classroom teachers.

TABLE 6. Factor analysis

Label	Components	Factor Loading	
Standardizing professional competencies and teacher evaluation based on classroom teaching.	1(e)	0.682	0.712
	1(b)	0.657	
	1(a)	0.622	
	1(f)	0.461	
Linking license renewal training with classroom environment.	2(m)	0.649	0.561
	2(p)	0.479	
	2(j)	0.463	
Giving greater visibility to the standards of license renewal	1(h)	0.669	0.647
	1(g)	0.61	
Structuring and implementing a flexible framework of professional development	1(c)	0.451	0.526
	2(l)	0.434	
	2(n)	0.419	
	2(f)	0.369	
	2(o)	0.310	
Enhancing English teaching skills	2(g)	0.610	0.595
	2(h)	0.401	

The above cases indicate a contradiction in MEXT’s actions— on one hand, advocating the decentralization of authority and respect for local governments; while, on the other hand, reinforcing its supervisory powers. Local boards of education and schools seem to regard the directives by MEXT to take corrective action and other regulatory guidance, including management of non-performing teachers, as a means by the central government to exercise more rigid control. Comments by teachers in our survey testify to their belief that if the government seeks to “guarantee the quality of the teachers” (the stated purpose of the TCRS), it should give constructive guidance to improve the overall quality of education rather than imposing a regime of corrective action.

Clearly the issues of transparency, concrete standards, fair assessment, and workload adjustment are what most concerns teachers. Research points to the need to establish clear national standards of professional competence for teachers. Standardizing teacher education programs will help to guarantee higher standards in quality of teachers and

will encourage open discussion on these matters with the public. The results of the nation-wide survey indicate that in order to put the teachers’ license renewal system into effect in a meaningful way, qualities and capabilities of teachers, professional standards, teacher assessment, pre-service teacher education, teacher training, and duties of teachers must be standardized.

Design and implementation of a flexible system relevant to classroom educators in Japan

Teachers made it clear that the license renewal system would impose additional demands on their time. If this policy is to be effective in assuring the quality of teachers, it will be necessary to create a working environment where teachers can participate in professional training without sacrificing other duties or their personal time.

When government policies such as those regarding performance assessment are mandated from the top without prior consultations with teachers, proposed reforms are seldom effective in being put into practice (see the

allegations made by the All Japan Teachers and Staff Union in 2002, Asahi Shimbun, May 28, 2007). The introduction of the TCRS has also been done in a top-down fashion. Teachers' views have not been given due regard in the policy formulation process. This further underscores the need for a more inclusive approach to education reform. Inclusive reform approaches that involve teacher participation already exist in the United States. Our recommendation is that in-service teachers should participate in committees responsible for designing the TCRS training curriculum.

Training courses designed so that teachers gain practical knowledge and classroom skills should reflect the interests and input of teachers. The courses should combine theory and practice, incorporate demonstration lessons and class observations, and offer a range of content options so that they are meaningful for teachers in various professional settings.

As presently contemplated, most of the training program are to be administered by universities who will also release evaluations of participants to MEXT in a prescribed format. Our study indicates that the wishes of in-service teachers should be considered fully not only during the course design but also when the evaluation methods are discussed.

Finally, the license renewal courses should not be a one-off, formal exercise. MEXT should maintain and nurture working environments where teachers continue their professional training on a daily basis. Prior training should count towards the course completion requirements and class demonstrations should be encouraged to stimulate professional interactions and the sharing of expertise.

Appendix: The Questionnaire

1 Question items on preconditions for the implementation of TCRS

- (a) Professional competencies or standards for teachers should be specific.
 - (b) Appraisals of teachers of English should be based on diverse criteria, including English ability, pedagogical competence, record of professional development, and job performance.
 - (c) Adjustment to the workload should be implemented for those requiring license renewal-related training and with other professional development needs.
 - (d) The license renewal training (10th year training) should be provided to all license holders.
 - (e) English proficiency, pedagogical competence, past training record, service record, etc. of teachers who are to participate in the license renewal course should be quantified, and used as the basis for the determination of their specific recertification requirements.
 - (f) A provision enabling teachers with a high level of English proficiency, pedagogical competence, etc. to train and assess other teachers should be put in place.
 - (g) Standards of approval and assessment for license renewal should be based upon consultations with in-service teachers and should be publicly accessible.
 - (h) The deliberations of the license renewal evaluation committee should be made public.
-

Appendix: The Questionnaire

2 Question Items on System Design of the License Renewal Training Program

- (a) The license renewal course (hereafter the Course) should be offered during a long vacation for six hours a day for a five-day period, totaling 30-hours.
 - (b) The Course should be conducted over an extended period of time, e.g. one year.
 - (c) Successful completion of the Course should be decided on the basis of the result of a written examination.
 - (d) Successful completion of the Course should be contingent on the participants' regular attendance.
 - (e) The dominant element of the Course should be lectures offered at a specific physical location.
 - (f) Provisions should be made for the participants to be able to take the Course via distance learning.
 - (g) The Course should focus on practical teaching knowledge and skills useful in the everyday classroom context.
 - (h) For teachers of English the Course should focus on maintaining and enhancing the English proficiency of the participants.
 - (i) The Course should focus on up-to-date EFL teaching theory and teaching skills.
 - (j) Demonstration lessons or class observations should be included in the syllabus.
 - (k) Participants should be able to choose from a variety of courses.
 - (l) A preliminary review system should be set up. If warranted by the results of the preliminary review, a participant should be allowed to be exempted from taking the entire course or part of the course related to his or her subject area.
 - (m) Sessions focusing on practical aspects of teaching should be taught by experienced teachers.
 - (n) The renewal application process and participation in the Course should be permitted two years before license expiration.
 - (o) The training record (e.g. conference presentation/participation, graduate level study) should be evaluated and, if appropriate, should count towards the completion of the Course.
 - (p) Many in-service teachers should participate in designing the curriculum of the Course.
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ENDNOTES

¹ Contents of the course can be divided into roughly two strands: (1) of courses on current educational issues (more than 12 hours) and (2) on subject teaching, student counseling and guidance, or issues related to enhance teaching (more than 18 hours).

Problems in the Assistant Language Teacher System and English Activity at Japanese Public Elementary Schools

Chie Ohtani

In 2001, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) released the “Rainbow Plan” as the educational reform plan for the twenty-first century. As part of the plan, MEXT will make English education activities compulsory at Japanese public elementary schools beginning in 2011. In preparation, many Japanese schools have been working hard since 2002 to establish new systems, develop curricula, and acquire human resources to accommodate the educational reform plan. In addition, some schools are designated to research and develop curriculum.

The purpose of the Rainbow Plan is to establish a system to foster a school environment in which Japanese students can become functional in English within a five-year period. The goal is to promote international understanding through these English programs. MEXT’s hope is that the students will then carry what they learned in school to their adult lives thereby benefiting Japan as a whole. Thus, one of MEXT’s recommended goals is that one-third of all English activity conducted in the classroom should utilize either Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), fluent English speakers, or junior high school English teachers.

Because so many Japanese elementary school teachers never experienced English instruction when they were elementary school children, the Rainbow Plan is intended to address these deficiencies. Furthermore, curriculum for pre-service teachers has not been fully developed to prepare elementary school teachers to teach English. Thus, many in-service teachers conduct English activities through trial and error. More than 97 percent of public elementary schools have already started English activities through the integrated study class *Sougouteki-na Gakusyu-no-jikan* in 2007. Consequently, approximately 70 percent of English activity periods at elementary schools use ALTs (MEXT, 2008).

However, the Rainbow Plan failed to address the impact of ALTs on English activities because there is no discourse regarding the quality of ALTs, nor does it address the issue of communication between ALTs and Japanese teachers (Kushima, 2007). Indeed, despite the fact that ALTs are val-

ued as integral to MEXT’s educational reform, many ALTs report that they have been isolated or excluded from lesson planning because of poor communication and a lack of input from Japanese teachers. Many Japanese teachers have found problems team teaching with ALTs because they feel that some ALTs are not really interested in teaching.

ALT issues are often addressed in English education research and in team teaching studies. However, such studies have not fully examined the nature of the system or the program’s implementation. This study focuses on the ALT system and current practices in using ALT teachers at Japanese elementary schools. In particular, it focuses on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program because it established the original ALT system, and the JET program dispatches many ALTs to Japanese schools each year. In concrete terms, this study examines systemic problems in the JET program, identifies the problems that arise between Japanese teachers and ALTs, and critically analyzes English activities at elementary schools from an international perspective.

Data for this study were based on in-depth interviews, e-mail exchanges, and secondary surveys of ALT teachers (both JET program and non-JET program teachers) between January and March of 2009.

The JET Program

The JET program was established in 1987 by local authorities in cooperation with three governmental ministries and the council of local authorities for international relations.¹ The majority of participants in the JET program work for one year as either ALTs, Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs), or Sports Exchange Advisors (SEAs).² In 2002, the JET program was extended to provide an elementary school ALT program to meet the recommendations of the Rainbow Plan. Eighty percent of JET participants, including CIR coordinators and SEA advisors, are dispatched to public schools. It has been a huge national program over the past twenty years and the often attributes its success to

the cumulative effects of the large number of participants.³ However, it is more important to assess the quality of the program by qualitative surveys and other forms of research than by gauging the number of participants. Also, given the short contract period, there is a need to examine the JET program eligibility criteria and its training system.

The data gathered in this study reveals major problems with statements in the official JET documentation, such as the JET Handbook, regarding the nature of the program and its impact in the schools. First, the organization and structure of the Japanese and English versions of the documents are quite different. Secondly, some statements in the English document are not directly translated from the Japanese and the translations are inaccurate in numerous places. These problems appear to stem from the political intention of the authors especially in the vagueness about eligibility requirements for candidates to the JET program.

Political Objectives

The JET program is a product of political and economic factors. The official purpose of the JET program is to promote international exchange and language education between Japan and other nations. However, this program was not purely implemented for educational purposes. It was implemented to improve the Japan-US economic imbalance in the 1980's (McConnell, 2000).

As a result, the JET program is fraught with inadequacies. Browne (2008), for example, points out that the poor eligibility criteria were intentionally set. Browne describes the percentage of ALT teachers with a qualified background in education or pedagogy as under 15 percent. In addition, Browne, one of the first JET participants and the first chairperson of the nation-wide JET organization, retrospectively describes the eligibility criteria as follows:

During the beginning of the JET Program, the administration office intentionally adopted the term 'Assistant Language Teacher' instead of 'Teacher,' and ALT teachers with educational experience were set at under 10 percent of the total ALT workforce. This was done out of consideration for Japanese English teachers, who are not confident in their English communication skills as procedural knowledge, or in teaching English, in order to prevent native English speakers from becoming threats to Japanese English teachers (Browne, 2008, p.21–24).

In fact, twenty years later, such quotas still determine today's ALT eligibility.

Poor Eligibility Criteria

As the JET program is a product of the political and economic relationships between the US and Japan, the JET program requires only a bachelor's degree in any field, and requires neither a degree in education, nor a degree in English, nor a formal course of study (major) at a university or college. Teaching qualifications are treated as optional. Consequently, most ALT teachers do not have sufficient educational experience or content background to become teachers.

In addition, most ALTs are recent graduates, and applicants receive official acceptance only two months before their departure. This means that preparation for ALT candidates is insufficient (Kushima, 2007).

In addition to the poorly written eligibility criteria, some statements in the general handbook (2008) require some background in education in order to fully understand the teaching guidelines. For example:

- ❖ Consider an alternative, forming a 'student-centered' lesson.
- ❖ You might want to make a standardized lesson plan form to plan each lesson. Using a standard form makes it much easier to create an organized lesson.
- ❖ The most important part is that the students can understand and apply language principles....

Teachers with a limited educational background may have trouble interpreting such words and phrases as "student-centered lesson," "standardized lesson plan," and "language principles."

Inconsistencies and Mistranslations

Within the JET program, there are many inconsistencies between the English and Japanese versions of the documents given to ALT teachers, thus, contributing to some of the systemic problems in the program. For example, the Japanese official site does not make any distinction among CIRs, ALTs, and SEAs because there is only one "eligibility criteria" section for all three positions. However, the US official web site has a "Types of Positions and Duties" section and defines the different eligibility criteria for each CIRs, ALTs, and SEAs.

When looking closely at eligibility criteria on both the US and Japan sites, the organization of each is different. For example, in the Japan site eligibility criteria numbers twelve through fifteen are described in the “Duties” section, but as ‘j’ to ‘m’ in the US official site. Eligibility criterion 16 in the Japanese official site appears in the general statements section of the US official site.

