What social or cultural factors assist or hinder Japanese learners in acquiring communication skills in English?

By

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Abstract

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In this thesis, the author examines several cultural and social factors that assist and hinder Japanese learners in acquiring speaking and listening skills (communicative skills) in English. A study was undertaken to explain the situation of Teaching English as second language in Japan and focused on the area of cultural and social factors that contribute to the proficiency of learning English. This study involves with interviews of six Japanese English teachers and four Assistant Language Teachers and a survey to forty students. Through the study, the author found current situation of Oral Communication class and students’ perception toward Oral Communication in Japan.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Introduction

Over the past ten years, Monbusho, the Japanese ministry of education has revised the teaching curriculums in order to establish student individuality. English education has also evolved as a way of raising individual living standard in the international society.

Statement of the problem

Although change has been happening in the last ten years, there are clearly still some shortcomings in language education in the way of improving communicative skills in Japan which are not being addressed. Many students can read and write effectively, but they still struggle to communicate face to face. There seems to be a difference between Japanese students and students from other countries in their comfortableness and ease in speaking English as a second language. Some of this uneasiness can be attributed to linguistic differences, but there also seems to be prominent or important social and cultural factors that may cause this difference. In this thesis, an attempt is made to identify social and cultural factors that play a role in communicative English. This study examines the approaches and conditions of learning English as a second language in Japan. Through this study, the author attempts to answer how Japanese educational conditions and approaches to teaching English might be improved in providing a more
effective outcome in the way of communicative English. This study also identifies how knowledge and awareness of social and cultural factors may increase the understanding of how to more effectively teach the communicative aspect of English to Japanese second language learners.

English is a common language throughout the world. Business and political meetings are carried out through English. Because of the lack of confidence of communicating in English, Japanese people are sometimes not able to express their opinions sufficiently when they go to another country or when they communicate with foreigners. In order to recognize Japan as one of the internationalized countries in the world, it is important for each individual Japanese to express his own idea and culture to people in other countries. In Japanese traditional culture, the identities of Japanese citizens are based on the sameness of individuals rather than differences. Researchers often characterize Japanese culture as traditional, homogeneous, and group oriented (Kubota 1999). We can see this characteristic in the teaching techniques and school settings in Japan. Teachers put values on the sameness of individual students rather than differences and teachers use traditional teaching techniques such as memorization, repetition, and drills. In English class, the teacher focuses on reading and translating rather than speaking or listening. According to LoCastro (1990), this approach “dehumanizes” or “uncontextualizes” English (as cited in Hashimoto, 2000).

Japanese government defines ‘internationalization’ as “a process of reconfirming the Japanese-ness of individual citizens who have a mission to be ‘trusted’ in the international community” in its policy documents (Hashimoto 2000, p 43). Also the goal of foreign language education defined by Monbusho is to deepen the understanding of
language and culture and raise the positive attitude towards communication (Monbusho, 2000). In order to produce Japanese students who can express their opinions and introduce Japanese culture to the international community, English education has to be changed from the traditional approach which emphasizes rote memorization to the communication based approach.

In this study, I look at Japanese approaches for teaching English to second language learners and analyze the challenges for English language education in Japan. Through this process, I attempt to address some of the educational or cultural concerns that may inhibit the learning process of communication English in Japan.

Purpose

The purpose of the thesis is to examine what kind of cultural or social factors assist and hinder Japanese learners in acquiring communication skills (listening and speaking skills) in English. A study was undertaken to explain the history of the Japanese approach to teaching English and will focus on the area of cultural and social factors that contribute to the proficiency of learning English. This study used a qualitative research method of inquiry, including review of literature and interviews. I conducted a survey with forty Japanese high school students to establish their perception of learning English in Japan. In addition to the student survey, I interviewed three ALTs (Assistant Language Teacher by native speakers) and three JTEs (Japanese Teachers of English) in Japan.

Background

I worked as a Japanese teacher of English for three years in a vocational high school in Gifu prefecture in Japan from 1995 to 1998. During this time, I was privileged
enough to participate in some of the restructuring of English education through the introduction of ALTs, new materials and curricula development. Compared to my schooling years, the approach of English education since then has been more focused on communication. Most schools now have access to ALTs and such valuable tools as language laboratories and the Internet.

Through my schooling years and teaching experience in Japan, I found several problems that may hinder or affect Japanese students in acquiring English communicative skills. First, in Japan, most of the classrooms are made up of more than forty students and all students are given the same instruction by a single teacher. It is difficult for the teacher to pay individual attention to each student and give opportunities for them to interact with each other. Students become reluctant to communicate in English in such a large sized classroom. When I was a high school student, there were fifty students in one class and the method that English teachers used was grammar-based instruction. The methodology did not allow students to have an opportunity to communicate in English. After becoming a teacher, I had to teach twenty to forty students at the same time in Oral Communication class. Even when I tried to have students speak in English by letting them pair up, to do skits and demonstrations, students would become tired of attempting to speak in English and began chatting in Japanese during the interaction.

Another factor that seemed to affect the learning of English was that students are forced to memorize English grammatical structure, words, and phrases for the entrance examination of university. This is the case of ippan-school, normal school, in which students go to university after graduation. The school that I was working for was a jitsugyo-school, a vocational school, where students do not have the pressure of
university entrance examinations. That gave me the flexibility of teaching which was in contrast to teachers in ippan-schools. However, in most ippan-schools, there is high pressure towards entrance examination for university. Teachers use traditional translation methods and students become eager to memorize English structure, words and phrases as much as possible in order to pass the examination. Because the examination at present is the assessment of memorization, for six years English education is emphasized by reading and translation skills and not so much on communication skills. Therefore, students acquire English as knowledge based and not as a tool for communication.

There is another factor that should also be considered in the teaching of English, which involves Japanese culture. When I was doing team teaching with an ALT in class, many students could not speak English with the ALT since they were shy and afraid of making mistakes. Also, when Japanese students come to the U.S. and study English in ESL courses, they hesitate to ask questions or give their opinions and struggle with the different instructional styles. It is said that Japanese are people who are generally shy and have a “culture of shame” (Clerc 2000). However, if students are always reserved and hesitate to speak up, their speaking ability cannot be improved without practice. I am proud of Japan’s long history and unique tradition and recognize the importance of preserving and perpetuating many of our cultural and special customs. However, Japanese culture and tradition which places value on the “sameness of individuals” rather than individual differences tend to exclude foreigners from Japanese society and discourage students to communicate with foreigners.

In Japan, a teaching credential can be earned by taking a few required courses in college. So even Japanese teachers who teach communication English in secondary
school sometimes have a lack of training in communicating in English. Many English
teachers major in English literature or Education in their undergraduate level. The period
of practical training for college students less than one month, which is not enough to
acquire teaching skills. After becoming certified teachers, they not only become busy
with teaching English, but also become involved in classroom management or club
activities. Many JTEs, especially the older generation, are good at teaching grammar, but
not communication since they were not trained in oral/aural skills and do not know how
to teach communication in English. Those teachers tend to depend on ALTs for the
preparation of lessons and are not able to communicate with ALTs and use them
effectively in class.

Definitions

ALT: Assistant Language Teacher by native speaker of English

Audio-lingual method: It focuses on oral skills in order to let students acquire good
pronunciation and accurate speech. Also this methods stress
the teaching of culture and prepare students to deal with
everyday situations in the target community (Hadley, 2000 p112).

Communicative English: English as a tool of communication

Confucianism: “A Chinese way of thought which teaches that one should be loyal
to one’s family, friends, and rulers and treat others as one would
like to be treated” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English,
1991 p259).

Curriculum for English: By the Course of Study Guidelines (Monbusho, 2000),
all high school students are required to take general English,
English I and English II, Oral Communication I, Oral
Communication II, reading and writing for graduation.

Entrance
examination for University: High school students who want to enter national University are required to take nationwide entrance examination and those who want to enter private University are required to take each school’s examination.

ESL: English as a Second Language

Jp pan-high school: Normal high school where most students go to University after graduation

JET Program (Japan Exchange Program): A government program which run by the Japanese Ministries of Education, Home Affairs, and Foreign Affairs created in 1987, which places native speakers of English in Japanese public schools.

Jitsugyo-high school: Vocational high school where most students start working after graduation

JTE: Japanese Teachers English:

Lose face: Be humiliated, lose one’s credibility (Oxford Encyclopedic English, 1996).

Natural Approach: The goal of the Natural Approach is set an intermediate proficiency in the second language, at least in oral-aural skills (Hadley, 2000 p120).
A primary emphasis is on the teaching and practice of vocabulary with the little emphasis on structural accuracy (Hadley, 2000 p120).

Oral Communication I: By Monbusho’s guideline, the aim of this course is that to improve English communicative skills through listening and speaking and raise the attitude to communicate in English (Monbusho, 2000).