Although eligibility criterion numeral fifteen in the Japanese official site and “m” in the US official site describe the same eligibility criterion, they use two different phrases such as “to take part in” and “to learn about.” Obviously, these verbs imply different levels of action, the former implying more active participation than the later.

Be qualified as a language teacher or be strongly motivated to take part in the teaching of foreign languages (Japan site, Eligibility criteria No. 15).

Already have qualifications as language teachers or be motivated to learn about the teaching of foreign languages (US site, Eligibility criteria ‘m’).

A most interesting inconsistency is the following:

Have finished any periods of probation and/or paid any fines by the application deadline if a jail term was suspended (US site, Eligibility criteria ‘e’).

Eligibility criterion ‘e’ in the U.S. official site does not appear on the Japanese site.⁴

A critical mistranslation was also found in the official document in the JET general handbook because it is intentionally vague about whether ALTs are to be regarded as teachers or teaching assistants.

It is difficult to generalize about your position (JET general handbook).

A more accurate translation would be the following:

It is difficult to generalize about your duties because they depend on each school site needs.

Inadequate Training

There is no systematic training in the JET program. The only official preparation and training arranged for new ALTs consists of one post-arrival orientation, one mid-year training seminar, and one conference for returning JET teachers. Lesson-related training is only provided at the mid-year training seminar sometime between October and

January after ALT teachers have been dispatched to schools in September. This training occurs in the middle of the Japanese school calendar which runs from April to March.

The mid-year seminar focuses on team-teaching, but it generally lasts for two or three days, and the content is decided at the prefectural level. Due to the poor eligibility criteria, and the fact that many CIRs are dispatched to schools as ALTs, many CIRs express concern with the discrepancy between their current situation and what had been advertised to them by the JET program. The Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) survey conducted in 2005 highlighted these observations by disillusioned CIRs. (Huang and Swallow, 2005).

“CIR coordinators aren’t hired as teachers and thus lack both the desire and qualifications to teach” (CIR coordinator, AJET, 2005).

“It is clear that my job is to be an elementary school ALT. I feel that I was misled by the JET program” (CIR coordinator, AJET, 2005).

In the same study, only 11 percent of elementary and junior high school ALT teachers stated that their expectations of the program were met. Kushima & Nishihori (2006) point out that few ALT teachers come to Japan to teach English, and their personal job related preparation is insufficient. Respondents in this study also pointed out the lack of training teachers receive.

“The training is adequate if working in conjunction with teachers was possible, but it is not a reality” (ALT teacher, AJET, 2005).

“The training is too late, and based off an ideal situation that does not exist between Japanese teachers and ALTs” (ALT teacher, AJET, 2005).

“ALTs expect to have the time to plan a lesson together with their teachers, but we don’t get too much time for that because Japanese teachers have a lot of other responsibilities that are outside of teaching” (ALT in this study).

These comments imply the reality that many ALTs have insufficient education and pedagogic background, and that they are thrown into the Japanese educational system without adequate training and preparation.

Many new ALTs experience anxiety in their teaching. Their contract lasts only one year and most school sites do

not have extra training time in the middle of school year for them. After one year, most ALTs have to leave school because of their one-year-contract and the school will have to hire another ALT. As a result, the school receives another new and potentially inadequately trained ALT; thus continuing the cycle of inexperience and ineffective training. There is no overlap and therefore no chance to hand over the teaching resources and school information from one ALT to the next one.

The AJET study (Huang and Swallow, 2005) stated that 88.9 percent of four hundred and twenty-five elementary and junior high school ALTs felt unprepared or unqualified for teaching in the style that the JET program demands.

“Perhaps the best option would be to hire native English speakers who are not ALT teachers, but primary English teachers at schools” (ALT teacher, AJET, 2005).

“I think private companies should do the job of educating elementary children because they already have a pre-set curriculum in place for all ALT’s to use, along with resources. Also most private companies hire ALTs who speak Japanese for elementary schools. This enables clear communication with the staff” (ALT teacher, AJET, 2005).

“If you cut the JET program in half, and took the money and sent Japanese English teachers to English speaking countries to do work-study, teaching English, perhaps that would be better use of funding” (ALT teacher, AJET, 2005).

These comments indicate that there are serious systemic problems in the ways that ALTs are trained and recruited.

Ambiguities between Expected Duties and Actual Role

Ambiguous phrasing creates confusion among ALTs about their role. The phrase “team-teaching partner” and the term “assistant,” implying very different roles, frequently appeared in the “Work Duties and Workplace” section in the General Information Handbook (2008, p.91). Sometimes the idea of a teaching partner is emphasized

“ALTs participate in team-teaching.”

“ALTs are involved with planning lessons in cooperation with Japanese foreign language teachers, interacting jointly with the Japanese

teacher in the classroom and evaluating the effectiveness of the lessons.”⁵

On other occasions the role of assistant is given prominence.

“Please bear in mind that the ALT is an assistant to the Japanese teacher in the classroom. The ALT should not, therefore, be expected to conduct classes alone, nor be the main teacher.”

Contrary to these statements in the JET handbook, comments from many ALT teachers reveal that, in practice, they are left to conduct classes alone and there is little or no team-teaching done (Huang and Swallow, 2005).

“I teach on my own ALL THE TIME... I’m an ASSISTANT language teacher but I do the job of a teacher” (ALT teacher, AJET, 2005).

“I never teach on my own in the sense that there is always a Japanese teacher in the room, however, it is very seldom that they speak or take part in the class. So, in a way, you could say that I teach on my own” (ALT teacher, AJET, 2005).

“Just because there is a Japanese teacher in the class does not always mean that they take an active, joint role in the lesson” (ALT teacher, AJET, 2005).

Another problem is that a few statements seem to encourage ALT teachers to take the initiative (JET handbook, 2008, p.36).

“For a lesson, first determine the aims and objectives. Your first move might be to talk with the Japanese teachers to find out exactly what the students have studied and are studying at present.”

“Consider an alternative, forming a ‘student-centered’ lesson.”

“Work together and see what you are both willing to give in the lesson.”

In addition, some statements refer to junior high school teachers and are irrelevant for elementary school teachers. But no distinction is made in the JET handbook between English lessons at junior high schools and English activities at elementary schools. Furthermore, some statements project negative and unprofessional images of Japanese teachers. In fact, 63.4 percent of ALT teachers harbor negative

impressions of their team-teaching experiences (Huang and Swallow, 2005). ALTs sampled in this study report similar problems to those described in the AJET survey (2005).

Consider the following examples of negative stereotypes:

“Their (Japanese teachers’) underlying concern may be whether or not it prepares the students for the entrance examination” (JET handbook, 2008, p.36).

“In some cases, Japanese teachers may limit the ALT’s role to ‘letting the students enjoy speaking with a foreigner’, model reading, and pronunciation” (JET handbook, 2008, p.36).

“Japanese teachers might be skeptical about their students’ ability to understand successfully and perform activities that you suggest” (JET handbook, 2008, p.36).

“Not all teachers in Japan prepare lesson plans as you might expect” (JET handbook, 2008, p.36).

The handbook’s lack of information on the Japanese educational system and its schools, without a clear distinction between elementary school settings and junior high school settings, may create an impression of distrust toward Japanese teachers. Furthermore, such statements run counter to the overall goal of fostering international understanding.

Problems at the School Site

Up until now I have focused attention on the problems in the JET program as it is represented in its documentation. In this next section, I wish to focus on problems at school sites, especially with regard to issues of international understanding.

A major problem at school sites is the language barrier between Japanese teachers and ALT teachers. This results in a lack of communication that impedes the quality and quantity of information and the preparation of lessons. A lack of communication makes ALTs feel a sense of isolation that is contradictory to the goals of the program. It is ironic when the goal of the program is to foster international understanding that those involved in teaching the program fail to achieve international understanding among themselves. If teachers cannot practice mutual understanding by looking at things from the point of view of their ALT, the question

remains as to whether such teachers can effectively guide children toward international understanding.

A Lack of Information and a Sense of Isolation

Many Japanese teachers expect quality in teaching from the ALT (Kushima, 2007), and they also would like ALTs to obtain information on areas such as the Japanese school management system and the daily routine of Japanese students (Kushima and Nishihori, 2006, p.229). However, 70 percent of Japanese teachers do not fully understand the ALT recruitment system (Elliot, & Tsuji, 2005) and such school-based information is not adequately explained to ALTs. In addition, teachers regard it as “a great burden” (Kushima and Nishihori, 2006, p. 229) to have to explain such topics as the management system to their ALT.

Many Japanese teachers whom I met through this study felt that it was unreasonable to place English or ALT subject matter on the shoulders of the teacher who is in charge of English Activity. Teachers are simply unwilling to talk to ALTs because they cannot fully communicate in English; nor ALTs, in Japanese. Consequently, it takes a lot of time and energy to exchange ideas and information, and this is the reason that planning a lesson is such a ball and chain for Japanese teachers.

Thus, information regarding student demographics is also inadequate. Looking at the statistics, approximately 46,000 children with a foreign nationality go to public schools (MEXT, 2008). Over 60 percent of schools have minority students whose native language is neither Japanese nor English. However, there is no statement or discussion about these diverse minority children in the JET handbook. All respondents in this study reported that they have never received any information on minority students. And one respondent in this study commented: “Encouraging them (minority students) to interact with other students is not a responsibility my teachers, nor the other teachers, should be given.”

The AJET survey of 2005 and the in-depth interviews in this study cite that a lack of information is a major problem for ALT teachers. It took a long time for some of ALT teachers to solve the problems through experience.

“ALT teachers cannot understand the Japanese educational system. It is a very different system than we come from; explanation of these differences

would be extremely useful. Perhaps this is the biggest problem for the English in Japan” (ALT teacher, this study sample).

“Now that I’m in my 3rd year, I finally understand some of the earlier mysteries. Perhaps with additional training early on, these mysteries could be cleared up” (ALT, AJET, 2005).

“There are so many aspects to the education system that knowing/understanding would have helped me tremendously in my first few months” (ALT, AJET, 2005).

It should be noted that Japanese teachers are not to blame for this problem. Japanese teachers have a high workload because of the high social expectations regarding their role and Japanese work culture and do not have much extra time to engage in communication or lesson planning with their ALT. ALTs do acknowledge this fact:

“We are placed in schools among teachers who work far too hard while we’re given little direction or responsibility. The result is a lot of resentment from Japanese teachers who now, on top of all of their other responsibilities, have to figure out what to do with an entire extra person” (ALT, AJET, 2005).

Japanese teachers do not intentionally exclude ALTs. Their high workload and the language barrier result in simple or minimal communication with ALTs. The effect of this situation is a sense of alienation and misunderstanding among ALTs.

“Most people don’t talk to me unless they have to, or they want me to do something” (ALT, AJET, 2005).

“I still feel quite lost in the daily shuffle of events and I always feel under-informed about things that the rest of the teachers discuss” (ALT, AJET, 2005).

Establishing good relationships with ALTs and providing sufficient information for them to conduct their duties effectively is a necessary condition for promoting the stated goals of enhancing international understanding at school.

Lack of Preparation for Teaching English Lessons

Insufficient communication between ALTs and Japanese teachers impacts the teaching of lessons. Many ALTs report that they do not get information regarding their

school mission, lesson planning, and curriculum from their schoolteachers (Hoogenboom & Uehara, 2006). Many of the subjects interviewed in the AJET 2005 survey and all the respondents in this study agreed that there was a lack of preparation for lessons.

“Lesson planning occurs five minutes before class, if at all, and many times I am unsure of what is expected of me in the classroom” (ALT, AJET, 2005).

“There is an huge disconnect between both Japanese teachers and ALT teachers. This stems largely because ALT teachers expect to have the time to plan a lesson together with their teachers” (ALT, AJET, 2005).

“Elementary English activities have become a source of major frustration for me. It is not education, and ALTs have absolutely not been consulted about the upcoming curriculum, and that is a major disappointment, and a big opportunity missed by Japan. ALT teachers have a lot of great things to contribute, but our exclusion from the process has left many of us frustrated” (ALT in this study).

These comments indicate that highly motivated ALTs are troubled at not being involved in lesson planning. Insufficient lesson planning has unfortunate consequences as it negatively affects the quality of instruction our children receive at school.