Oral Communication II: By Monbosho’s guideline (Monbusho, 2000), to raise the attitude to debate several topics in English (Monbusho, 2000).
Prefecture: “a governmental division or area of certain countries, such as France and Japan” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1991 p985). It is like a county or state in the U.S.

TPR (Total Physical Response): This approach is based on the belief that listening comprehension should be developed as children learn listening their native language before any oral activity starts, also it is based on the belief that skills can be more developed if the teachers appeals to the students’ kenshesthetic-sensory system (Hadley, 2000 p118).

Traditional Approach (Method): Its main goal is to enable students to access appreciate great literature with the help of their native language through analysis of the grammar of the target language and translation (Hadley, 2000 p106).

Limitations of the study

The study has been restricted with regard to the individual characteristics of the respondents. Since data were gathered within a relatively short period of time, there was no method in the procedure to measure how these descriptions may have recently changed or may be expected to have changed in the near future. In short, these static descriptions may not be reliable reports of the same in some future retesting period. Also I did not interview subjects face to face. Instead, I sent questions to my previous colleagues and they responded on a cassette tape. Therefore, I could not ask follow up questions for clarification, so I had to depend on respondents’ interpretations.

Another limitation is that the control subjects for the study were selected from high school students in a suburban city in Gifu Prefecture in Japan. These students may represent a select sub-population. For the interview, I selected teachers from several high schools whose academic levels varies, so it is necessary to consider the conceptual differences by academic level.
As has been previously stated, the purpose of this study was to examine communicative skills of Japanese learners of English. The second chapter deals with a review and analysis of the supporting literature having to do with cultural and social influences on second language learning. The methods and procedures of the study are presented in Chapter 3 and the results of the analysis of the data are presented in the final Chapter 4. Lastly, Chapter 5 of the study is concerned with the summary of findings, communicative skills of Japanese learners of English discussions, implications, and suggestions for further investigations regarding the topic of communicative skills of Japanese learners of English.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

This chapter will review and analyze the supporting literature having to do with cultural and social factors on second language learning. There has been a significant amount of research done on second language instruction in Japan. The resources discuss cultural and social factors which affect and may hinder Japanese learners to acquire communicative English including Japan’s internationalization, Japanese culture, teachers’ training limitation, traditional instruction and students’ perception toward English instruction.

I. Internationalization

Japan is in the process of its internationalization through English education. Monbusho (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) states that it is important to promote individuality of each student in order to contribute to the future international society in the moral educational policies (Monbusho, 2000). Several researchers emphasize Japan’s internationalization in their articles. Suzuki (2000) states that English education so far has been only focused on ‘importing’ other cultures and Japanese students try to understand other countries in the world through English curriculum. However, for Japan’s internationalization in the future, Japanese people have to not only learn about other countries, but also convey Japanese way of thinking and Japanese culture to the rest of the world by using a tool “English” (Suzuki,
2000). Hashimoto (2000) discusses Japan’s internationalization through English education. According to Hashimoto, “internationalization has became an important concept in the process of re-establishing Japanese identity after the war, providing a view of self (Japan) and the other (the rest of the world)” (Hashimoto 2000, para.3).

II. Japanese Culture

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are several cultural factors that affect and hinder Japanese learners to acquire communicative English skills. Kubota (1999) discusses Japanese culture and Japanese education in her article. According to Kubota (1999), Japanese culture is characterized as traditional, homogeneous, and group oriented, which strongly emphasizes harmony. In this article, the author discusses Japanese educational system which forms students knowledge. Japanese elementary education has less emphasis on creativity, self-expression, individualism, and critical thinking than U.S. education (Kubota, 1999). In Japanese classrooms, teachers are the authority and students are taught to follow the structured instruction. In secondary education, the instruction is influenced by the entrance examination for high school which is required of all students who want to enter high school. Since the examination is the assessment of memorization of words and phrases and listening skill, students put emphasis on memorization. Also in high school, the instruction is influenced by the entrance examination for University, which is the assessment of memorization. However, there has been a debate if this memorization-oriented education affects creativity or self-expression (Kubota, 1999).

Claire (1998) describes cultural and linguistics differences between Japanese
students and American students and the struggle among Japanese students when they attend school in America. According to Claire (1998), because of cultural differences, Japanese students face many difficulties when they attend American schools. Claire goes on to report that in Japanese schools, the group culture is more important than the individual. Japanese students are considered not good at self-expression and ask teacher "right" answers whereas American students put values on personal interpretation.