Many ALTs confront hurdles due to their lack of educational qualifications and experience. They are insufficiently prepared for the task of teaching Japanese students and partnering with Japanese teachers. In addition, the ambiguities and inconsistencies in the JET documents and inadequate information regarding the Japanese school system create confusion and unrealistic expectations. Consequently, many ALT teachers experience confusion between their expectations and the reality of their experiences at schools.

As a result, many ALTs feel a sense of alienation when Japanese teachers unintentionally exclude ALTs from lesson planning because of the language barrier. This is further compounded by the fact that Japanese teachers already encounter a high workload.

Recommendations

Regarding the JET Program, the ALT eligibility requirements need to require a higher standard in the

educational and pedagogic background of the candidates. For example, the Cambridge ESOL qualification Certificate in English Language Teaching to Young Learners (CELTYL) is a worldwide qualification for teaching young learners English. Some US states also issue teaching qualification for diverse learners, such as Cross-cultural Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) and Bilingual Cross-cultural Language, and Academic Development (BCLAD) in California. If these certificates were highly recommended for candidates to the JET program, the proportion of high quality ALTs would increase.

In addition to the eligibility criteria, the JET program needs to provide more teacher training for ALTs who have less teaching experience or educational background. Furthermore, the expected role of ALT teachers should be described clearly, and such information should be shared with the schools. The JET program also needs to reconsider the program schedule in order to fit more conveniently with the Japanese school calendar. Furthermore, the JET program needs to include information on minority children at public schools in its handbook.

Regarding school sites, Japanese teachers need to improve their basic English communication skills. International understanding should be fostered first among teachers as good role models in order to provide ALTs with opportunities to share cultural knowledge. In addition, efforts should be made to prepare elementary school teachers to function as team teachers in English lessons. Teacher education also needs to prepare teachers who can facilitate communication among diverse children to develop international understanding.

Lastly, as more non-JET ALTs are hired at public schools, local government needs to establish non-JET ALT eligibility criteria. The number of the non-JET ALTs now exceeds that of the JET ALTs because local government and boards of education can easily hire native English speakers with a longer contract period and at less cost. However, the eligibility criteria usually depend on the contracting organization (private English schools).

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ENDNOTES

¹ Three governmental ministries are Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.

² The official document uses CIR for Coordinator for International Relations and SEA for Sports Exchange Advisor. However, for the purpose of this paper, this paper uses CIR coordinator and SEA advisor in order to distinguish their types of works.

³ In the JET official web site, reports, and articles for the special edition for the 20th celebration, the cumulative numbers of teachers (CIR coordinator, SEA advisors, and ALT teachers) always appears to emphasize the huge number as a great success.

⁴ This refers to the on-line documentation only. The eligibility criterion (e) appears in the JET pamphlet for 2009, however, it does not appear in the Japanese official web site.

⁵ In the JET official handbook and documents, JLT is used for Japanese Language Teacher. However, “Japanese teacher(s)” is used in this paper because regular teachers conduct English activities (with ALT teachers) at elementary schools.

Disregard of Opportunity Gap Inequalities in Policy Debates over Mandatory English Education at Public Elementary Schools in Japan

Ryoji Matsuoka

Introduction

On January 17, 2008, the Japanese Central Education Council submitted a newly revised set of official curriculum guidelines to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan (Central Education Council, 2008). These guidelines for elementary schools will become effective in the 2011 academic year and include a controversial new policy: the introduction of mandatory “foreign language activities” at all public elementary schools. Japanese fifth and sixth graders will receive about one period (approximately forty-five minutes) per week of mandatory English education called “foreign language activities.”

Prior to implementation, these guidelines were vigorously debated by supporters and opponents of the policy. However, they have now been made official and every public and private school in Japan is required to follow them. This article will identify supporters and opponents of the policy and summarize their arguments in order to demonstrate that neither side has ever discussed the policy in terms of the opportunity gap that exists between different segments of the Japanese population.

Considering that the existence of an opportunity gap is a major issue in educational policy debates in the United States, my aim here will be to argue that a similar opportunity gap exists in Japan, but that it tends to be ignored in policy debates. Next, I will show that the gap is manifested in differential access among sectors of the population to shadow education and to private schools. Finally, I will evaluate the new policy in terms of narrowing this opportunity gap between students with access to shadow education and private school lessons and those without them.

English education at elementary schools in Japan

The revised guidelines for elementary schools state that fifth and sixth graders will receive thirty-five periods of

“foreign language activities” per year. Despite the fact that no particular language is mentioned in the main statement, it is clear that the authors of the guidelines intend English to be the foreign language that should be taught in practice (MEXT, 2008b). The overall object of the activities is

To form the foundation of pupils’ communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages (MEXT, 2008b, p.1)

For these activities, no evaluations and examinations are required, nor are there any clear standards articulated, such as the specified number of vocabulary and grammatical rules that fifth and sixth graders are supposed to memorize, since the activities are not considered as an academic “subject,” but an area of study. The aim is not to impose strict standards of success, but to have students enjoy what they are doing—to develop positive associations with learning another language.

Supporters and their main arguments

The main supporters of the policy come from the business community, the general public, the English education industry, academic societies in English education, and MEXT (Otsu, 2004a). They present three arguments in favor of the policy.

First, a strong demand exists for reforming English education because of the increasing importance of English for communicating in a rapidly globalizing world (Butler, 2005). This is the first and seemingly most influential point—intensifying globalization and its demands on people. These perspectives are clearly reflected in an announcement called “Regarding the Establishment of an Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities” by Atsuko Toyama, who was the minister of MEXT in 2003.

Globalization extends to various activities of individuals as well as to the business world. Each individual has increasing opportunities to come in contact with the global market and services, and participate in international activities. It has become possible for anyone to become active on a world level.

Furthermore, due to progress in the information technology revolution, a wide range of activities, from daily life to economic activities, are being influenced by the movement to a knowledge-based society driven by the forces of knowledge and information. Thus, there is a strong demand for the abilities to obtain and understand knowledge and information as well as the abilities to transmit information and to engage in communication.

In such a situation, English has played a central role as the common international language in linking people who have different mother tongues. For children living in the 21st century, it is essential for them to acquire communication abilities in English as a common international language (Toyama, 2003).

The second argument makes the point that the younger one is the more receptive one is to acquiring a second language. The fifth and sixth grades, therefore, represent a critical period for language acquisition that educational policies need to take into consideration (Tomita, 2004).

The third argument, advanced by the Central Education Council and MEXT, suggests that equal educational opportunity is a major reason for mandatory English education in the fifth and sixth grades, though the other supporters do not seem to make this point in any significant way. MEXT (2008b, p.6) provides the following reasons for enhanced educational opportunity:

Currently, many elementary schools conduct English activities during period for integrated study, but the contents of these activities vary widely. From a point of view of securing equal educational opportunity and connecting elementary school education with middle school education, the nation needs to show common teaching guidelines.

However, no detailed argument is provided in support of their idea that common teaching guidelines will improve equal access to English, nor is there any consideration given to the possibility that social status or other differences in

social category might inhibit access to English. Also, MEXT provides no explanation about how thirty-five periods of mandatory English education activities “secure” equal educational opportunity. Their argument, it would seem, suggests that “securing equal education opportunity” means that the content of instruction across schools varies widely so that establishing common guidelines will be sufficient to narrow a perceived opportunity gap between schools that conduct English activities. In other words, MEXT does not mention the problems of differential educational opportunity that are based on social categories.

Opponents and their arguments

Most opposition to the policy seems to come from professionals in the teaching of English and from professors in the social sciences, especially linguistics. Professor Yukio Otsu, a linguist, actively opposes the policy. He has published one book and edited a further three books in which he criticizes mandatory English education at public elementary schools (Otsu, 2004b, 2005, 2006b; Otsu & Torikai, 2002). In 2006, he organized a petition drive to protest mandatory English education at public elementary schools. The petition to appeal to MEXT to reverse track and stop making the policy official was submitted to the education minister, Kenji Kosaka on February 14, in 2006 (Otsu, 2006a).

Otsu and his colleagues argue that teaching English to elementary pupils is not only meaningless, but that it can be harmful, if not properly done. In presenting their case, they make six important points:

First, there is a shortage of teachers who are capable of teaching English at the elementary school level. It would be an impossible task to prepare teachers who are able to teach English for every public elementary school (Saito, 2005).

Secondly, English education as it is proposed to be taught at elementary schools will not be as worthwhile as supporters would have us believe (Saito, 2005).

Thirdly, there is the problem of the potential negative effects on pupils’ English abilities. If elementary school teachers—those currently teaching in the classroom—teach English, they may harm pupils’ attitudes to the language because of their insufficient knowledge of English (Saito, 2005).

Fourthly, the policy overemphasizes English at the cost of other languages and cultures, and so it does not foster multilingualism. It should be noted that most foreigners who

live in Japan are non-English speakers (Yamakawa, 2005). The tendency to overwhelmingly promote English as the *de facto* foreign language can be observed at all levels from elementary schools to higher institutions (Koishi, 2006).

Fifthly, falling academic standards in Japanese and reading are connected to English education at elementary schools (Saito, 2005).

Finally, Imai (2005) assesses the benefits of English education in relation to the potentially detrimental effects of cutting other subjects, and doubts that the trade-off is desirable.

Disregard of the Opportunity Gap Problem in the Policy Debates

It is notable that in making their arguments to support or to oppose the policy, neither side mentions the role of social categories like social class in such questions as equal access to second language instruction. MEXT mentions “equal education opportunity” in terms of the contents of activities between schools, not individuals. Kariya (2001) argues that discussions regarding inequalities in educational achievement have been avoided in Japan because any merit system in schools would be considered as discriminative, even though inequality in achievement based on social stratum has consistently existed in the postwar period. A distinctively Japanese view on merit systems as discriminative emerged in 1950s. During this period, educators faced students who were not able to go to high schools because of their low socioeconomic level. Educators recognized the relationship between one’s economic situation and likelihood of going on to secondary education and sympathized with those who could not attend high schools due to their limited financial situation.

As Japan entered an age of high economic growth in 1960s and poverty became less of a problem, the relationship between social class and academic achievement (poverty and low achievement) gradually disappeared in educational debates, but the view, “merit system as discriminative education” has remained. Because of this, the idea has become established that equal education means arranging educational activities so that students do not feel a sense of being discriminated against by being classified according to academic merit (Kariya, 2001). In effect, viewing class differences as factors in academic achievement is problematic because it makes low social class-students feel they are

being discriminated against. Also, differentiation based on one’s merit was avoided since it would harm orders of school communities (Kariya, 2009). In consequence, inequality as a structural or class problem has been ignored in educational policy and practice (Kariya, 2001).

The Opportunity Gap and Shadow Education

Inequality in achievement due to social class is overlooked in Japan, but it does exist (Kariya, 2001; Tsuneyoshi, 2008). With regard to English education, an indication of an achievement gap based on social class differences is evident at the elementary school level due to the existence of an opportunity gap intensified by the private education market called “shadow education,” which enables students from wealthy families to take English lessons in addition to formal schooling.

Although there is a variety of shadow educational activities (Baker, Akiba, Le Tendre, & Wiseman, 2001; Stevenson & Baker, 1992), they “share a similar logic such as correspondence courses, one-on-one private tutoring, examination preparatory course, and full-scale preparatory examination schools” (Baker et al., p. 2). These organized learning activities offered by private companies are similar to those of formal schools. They are intended to enhance students’ academic performances within formal schooling (Baker et al., 2001). Shadow education has been a major phenomenon in East Asian countries such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan (Bray, 2003), and it is “growing proof of how economically generated inequalities outside of education systematically undermine quality of access, participation and outcome within (Lynch and Moran, 2006, p. 223).

Shadow Education in Learning English among Elementary School Pupils

In 2006, Benesse (2007), the biggest private company in K–12 correspondence education in Japan, conducted a basic survey about English education. Four thousand, seven hundred and eighteen parents with children attending a sample of public elementary school (1st to 6th graders) completed the survey. Eighty-nine percent of them were mothers.

Nineteen percent of them reported that their children learn English outside of public elementary schools. Twenty-four percent of sixth graders take English lessons outside of public schools, while sixteen percent of first graders also study English outside of their schools.

Access to shadow education in English differs significantly depending on the mother's educational background. In the survey, 48.3 percent of the mothers had a high school diploma or lesser academic background, while 45.1 percent had an associate or higher degree. In the case of mothers with lower academic background (middle school or high school graduates), only 13.7 percent of their children studied English outside of public schools. On the other hand, 26.1 percent of children whose mothers have an associate or higher degree take English lessons in the private education market. This data suggests that mothers with a higher educational background are more likely to enroll their children in English lessons in the shadow education industry. As Lynch and Moran (2006) argue, middle class parents use their economic capital to send their children to shadow education institutions in order to secure their child's future class status. Thus, there is a need in Japan to recognize that social class does play an important role in gaining access to English programs, even at the elementary education level.

Private Elementary Schools

Expensive private elementary schools also offer English lessons as parts of their curriculum. Some private elementary schools started English education more than one hundred years ago and the number of private schools that began to provide English lessons dramatically increased in the 1950s (Matsukawa, 2004). In 2005, 135 out of 148 private elementary schools which responded to MEXT's survey conduct English education (MEXT, 2006). In addition, teachers who teach English at private elementary schools do not teach other subjects but specialize only in teaching English (Matsukawa, 2004). Thus, compared to public elementary school teachers who need to teach all subjects, teachers at private elementary schools have more skills and knowledge in teaching English.

Because parents who send their children to private elementary schools are more educated and possess higher socioeconomic status, private schools are another source of unequal opportunity to learning English. Put in perspective, in 2008, Japan has 73 nationally established elementary schools, 22,197 public elementary schools, and 206 private schools (MEXT, 2008a). But even considering the small number of private schools in relation to public elementary schools, it is still clear that a considerable opportunity gap

exists between those who can afford extra services for their children and those who cannot.

Evaluation of the existing policy in terms of narrowing opportunity gap

Both supporters and opponents of the policy argue their respective cases about the benefits and harms of mandating English education in the elementary school without considering the important issue of equality of opportunity, which is one of the most discussed topics in countries like the United States. It is indeed important to argue how to improve pupils' English ability, but at the same time, it is necessary to ask who benefits from mandated English education at public elementary schools, while identifying who suffers from the English education practices. One could argue that no one benefits, neither the poor students who do not get extra tutoring, nor the students who attend shadow education institutions, because the lessons are so poorly taught that they can undo all the positive good of taking classes out of school.

The policy does seem to be good in one respect in that it does give some opportunities to pupils who, due to their social class, would otherwise have no familiarity with English, whatsoever. Thirty-five periods of English activities may not be much, but they may be sufficient to provide some opportunities for disadvantaged groups and thus narrow the gap with those who have access to shadow education and those who have access to English in private schools. Thirty-five periods of language activities is a distinct improvement on current practice. In 2006, 95.8 percent of public elementary schools conducted English activities and the average number of periods devoted to these activities—14.8 periods per year—fell short of what the policy offers from the academic year of 2011.

The opponents may argue that thirty five periods of language activities are meaningless, and these hours should be used for other subjects. However, considering the substantial number of pupils taking English lesson in the shadow education industry, one class-hour per week does not seem much and may help some pupils who have no opportunities outside of public schools. It would certainly help when the students move on to seventh grade.

Middle school students take regular examinations in every subject, including English, between four times and six times per academic year. Successful performance on these

exams is important for entering competitive high schools. Two or three months after their entrance to middle school, seventh graders take the first regular series of examinations. Seventh graders are normally asked to write the alphabet with both capital and small letters and show knowledge of a simple vocabulary such as 'dog,' 'cat,' 'ball,' 'cup,' and so forth. A score on this first examination of English may set students' attitude toward English because this is the first official evaluation of their English ability. Thus, it can be argued that thirty-five periods of English activities may be helpful for pupils who have fewer opportunities to learn English. They would at least have some familiarity with the language and a better chance of performing reasonably well from the beginning in their seventh grade English class.

Although pupils without any opportunity outside of public schools may benefit from the policy, it is unrealistic to believe that this policy can narrow the achievement gap significantly, for two reasons. First, students with more opportunities in the private education market start with a larger vocabulary, knowledge of English grammar, and so forth, which enables them to achieve higher scores on regular examinations throughout the three-year period of middle school education. Secondly, since the policy is aimed at giving students a foundation of communicative competence in English and a positive attitude toward English, the activities may not help pupils at all for the second or third regular examinations held later in the year at the seventh grade level. These later examinations focus on writing and reading skills. In other words, what pupils learn during the activities in fifth and sixth grade at public schools is not what is tested at the seventh grade level. Therefore, all the efforts and thirty-five periods of fifth and sixth grades may be meaningless in terms of narrowing an achievement gap based on social class differences. Thus, a greater concentration on English lessons during elementary and middle school years may be necessary to narrow the gap.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the problems arising from an official disregard in Japanese policy debates regarding the opportunity gap that exists between different groups in obtaining access to English instruction. Neither the supporters nor the opponents of mandatory English education at public elementary schools show any awareness of problems of unequal access or admit that an opportunity gap exists

that is based on social class differences. Therefore, it is important to consider that many public elementary school pupils from high socioeconomic status families tend to take private English classes outside of public schools, and that some attend private schools that offer more intensive English lessons. Families with sufficient resources have more opportunities than others to help their children learn English before they take the middle school mandatory English course in which good performance is required to enter competitive high schools. I argue that this case exemplifies the disregard of inequalities based on one's socioeconomic status, and suggest that the opportunity gap between these groups be considered in future educational policy debates in Japan.

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The English Program at Murasakino Senior High School

Haruo Minagawa

Profile of Murasakino High School and Its English Language Programs

Murasakino High School is a municipal senior high school located in the northern part of Kyoto, an ancient capital city of Japan. With a little over one thousand students studying in three grades (from fifteen to eighteen years of age), Murasakino has a distinctive scholastic tradition that makes it different from other high schools in Kyoto. Our school has a number of unique school policies that aim to foster independence and individuality in our students. For example, we do not require our students to wear a school uniform, which is rare in Japan. We also have a number of international exchange programs (see the later section) and unique English programs that place an emphasis on developing students' communication skills, which really sets Murasakino apart from most other high schools in Japan. An important advantage to our students is that Murasakino is located in Kyoto. As one of the major tourist destinations in Japan, Kyoto attracts a large number of international visitors, and this provides our students with many chances to interact with people from a variety of English-speaking backgrounds. We believe these factors work together to help most of our students go on to attend university after graduation.

Murasakino takes part in a regular yearly exchange program with a sister school in Australia named Chevalier College, and our students go overseas in groups composed of an entire class or grade level. Every class in the first grade participates in an overseas study trip in March, with the English Course classes visiting Melbourne for three weeks and the other classes visiting Singapore for about a week. We also send a group of some twenty students to Chevalier College every other year, and accept some twenty students from Chevalier in return every other year, as well. We also host several groups of visitors from various countries.

In addition to these programs, students in the English course also have opportunities to use the Internet or video-conferencing system to interact with young people overseas. Few schools in Japan are involved in programs of this kind.

Over the fifty years of our existence, Murasakino has made a number of innovations that have entailed restructuring our curriculum. In 1993, we started a special English program called the advanced academic English Course in one of the nine classes we offer in each grade. The other eight classes remained unchanged, and the students continued with the regular academic coursework. We have provided the students in the special English course with a unique English education that combines computer and Internet-based programs with opportunities for international exchange. These programs have turned out to be very successful, and led to a three-year designation as a Super English Language High School (SELHi) from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) from 2003 to 2005. Our efforts during the years of the designation were focused on developing the existing English program for the English Course and on improving our English coursework in other classes, using some of the ideas that we have learned from advanced programs in the English Course. In spring 2007 we doubled the number of students we accept in the English Course.

The Special English Course

In this section I propose to outline the main features of the approach to English education that we employ in our special English Course as these are quite distinct from the ways that English is normally taught in Japan. In addition, what we have learned from this approach to teaching English has had a positive impact on the ways that English is taught in the other courses in our school.

English teaching in our special English Course consists of three major categories:

- 1) Regular English instruction using the textbooks authorized by the Ministry of Education,
 - 2) Content-based instruction using self-expression activities through various projects such as the three-day intensive summer English seminar for the tenth graders and varied international exchange programs, and
-

- (3) Computer and Internet-based programs that promote students' individual studies and encourage online interactions in English with other people both within Japan and overseas.

As a public high school in Japan, we are required to teach all our English courses in a traditional format using textbooks authorized by the Ministry of Education. This is the feature that our English program shares with other programs. However, our approach places much more emphasis on the four communication skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking than other classes. For example, we spend less time on reading comprehension and provide students with follow-up, communicative activities in writing and speaking using the language that they study in the text. In contrast, most high schools in Japan tend to place emphasis on vocabulary-building and reading through reading and listening activities.

Language experts believe that language learning is more likely to take place when learners have more opportunities to use English in actual situations and for actual practical purposes. These opportunities are more likely to occur when students have the chance to interact with their classmates and with others—especially those that prepare students for actual interaction with other people—than when they participate in individual self-study tasks. For instance, our students are provided with the opportunity to interact with people overseas in online discussion forums individually or as a group. A variety of self-expression activities and exchange projects have been designed to provide our students with more opportunities of these kinds.

These are the three features that set our English programs at Murasakino apart from those found in most other schools in Japan. In the next section I will deal with each one separately and describe them in more detail.

Content-Based Teaching Using Self-Expression Activities Through Various Projects Such As International Exchange Programs

English Course students in each grade level take approximately seven to ten English lessons a week. In several of these lessons, we provide students with various projects in which they are required to use English to interact with their classmates. They are also usually able to speak with overseas visitors who reside in Kyoto or use a video-

teleconferencing system to converse with English speakers abroad.

These projects differ in duration. Some, like exchanges with a group of visiting students from overseas, span only a few days, while others last for several months and even up to half a year. For example, our online exchange project with people overseas takes up about four months while the debate project in the twelfth grade lasts nearly eight months. The latter includes step-by-step instruction in the use of debating strategies and exercises in English. It involves small-group debate taking place on different occasions. The best group is then selected to participate in a national debate contest. All these projects are designed with the aim of providing our students with the content that they can apply in actual speaking situations. The aim is to have them use English to interact with people and to produce final products such as papers written in English, oral presentations, and other performances. These combinations of activities make students highly motivated to study English so that they can become better prepared to participate in actual communicative situations.

The English projects also make use of what we call “self-expression activities.” Self-expression activities can take the form of a short-speech, a show-and-tell presentation, a skit, a discussion, or a debate. They offer students useful practice in using English. We regard these as integrated activities that include practice in writing and speaking and, in most cases, in reading and listening, too. In these activities, learners are encouraged to express what they have to say on a given topic. They also provide students with a very intense writing experience that advances them through various steps of the writing process. In preparing a script for oral presentations, for example, they not only work on developing their writing skills, they also have many opportunities to practice speaking. They may start by memorizing their lines, and then proceed to speaking their lines with emphasis, much as they would do in oral interpretation. Ultimately they come to speak their lines as if they were their own words, as if they had just sprung from their hearts.

Another benefit of these activities, especially the presentation-type of activity, is that we can have students with relatively low English speaking proficiency successfully participate, as long as we provide them with good support. By that I mean that we are clear about what they should aim for, provide steps for proper preparation, offer good

examples, and provide plenty of practice and rehearsal opportunities.

These activities constitute a very effective approach to teaching English that in addition to improving students' speaking skills also advances their overall English proficiency.

The Cultural Workshop

Throughout the year, we accept a number of visitors from overseas to visit us at Murasakino High School. For example, in July 2007 we hosted a group of Chinese students from Hong Kong. In November, we accepted another group of Chinese students from Taiwan, and in December still another group of students from our sister school in Australia. During their stays with us, these students attend a number of classes in our school. A typical activity that we do on such occasions is what we call a "cultural workshop."

A few weeks in advance of a visit, we ask our students to prepare a show-and-tell activity that relates an interesting example of Japanese culture to our foreign visitors. We split the class into several groups of six to eight students and have each group come up with a topic or items to demonstrate. In the following weeks, we have our students prepare their presentations and sometimes prepare a set of questions to ask the visitors after their presentation. Teachers decide how many lessons need to be devoted to preparing for the visit, and this depends on the English proficiency of the class.

When the visiting students are present, they are divided into different small groups. Each group takes a turn at watching a presentation by one of the Murasakino groups. They are free to ask questions and then, when they are finished, they move to the next group according to the teacher's directions. In this way the visitors get to see all the presentations and all the students have time to interact with each other.

The teachers decide how much time they spend in each round, and sometimes toward the end of the entire session one member of a Murasakino group reports about the exchange to the entire class. Using this learning format, Murasakino students have a chance to perform their presentations several times with a different audience, and the visitors get to enjoy several different presentations in one class.

In our experience this activity has rarely failed to please foreign visitors and motivate our students to work earnestly so that they have plenty of writing and speaking practice.

Computer and Internet based programs

Almost all high schools in Japan are equipped with computer-assisted language laboratories (CALLs). The national government has been heavily promoting effective use of these facilities in recent years. However, only a few schools have actually started to make regular use of these facilities in English study. This is probably due to the fact that using computers and the Internet for English study has not been considered something which schools are responsible for. Ever since the introduction of the English Course back in 1993, Murasakino has recognized the importance and the positive effect of English study using computers and the Internet. As a result we offer English Course students in all grades two to three lessons a week in a CALL.

Our computer and Internet based programs in Murasakino come in two categories:

- 1) Individual learning using either computer software or online courses.

The majority of the tasks we give in a CALL are done using computer software installed in school computers or provided in online courses which students can access on the Internet, such as 'Global English' by the Global English Corporation, or 'Criterion' by the Educational Testing Service.

The learning covers the four communication skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In later grades, however, instruction shifts more towards writing. We give a lot of writing tasks that are linked to the content-based teaching described in the previous section. For example, students can use computer software and the Internet to do research for writing their manuscripts, as well as for class presentations, and review writing. The concept of writing for speaking is one of the most highly regarded by the Ministry of Education in our SELHi studies.

Most of the tasks that take place in the CALL are meant to promote individual self-study for students both at school and outside school. In recent years, it has been a priority for Japanese high schools to promote students' study hours outside of school. In the Murasakino programs, teachers give tasks at

determinate intervals, monitor students' work, and offer necessary feedback. They also provide regular evaluations after each session and offer directions to students to encourage their study.

2) Use of computer as a tool of communication in collaborative work projects.

Related to content-based learning projects as described in the previous section, we also have students in the second half of the eleventh grade and the first half of the twelfth grade take part in online discussion forums exclusively designed for the projects that they participate in. In 2007, our students participated in an online forum provided by a university in New Jersey, another provided by a university in Kyoto, and yet another called *iEARN Asian Pacific Learning Circle* provided by International Education and Resource Network, an international organization promoting international exchange among youth online and offline.

Teachers give students step-by-step instructions on how to exchange messages, conduct surveys, and write online reports that can be shared with their international partners who are participating in the forums. They usually have a chance, as a culminating activity, to engage in real-time online interactions with international partners using the video-teleconferencing system.

Our continuing efforts to expand and improve our English programs

In 2005, the second year of the SELHi designation, our English department, comprising sixteen Japanese teachers and three native-speaking English teachers, decided to implement some of the features of the English course programs that had proven so effective in the other special English courses at Murasakino.

For example, two classes in our regular course are now working on an English newspaper project, in which each student writes four articles in English. They then combine the articles into their own newspaper using Microsoft Word. They also make two show-and-tell presentations to the entire class with the use of computers. All students in the other English courses are now given between one and two computer and Internet-based lessons a week. In order to promote study of this kind, Murasakino lets students use our CALL rooms during the lunch hour and after school.

In 2007, we also introduced an innovative iPod program to the English course to enhance students' exposure to English outside school. Students are required to listen to learning materials on the iPod to prepare for their lessons. The learning material, the sound data of their English textbook and an online English newspaper for learners of English that Murasakino subscribes to, are now provided online. Students access our school website and download the data with a given ID and password. We are now promoting this program to the students of other courses.

Since the SELHi designation, the English course students have been taking an English proficiency test called *GTEC (Global Test of English Communication)*, a similar test to *TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication)*, in order to make our students aware of their English proficiency level and have a clear goal in their English studies. We now have all Murasakino students take the test once a year. The results of the test are used by English teachers to evaluate and to improve teaching at the school. The results this year show a steady improvement in all courses.

Learning from Analysis of Japanese EFL Texts

George R. S. Weir and Toshiaki Ozasa

1. Introduction

Japan has a long tradition of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). A common feature of EFL courses is reliance on specific textbooks as a basis for graded teaching, and periods in Japanese EFL history are marked by the introduction of different textbook series. These sets of textbooks share the common goal of taking students from beginners through to 'able' English language users, so one would expect to find common characteristics across such series. As part of an on-going research programme in which Japanese EFL textbooks from different historical periods are compared and contrasted, we have recently focussed our efforts on using textual analysis tools to highlight distinctive characteristics of such textbooks. The present paper introduces one such analysis tool and describes some of the results from its application to three textbook series from distinct periods in Japanese EFL history. In so doing, we aim to encourage the use of textual analysis and seek to expose salient features of EFL texts which would likely remain hidden without such analytical techniques.

2. Textual analysis

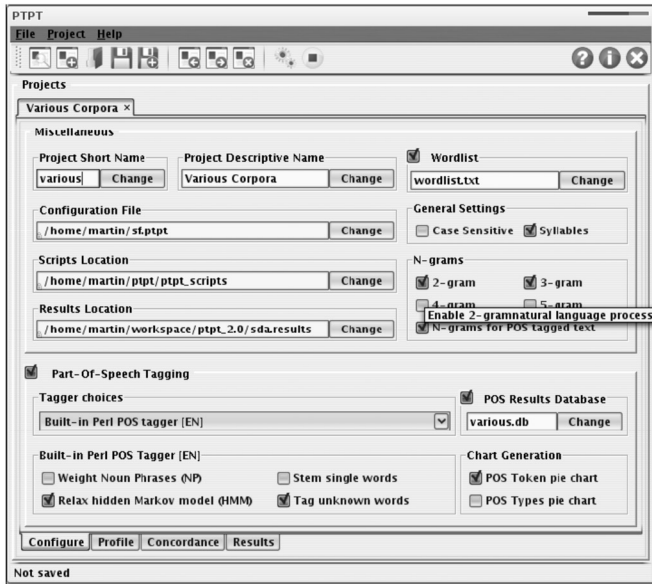
With the growing availability of text collections (corpora), many educators realise the potential for employing such resources in order to support teaching. An obvious application lies in language teaching, wherein available textual resources may serve as examples or illustrations of language use (e.g., Granger, et.al, 2002; Aston et al, 2004). In addition, local collections of texts, e.g., in the form of student submissions, are on the increase and this raises the need for tools that support the exploration and analysis of these text corpora. Tools such as Wordsmith (Scott, 1998) and AntConc (Anthony, 2005) offer approachable means whereby non-computer specialists may analyse their own data collections, and more ambitious facilities are available in systems such as NooJ (Silberztein, 2005), and GATE (Bontcheva, et. al., 2004). In the following, we introduce an alternative set of tools for textual analysis (developed by the first author) and thereafter describe the application of these tools in contrasting the content of historical Japanese EFL texts.

The Posit Text Profiling Toolset (Weir, 2007) comprises several software modules that work together to provide a broad range of textual analysis facilities. Built as an extensible set of Unix shell scripts and Perl programs, the system provides a means of generating frequency data, includes Part-of-Speech (POS) tagging, and can accommodate large text corpora with ease. In its initial version, the toolset is command line driven and depends for its flexibility upon users gaining a good understanding of the component scripts and available command options. In addition, for ease of use, a version with graphical interface has recently been developed (Baillie & Weir, 2008). In both cases, output from the toolset takes the form of multiple files that store a wide variety of results from the textual analysis.

A key feature of the Posit tools is part-of-speech profiling on any specified text, with word occurrence information

TABLE 1: Summary POS Profile output for 'Emma'

Input filename		emma.txt	
Total words (tokens)		159826	
Total unique words (types)		7364	
Type/Token Ratio (TTR)		21.7037	
Number of sentences		8585	
Average sentence length (ASL)		18.6169	
Number of characters		914519	
Average word length (AWL)		5.72197	
POS TYPES		POS TOKENS	
noun_types	4268	nouns	69060
verb_types	2603	verbs	67678
adjective_types	1346	prepositions	38600
adverb_types	487	personal pronouns	31192
preposition_types	65	determiners	26178
personal_pronoun_types	23	adverbs	25432
determiner_types	18	adjectives	25086
possessive_pronoun_types	7	possessive pronouns	9582
interjection_types	5	interjections	516
particle_types	0	particles	0

FIGURE 1: Posit Toolset with graphical user interface**TABLE 2:** Example 4-gram frequency data

Frequency	4-gram
50	i do not know
26	a great deal of
20	i am sure i
19	it would have been
18	mr and mrs weston
18	it would be a
18	i do not think
16	i have no doubt
16	i am sure you
15	and i am sure

TABLE 3: Example 2-gram frequency data

Frequency	2-gram
608	to be
566	of the
449	it was
446	in the
395	i am
334	she had
331	she was
308	had been
301	it is
299	mr knightley

detailed by raw frequency and by part-of-speech frequency. Totals are given for word tokens, word types, part-of-speech types, and part-of-speech tokens. As well as the summary level of detail on parts-of-speech, the system provides detailed frequency data on specific sub-types within parts-of-speech, such as common nouns, superlative adjectives, etc.¹ As an illustration, Table 1 shows the summary level data from analysis of Jane Austen's novel Emma.

In addition to word and part-of-speech analysis, the Posit toolset can also return frequency data on the presence of multiword sequences. Such sequences are termed 'n-grams,' where n has a value that indicates the number of words in the sequence. Thereby, 2-grams are sequences of word pairs, 3-grams are sequences of word triples, etc. The result of 4-gram frequency analysis on the text of the novel 'Emma' gives the 'top ten' results shown in Table 2, below.

The configuration screen for the graphical version of the Posit Text Profiling Toolset is illustrated in Figure 1.

Using the n-gram facility of the Vocabulary Profiler, we can readily contrast the 4-gram result with the 'top ten' 2-gram result from the same text (Table 3).

2.1 Other Posit features

A range of features has been added to the core Posit functionality with the graphical interface development. The principal additions are

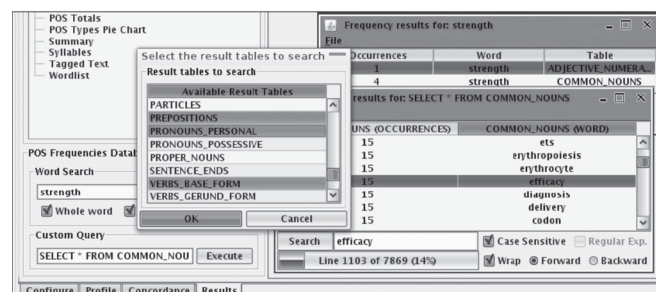
- i. results database,
- ii. optional POS tagging and support for multiple taggers and pre-tagged text,
- iii. concurrent profile execution, and
- iv. concordance.

2.1.1 Results database

Inclusion of a relational database for storing the results of word/POS tag frequency analyses affords a powerful new addition to the Posit system. Through this facility a user may perform searches across numerous results files and cross reference words to determine the grammatical types under which they have been categorised and in what contexts they are used within the test corpora (Figure 2).

2.1.2 Optional POS tagging

Since most script features are configurable, the GUI also allows the user to configure the POS tagging. As well as

FIGURE 2: Database search facility

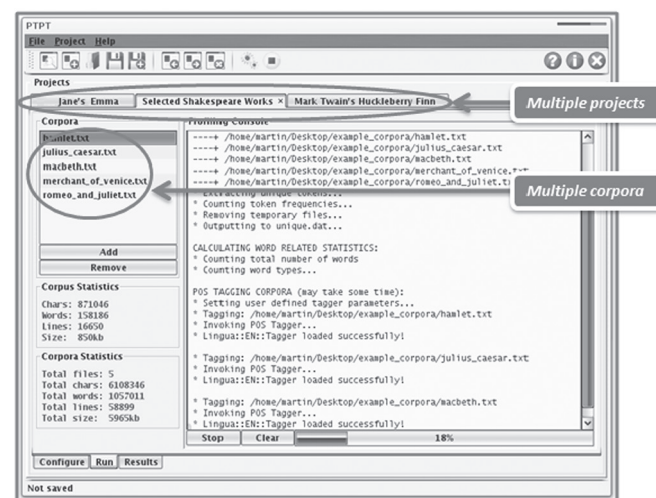
turning POS tagging off altogether, thereby accommodating pre-tagged texts, the user may opt to change from one POS tagger to another. The application comes with two POS taggers but, through the addition of wrapper scripts, also allows for the use of external POS taggers.

2.1.3 Concurrent profile execution

This useful facility allows the user to perform simultaneous independent analyses on two or more sets of texts and manage the profiles and results through separately specified project windows (Figure 3). Each profile will have its own set of configuration, profile, concordance and results windows. Although processed independently, the concurrent availability of separate sets of results will facilitate ease of visual comparison across the analysed texts.

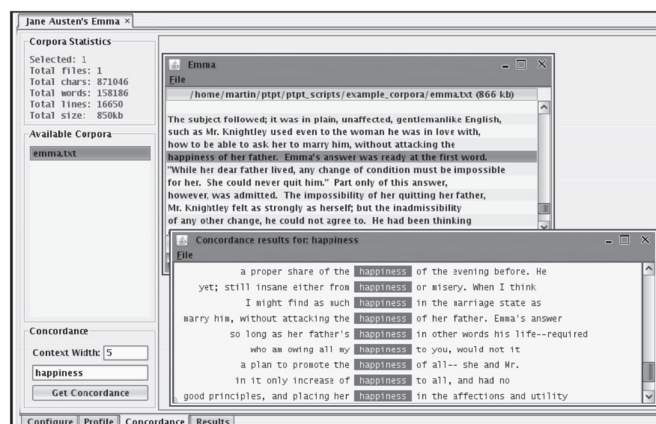
2.1.4 Concordance

The concordance feature adds a common and useful textual analysis component that was absent from the

FIGURE 3: Managing multiple projects

original Posit tools. Through the concordance a user can select a keyword and the desired word span on either side of the keyword. The system will then display all occurrences of the keyword in the contexts provided by the surrounding number of adjacent words. The concordance feature is illustrated in Figure 4. With the addition of a concordance, the Posit Toolset becomes one of the most versatile and complete textual analysis tools available.

Concordance searching is an interactive feature that is performed on the original corpora; it is not a batch job carried out by the scripts. Since the concordance facility did not fit with any of the existing tabs in terms of similar functionality it is provided in a separate tab. Concordance results are displayed in a file viewer similar to that of the Results tab. This also allows the user to have many concordance result windows open simultaneously for comparison purposes. The concordance results can also be saved as an HTML file for subsequent viewing as a 'webpage' within the Posit tool or through a Web browser.

FIGURE 4: Concordance feature

3. Analysis of Japanese EFL textbooks

The present study contrasted three EFL textbook series used in Japan at different historical periods. This forms part of an on-going programme of diachronic analyses (e.g., Ozasa & Erikawa, 2004; Weir & Ozasa, 2007) and exploration of textual analysis techniques (e.g., Weir & Anagnostou, 2007). The first textbook series, Barnes' New National Readers, was published in 1883–84 and is taken to represent the 'early' period of ESL teaching in Japan. The second textbook series, Okakura, Yoshisaburo, The Globe Readers, was published in 1907 and is taken to represent the 'middle'

period of ESL teaching in Japan. The third textbook series, Jack and Betty: English Step by Step, was published in 1948 and represents ‘recent’ ESL teaching in Japan.

Our comparative analysis focused on part-of-speech profile and vocabulary—specifically, single word frequency and n-gram frequency (for $n=2$ through $n=4$). Our aim was to explore the POS and vocabulary profiles for each textbook series. The data for this work was derived using the Posit Text Profiling Toolset (described above). As well as comparing the word contents across these three textbook series, we also consider contrasts with data from the Brown corpus (Kucera and Francis, 1967). We also compared the degree of hapax legomena² for single and multiword vocabulary. Finally, we considered the textbooks’ coverage of words from Dolch’s high-frequency lists, as recommended for reading practice.

As a basis for our comparative study, we derived statistical data on each of the three textbook series listed above. To this end, each series was digitized and treated as a single text corpus. The three resultant corpora were analysed independently using the Posit Toolset to produce extensive word and n-gram frequency data. General statistics for the three textbook corpora are shown in Table 4, below.

The following data dimensions were considered in our contrastive analysis of the textbooks: (1) POS profile, (2) single word frequency; (3) 2-gram frequency; (4) 3-gram frequency, (5) 4-gram frequency. In addition, we compared the proportion of hapax legomena for each of the word frequency dimensions across the three textbook series. Finally, we considered the coverage of Dolch high frequency words. Each of these features is detailed below.

TABLE 4: General Statistics for Textbook Corpora

	National	Globe	JandB
Total tokens	190470	67231	51557
Total types	12154	6869	4923
Type/Token Ratio	15.67	9.78	10.47
No. of sentences	10572	4484	5392
Ave. sent. length	18	15	10
Ave. word length	5.5	5.5	5.4

3.1 Data results

3.1.1 Part-of-speech profiles

Percentage values for the contribution of each part-of-speech are shown in Table 5, below.

Already, we can note that each of the three textbook series has the same ranking for part-of-speech distribution. This is an interesting result that could not have been readily predicted.

Using the data from Table 5, we can contrast the distribution for parts-of-speech by graphing each set of percentages. The result, shown in Figure 5, below, indicates a strong similarity in profile across the three textbook corpora.

TABLE 5: POS Percentages for Textbook Corpora

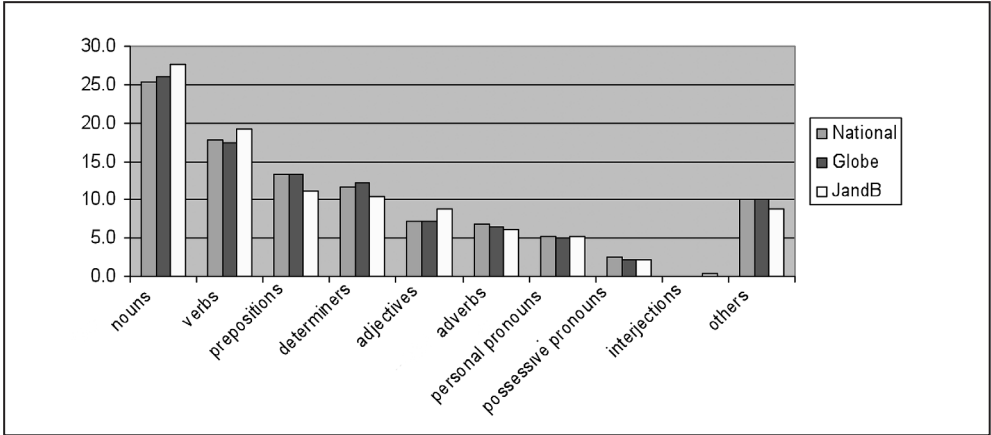
	National	Globe	JandB
nouns	25.3	26.0	27.7
verbs	17.9	17.4	19.3
prepositions	13.2	13.3	11.1
determiners	11.7	12.2	10.5
adjectives	7.2	7.2	8.8
adverbs	6.8	6.4	6.1
personal pronouns	5.3	5.0	5.2
possessive pronouns	2.6	2.2	2.2
interjections	0.0	0.1	0.3
others	10.0	10.1	8.8
total	100	100	100

In order to compare POS profiles as a dimension of English ‘quality,’ we employed a non-textbook corpus as a reference point. To accommodate the likely influence of American English in the composition of Japanese textbooks the Brown corpus was included as a source of American English.

A POS profile for the Brown corpus was produced by applying the Posit POS Profiling facility. This produced the POS profile shown in Table 6, below. We can better compare the POS distributions across the textbook series and the Brown corpus in Figure 6.

From this comparison, several conclusions seem appropriate. Firstly, as indicated earlier, each of the textbook corpora have remarkably similar POS profiles. Secondly,

FIGURE 5: POS Profiles for Textbook Corpora



each textbook POS profile is also markedly similar to that of the Brown corpus. What inferences may be drawn from these observations? Perhaps the textbooks share an underlying similarity in their choice of language forms. This may not be unreasonable, given their similar pedagogical objectives. Beyond this, their resemblance in POS profile to the Brown corpus suggests that they may also reflect a degree of English ‘naturalness.’ Certainly, their profiles appear consonant with American English characteristics as represented by the Brown corpus. We should perhaps note that National was originally published in the U.S. for American pupils and imported to Japan for use by Japanese learners of English. This may go some way toward accounting for simi-

TABLE 6: POS Percentages for the Brown Corpus

nouns	29.5
verbs	16.4
prepositions	14.0
determiners	11.4
adjectives	7.9
adverbs	4.7
personal pronouns	4.5
possessive pronouns	1.7
interjections	0.0
others	9.9
total	100

FIGURE 6: Textbook POS profiles compared with the Brown Corpus

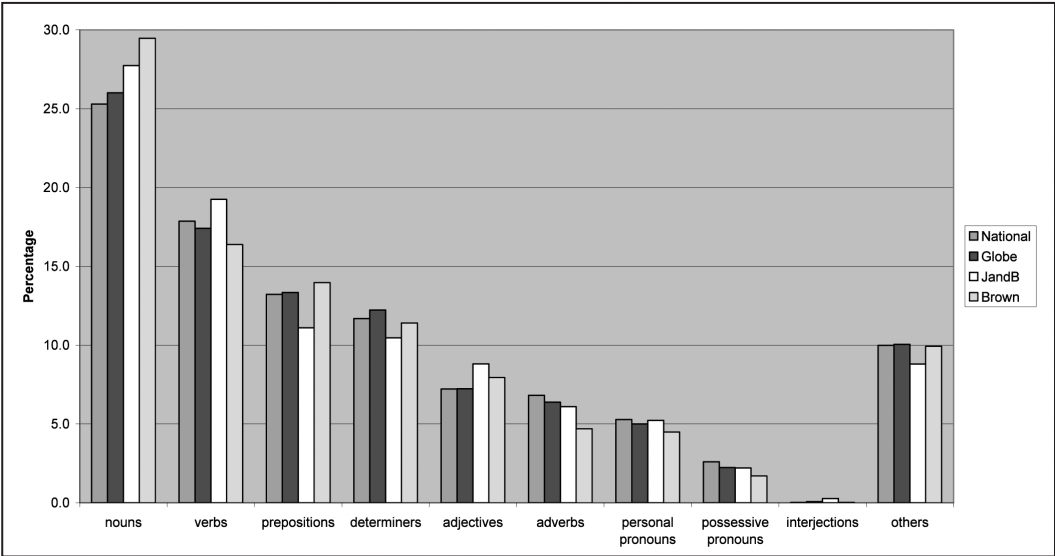
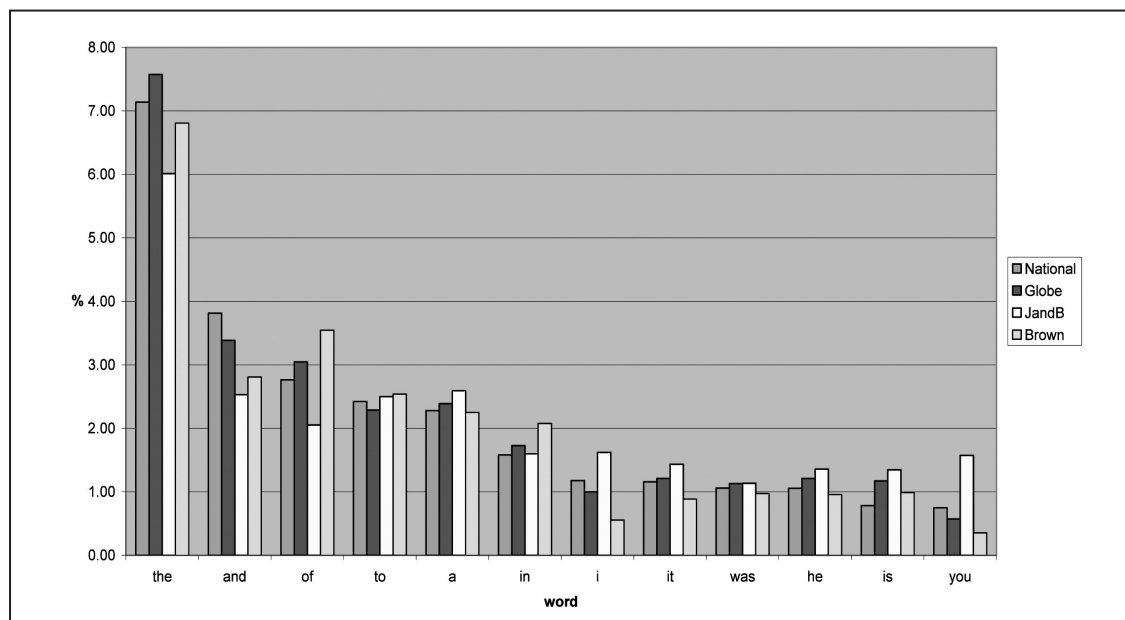


FIGURE 7: Single word frequency comparison**TABLE 7:** Top ten words for each textbook corpus

National	Globe	JandB
the	the	the
and	and	a
of	of	and
to	a	to
a	to	of
in	in	i
i	it	in
it	he	you
was	is	it
he	was	he

larity between National and the Brown corpus. Yet, despite their Japanese origin, both Globe and Jack and Betty also exhibit similar POS profiles to the Brown corpus.

3.1.2 Single word frequency

In order to compare the word frequency and n-gram frequency dimensions, for each textbook series we selected the top ten items in each dimension and noted their frequency of occurrence as a percentage of the respective corpus. Thereby, we may compare not only item rank across textbook corpora but also item ‘weight’ relative to its

own textbook corpus. One result of word frequency analysis for the textbook corpora is shown below (Table 7). This lists the top ten word occurrences by frequency for each textbook series. The absolute frequency value is shown for each word.³

This tabular comparison reveals that a compact set of only 12 distinct words accounts for the top ten occurrences by frequency across all three textbook series. This indicates a high degree of similarity in high frequency words.

Figure 4, above, allows a comparison across the frequency results in terms of percentage ‘weight’ of each word in its corpus. Additionally, Figure 1 includes a similar contrast with the Brown corpus. A visual comparison using Figure 1, suggests that National and Globe are close in terms of single word weighting, whereas Jack and Betty appears to diverge from these two textbook series. Finally, the Brown corpus results show a marked degree of deviation from the textbook series.

3.1.3 N-gram frequency

When considering the top ten word pairs (2-grams) by frequency for each of the textbook corpora, we find an intersecting list of 14 word pairs. These are shown in rank order, in Table 8, below.

The results of the frequency comparison of 2-gram occurrences are shown in Figure 8, below.

FIGURE 8: 2-gram frequency comparison

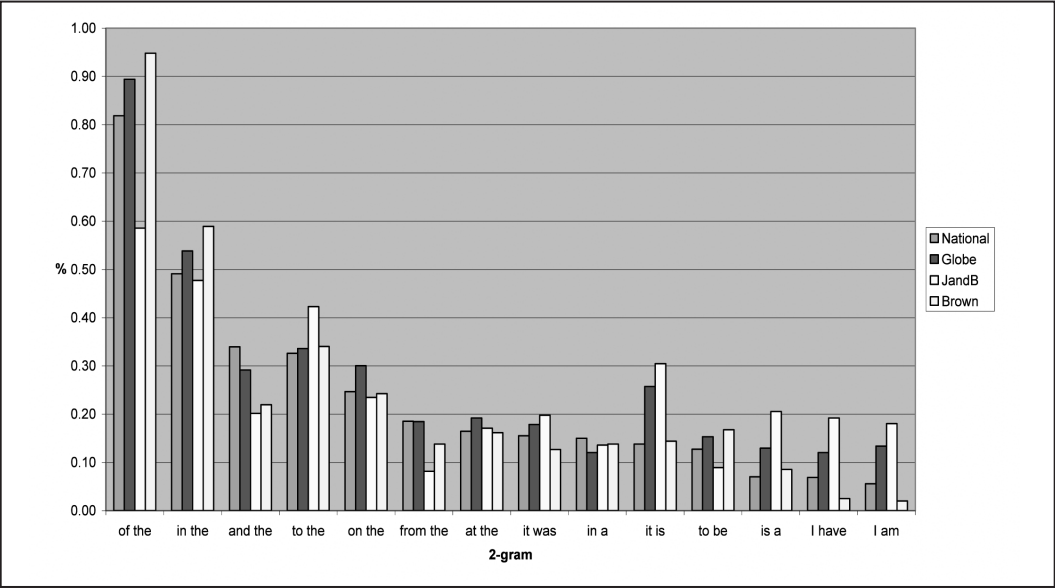


TABLE 8: Top 2-grams for each textbook corpus

National	Globe	JandB
of the	of the	of the
in the	in the	in the
and the	to the	to the
to the	on the	it is
on the	and the	on the
from the	it is	is a
at the	at the	and the
it was	from the	it was
in a	it was	i have
it is	to be	i am

As with the single word comparisons (Figure 7), Figure 8 suggests greater similarity between National and Globe, while Jack and Betty and the Brown corpus exhibit greater divergence. Likewise, a contrast in terms of 3-gram frequencies reveals the top ten three word sequences for each of the textbook series. This results in an intersecting list of 21 word triplets. These are shown in rank order in Table 9, below. Note that the presence of apostrophes in the original texts serve to differentiate some expressions, e.g., ‘I do not’ and the elision form ‘I don’t’ appear as separate word triplets.

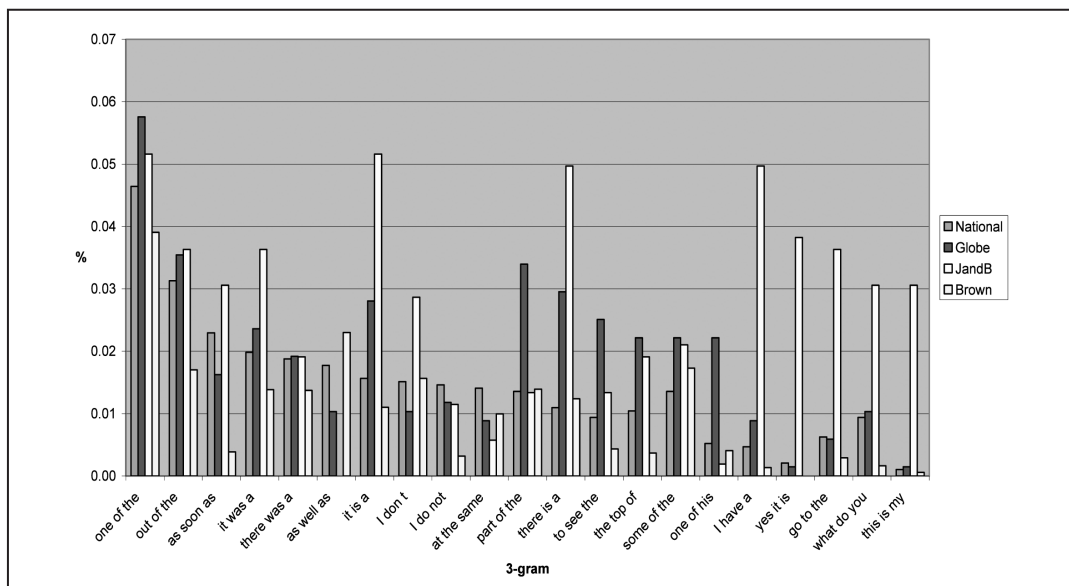
The results of the frequency comparison of 3-gram occurrences across all three textbook series and the Brown

corpus are shown in Figure 9, below. This appears to show particular disparity on the part of Jack and Betty.

Analysis of 4-grams from our textbook corpora revealed a list of 29 separate four word sequences. Only one 4-gram was common in the top ten between corpora - the expression ‘one of the most’. This was ranked 3rd in National and 4th in Globe. In Jack and Betty, this 4-gram is ranked 52nd. This hints at further divergence between Jack and Betty from the other two textbook corpora, although one might see the patterns for Globe and Jack and Betty as indicative of a focus upon grammar rather than vocabulary. Variation in usage is likely to be greater as we consider larger multiword expressions. This is evident in our comparison of 4-gram frequencies across the textbook series and the Brown corpus (Figure 10).

3.1.4 Hapax legomena

Conducting an exhaustive comparison of single or multiword units is beyond the scope of the present work. Our comparisons of ‘top ten’ items give some indication of the spread of most frequent items across the textbook corpora, and in contrast with the Brown corpus. Significantly, the highest frequency items account for relatively small proportions of the original texts. This suggests that vocabulary may not be the principal agenda for the textbook authors. A similar point can be made in a different fashion.

FIGURE 9: 3-gram word frequency comparison

The proportion of hapax legomena for each corpus may afford insight on the degree of vocabulary focus for each textbook series. Table 10 lists the percentages of hapax legomena for single words, 2-grams, 3-grams and 4-grams, across the textbook corpora. Clearly, the proportion of hapax legomena increases rapidly with the size of n-gram. For single words, National and Jack and Betty have around 45% and 48% hapax legomena, while Globe exceeds both of these with ~50%. This rises to ~98%, 99% and 97%, respectively for National, Globe and Jack and Betty, when we consider 4-gram occurrences.

One might assume that careful textbook design would address vocabulary coverage, as well as grammatical considerations. Furthermore, one might expect more frequent use of those words that were considered more important than others. Yet, the figures from Table 10 show that almost half of the individual words in each of the textbook series are used only once. This may suggest that only a small proportion of words were considered important enough to merit frequent use (or, indeed, that little consideration was given to word usage aside from meeting the needs of grammatical construction).

We may draw similar tentative conclusions regarding the data on multiword hapax legomena. There is decreasing indication of attention to multiword usage as the multiword sequence size increases. This leads to the small proportion

of ~1–3% of 4-grams that are used more than once in each textbook series.

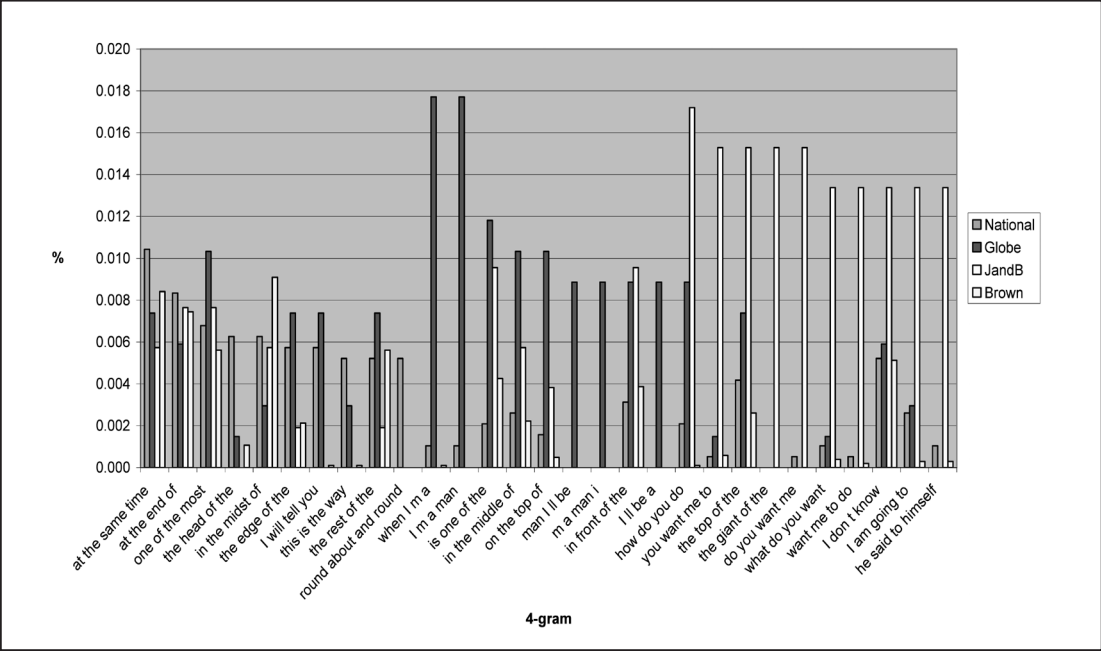
3.1.5 Dolch comparison

Edward Dolch compiled two word lists based upon their frequency of occurrence in children's books (Dolch, 1948) on the reasonable assumption that learners must be able to recognise such words in order to achieve reading fluency. His primary list contains 220 words (excluding nouns). Nouns are covered in a second list of 95 words. These Dolch lists are still in common use across schools in the United States and the United Kingdom, as a basis for gauging student progress in reading. In the context of our ESL textbook comparisons, the Dolch lists allow us to consider the degree of fit between the vocabulary of the textbooks and the content of the Dolch lists.

The first factor we consider is the presence or absence of the Dolch words in the textbook corpora. Indeed, we may regard the degree of Dolch word presence as a crude indicator of suitability of the textbook as a reading tuition, whereby, absence of a Dolch word represents a significant lack in terms of learner guidance.

Figure 11 shows a comparison of the top twenty Dolch words against our three textbook corpora. Values indicate the comparative ranking of these words (which, in turn, is indicative of relative frequency). The top twenty

FIGURE 10: 4-gram word frequency comparison



Dolch words have different rankings across our three textbook corpora but are all well represented in every textbook series.

Analysis of the word contents for each of the textbook corpora reveals some differences in their coverage of Dolch words. Firstly, with regard to the main Dolch list of 220 words, we find that the National textbook series contains all of these Dolch words. The Globe series contains all the Dolch words with two exceptions, the words ‘ate’ and ‘slow.’ Finally, the Jack and Betty textbooks contain all but one of the Dolch words. The missing item in this case is the word ‘drink.’

For Dolch’s list of high frequency nouns, we find greater variation in omission across the textbook corpora. Once again, the National textbook series is best in terms of Dolch word coverage. National omits only one word, ‘birthday.’ The Globe textbook series omits 10 words from the noun list and the Jack and Betty series omits 7 words from this list. The missing Dolch nouns for these textbooks are listed in Table 11.

4. Conclusions

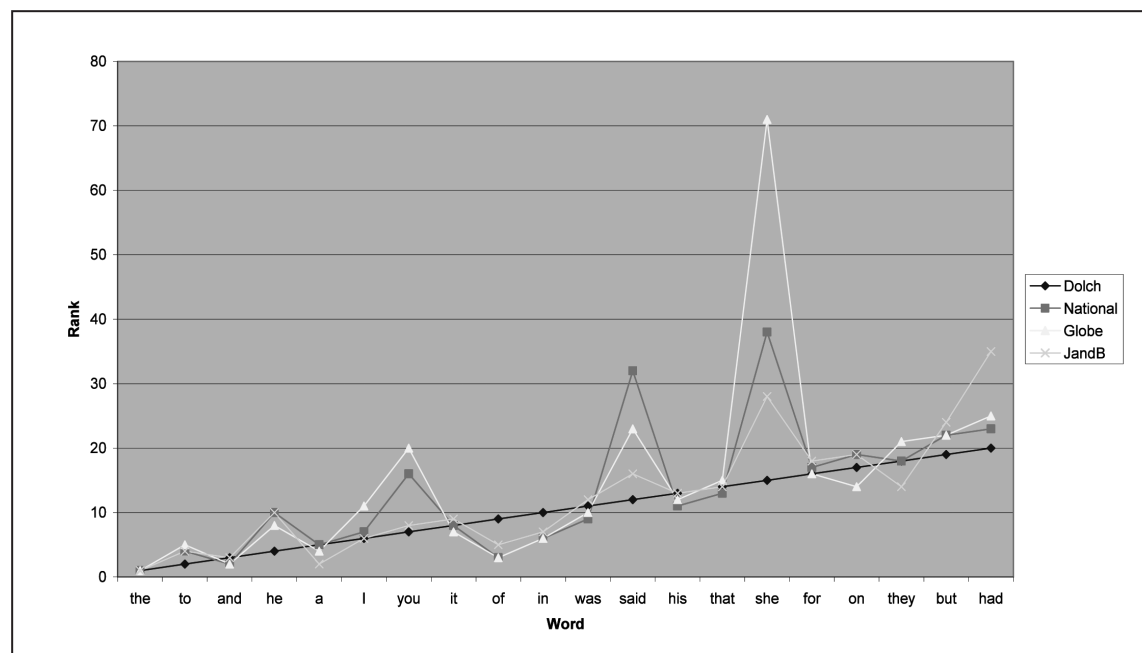
This application of textual analysis to these three sets of Japanese EFL textbooks allows us to consider a range of

TABLE 10: Percentages of hapax legomena

	National	Globe	JandB
1-gram	44.80	50.48	48.38
2-grams	76.68	79.84	76.49
3-grams	92.15	94.23	91.29
4-grams	97.99	98.76	96.62

comparisons across the textbook series. The comparative data allows us to consider the degree of similarity or divergence between these book series at the level of individual and multiword usage. For instance, Jack and Betty appears to diverge more from the other two textbook series in terms of n-gram frequencies. The high incidence of hapax legomena suggests a lack of focus upon multiword sequences on the part of the textbook authors and may indicate greater emphasis upon grammar over vocabulary. Finally, Dolch word analysis indicates good coverage of the main high frequency reading words but lower success in terms of high frequency nouns, especially in the case of the Globe series.

More broadly, our analysis of these textbooks provides a case study for the application of computer-based text analysis tools. There are other features in our textbook

FIGURE 11: Top twenty Dolch words**TABLE 11:** Missing Dolch nouns

National	Globe	JandB
birthday	chair	chicken
	chicken	cow
	doll	duck
	egg	kitty
	kitty	rabbit
	pig	santa
	rabbit	seed
	santa	
	squirrel	
	toy	

series that could be elucidated through analysis tools like Posit. For instance, our hypothesis that grammar rather than vocabulary was prominent in the textbooks' design may be further explored by analysis of the grammatical structures employed across the textbooks. We propose that tools such as Posit have considerable potential as a means of learning from available text corpora, whether in the realm of EFL or elsewhere.

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ENDNOTES

¹ For detailed analysis, the system outputs data files in spreadsheet-compatible format.

² Individual words (or word sequences) that appear only once in a collection of texts.

³ The frequency counts treat each word as lower case.

The Bukkyo University and University of Hawai'i College of Education Partnership¹

Hunter McEwan, Sunao Goto, and Yukiyo Horike

For the past ten years, the College of Education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM-COE) and Bukkyo University in Kyoto, Japan have enjoyed a special relationship designed to promote cooperation and academic exchanges between the two institutions. The agreement of cooperation was signed on June 5, 2000 by President Shinko Nakai of Bukkyo and Dean Randy Hitz of the UHM-COE. Like most formal agreements of this sort, work had begun a bit earlier to shape an agreement. In effect, the partnership had its origins in a number of informal meetings by faculty from the two institutions during meetings of the Japan-US Teacher Education Consortium (JUSTEC); in particular, the 1998 meeting held at Bukkyo and the 1999 meeting in Honolulu. Professors Haruo Nishinosono and Keijiro Tanaka of Bukkyo University and Professor Aiko Oda of UHM-COE were the people who were most instrumental in making the arrangements and negotiating the details of the first "formal agreement of cooperation," as it is referred to.

The aim of this agreement was to promote student and faculty exchanges, conduct joint research and publications activities, encourage participation in seminars and academic meetings, facilitate the exchange of academic materials, and arrange special short-term academic programs including practical training and field work. The first agreement was set up for a period of five years. The second agreement, identical to the first, was signed on March 31, 2005, this time by Chancellor Peter Englert and Dean Randy Hitz for UHM and by President Ryuzen Fukuhara and Dean Shoko Nishioka on behalf of Bukkyo University.

The UHM-Bukkyo agreement has been especially effective in living up to its aim of promoting academic exchanges. Each year, during the spring semester, around fifty students and faculty arrive from Bukkyo to visit the UHM campus. While there, arrangements are made for them to visit local elementary schools. These visits have been made possible by the school/university partnership between several local schools and UH. As a result, Bukkyo faculty and their students have been able to visit a number

of schools in several districts—for example, Ala Wai ES, the UH Lab School, Holomua ES, Waikīkī ES, Mānoa ES, Nānāikapono ES, and Ke Kula Kaiapuni 'o Ānuenue (Ānuenue Immersion School). During these week-long visits the Japanese student teachers, under the supervision of their faculty, conduct mini-lessons in English at different elementary school grade levels. Most of these students are in the Bukkyo University's elementary education program, but visiting groups often include a small number of students in the clinical psychology program who are preparing to become school counselors. To accommodate these students, school visits have been arranged so that they can meet with school counselors to learn about the issues facing school counseling programs in the US. In addition, a small number of students are enrolled in Bukkyo's Life-Long Learning program and special visits have been arranged for these groups to Kapiolani Community College and various Honolulu senior centers.

The visits provide an excellent opportunity for students to practice their English and widen their horizons regarding teaching in the US, especially given the much greater diversity of cultures represented in Hawai'i's classrooms than in Japan's. But the benefits go two ways as they also offered the student teachers a chance to teach American students about Japanese culture. For example, during the 2010 visit to Ala Wai Elementary School the Bukkyo student teachers, under the supervision of Bukkyo faculty Sunao Goto and Yukiyo Horike, made a presentation to the entire fifth grade on Japanese martial arts. The Ala Wai students were invited to hone their skills as samurai warriors by using paper swords to cut through sheets of paper and then, dressed as ninja warriors they threw paper stars at a target. Besides being great fun, the Ala Wai students learned valuable lessons about Japanese values.

Over the ten years of the partnership, these visits have evolved into well-organized study tours in which the Bukkyo students make elaborate preparations for their trips by carefully planning their mini-lessons, which they

conduct in English. Dr. Sunao Goto, Associate Professor of Education at Bukkyo University emphasizes the importance of these study trips in the context of the recent guidelines of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MEXT) to require public elementary schools in Japan to implement English education activities as part of their international education programs. The study tours provide Bukkyo University students with a unique opportunity to practice what they would be required to teach as elementary school teachers. They gain experience in using English in the classroom, cultivate a deeper understanding of different cultures, and learn to develop their communicative competence in English in realistic educational settings.

Another benefit of these visits is that the Bukkyo faculty have been able to establish a number of direct relationships with schools in Hawai'i. In 2006, Professor Goto coordinated a special project between Rakushi Elementary School in Kyoto and and Holomua Elementary School. Over a period of six days from March 26 to March 30, six student teachers, four university faculty, and a number of elementary school teachers organized and presented a Festival of Japan to the Hawai'i elementary school students. Students taught mini-lessons and conducted a festival that involved instruction in so-ran bushi (an ancient Japanese sea shanty), dances, paper airplane construction, and calligraphy.

Dr. Goto reports that these study tours have been of considerable value in familiarizing student teachers with English and in providing opportunities to hone their English communication and instructional skills. In addition, the experience of taking an active part in an elementary school classroom offers valuable exposure to a more diverse student population than is typical in Japan.

For UHM-COE faculty the opportunities that have been made available by the partnership to visit Kyoto and interact with Bukkyo faculty has been of equally high value. In the past ten years more than twenty-five COE faculty have visited Bukkyo, usually in connection with the annual International Education Conference. Bukkyo University is an incomparably rich setting for a conference. It is close to some of the most important Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in Japan. Daitoku-ji is close by the campus, as is the celebrated Golden Temple, Kinkaku-ji. The world famous rock garden of Ryoan-ji is only a short bus ride away. For many COE faculty, these visits have provided an incomparable introduction to Japanese culture and history.

Bukkyo University dates back to the Meiji Restoration of 1868. It originated as a Buddhist teaching facility at Chion-In Temple. Chion-In was founded in memory of Saint Honen (1133-1212 C.E.) who spread the Jodo ("Pure Land") sect of Japanese Buddhism during the Kamakura Era. To this day, Bukkyo University remains dedicated to the principles of Saint Honen and requires that its presidents be priests of Jodo-shin Buddhism.

It is no exaggeration to say that these annual visits have offered UHM-COE faculty with wonderfully valuable opportunities to gain insights into Japanese culture and to learn about the kinds of problems that our Japanese colleagues in faculties of education currently face in their work.

The first International Conference on education was held at Bukkyo University in April, 2001 on the topic of field-based teacher education, with Hunter McEwan and Joe Zilliox as presenters from UH. Later conferences have covered a number of significant themes of common interest including such topics as language education; teaching in challenging and changing times; multicultural education, diversity and inclusion; and teacher preparation. Bukkyo has played host to over twenty-five UHM-COE faculty over these years, all of whom have felt enriched by the hospitality and generosity of their Japanese hosts.

In 2006, a new exchange format was arranged to provide opportunities for scholarly exchange on a slightly longer basis. Professor Seiji Hara was the first scholar to make the trip from Kyoto to Honolulu, followed the next year by Hunter McEwan who spent three invaluable weeks at Bukkyo in June 2007 where he met with faculty, participated in classes, and visited schools. (This special issue of *Educational Perspectives* on the theme of teaching English in Japan is one of the outcomes of that visit). Later visitors of the scholar exchange program have included Hiroko Higashiyama in 2008 and Tony Toralba in 2009. This year, 2010, Sunao Goto is a visiting professor in the Department of Educational Foundations at UHM-COE.

The term of the second agreement is now complete and discussions are underway for a third five-year agreement to continue the Bukkyo-UH tradition of cooperation and partnership.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ This article was composed with input from Aiko Oda, David Ericson, and Christine Sorensen from the University of Hawai'i and JoAnn Soong of Ala Wai School.
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