Fukuda (1990) and Kouyama (1985) stated the impression that Japanese are not good at English has been widespread in the world. Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) is considered to be a key element for internationalization. The difficulty in communication, such as listening and speaking in particular is a serious problem (as cited in Hashimoto, 2000). In the Educational history of 20th century Japan, the promotion of individuality or an emphasis on 'individuality' has been a main agenda (Hashimoto, 2000). Clerk (2000) discusses "English-phobia" among Japanese students. According to him, one of the reasons for this "English-phobia" is that Japanese are people who are shy and have a culture of shame. This characteristic may hinder Japanese students from promoting their self-expressive skills and their communicative skills. William (1994) also states that Japanese cultural style in classrooms value passivity in conversation and which students listen to and learn but do not speak (as cited in Scholefield, 1997).

Tudjman (1990) discusses how knowledge is organized in Japanese culture in his article. According to Tudjman (1990), Japanese knowledge belongs primarily to the corporation; it is formed, organized, and used mainly within the corporation. And
people communicate with each other in a harmonious balance. That is, Japanese people think about what others think before speaking and try to keep harmony in the conversation, whereas Western people speak while thinking. Discussions among Japanese are usually quiet, one person speaks at one time. They come to the conclusion through the process of mutual agreement. On the other hand, discussions among western people are usually noisy since they think and speak at the same time. They come to the conclusion through debating. This difference may hinder Japanese people to participate in the conversation among Western people. The author also compares the way of thinking between Westerners and Japanese. As far as the way of communication, experimental research shows that only 35% of messages are transmitted verbal, and 65% are non-verbally among Japanese, that is, ‘seeing’ is very strong in Japanese communication. It is conceivable that these differences may have caused difficulties for Japanese people in communicating with western people.

In addition to Japanese culture, other authors discuss Asian culture. Nimmannit (1998) discusses Asian culture which may hinder oral skills. According to the survey that the author gave to adult learners of English, most students answered that they had fear of losing ‘face’, insecurity, and lack of confidence in language learning class. Most Asians feel comfortable following rules, group oriented and value harmony so that students feel more secure working in pairs or in groups (Nimmannit, 1998). The author suggests that it is important for teachers to be sensitive toward students’ feelings and to build classroom atmosphere that students feel comfortable to speak up. Lin (1998) mentions Chinese Confucian culture in his article. According to Lin, when Confucianism is applied to language learning, students are reluctant to
express themselves loudly or fear of losing face. Because in Confucian culture, compromise between people is important so that the students tend to be discouraged to speak out and become quiet in class.

III. Japanese teachers' lack of training

Teachers' lack of training is considered to contribute to the difficulties students have in the acquisition of communicative English. Browne and Wada (1998) conducted a survey of Japanese English teachers in Chiba prefecture. With regard to the major of the teachers, 63% (ippan school) and 75% (jitsugyo school) of the teachers majored in literature in college. However, the percentage of the teachers who majored in linguistics is only 12% and the percentage of TESL/TEFL major is only 11%. It is reported that those who majored in TESL/TEFL (Teaching English as Second Language/Teaching English as Foreign Language) at the undergraduate level felt more prepared for the many challenges since those who majored in literature were not required to take additional courses in second language acquisition theory, ESL methodology, and techniques, or testing (Browne and Wada, 1998).

Scholefield (1997) criticizes the system of obtaining teachers' license and the system of appointments. TEFL training for teachers is limited to the undergraduate degree and teaching practice. Besides taking some requirement classes in college, students are required only two weeks teaching practice. In teaching practice, teachers are trained to follow the supervisors who usually practice traditional techniques (Scholefield, 1997). Also the appointments are based on examination results which consist of written tests of education subjects, professional and teaching subjects, and
interviews so that teacher's communication skills are not really evaluated in the examination (Scholtefield, 1997).

It has been over ten years since the JET program was established. In the early years, many Japanese English teachers found difficulties in communicating in English with a foreigner (Scholtefield, 1997). According to the survey by Browne and Wada (1998) in Chiba prefecture, about half of the teachers in the entire prefecture had experience of team-teaching more than 25 times. However, 25% of jitsu-gyo high school teacher's and 10% of ippan high school teacher had the experience of only 1-5 times of team-teaching. Although there is still a great deal of debate if the JET program has improved the quality of communicative language teaching in Japan, it had an impact on English ability of Japanese English Teachers and their confidence of working with native speaker ALTs (Browne and Wada, 1998). Scholtefield (1997) criticizes Handbook for Team Teaching (1994) published by Monbusho and other publications for team-teaching since they do not form systematic teacher education.

Besides the JET program, Monbusho began a two-month program for teachers to study overseas in 1979. Since then, opportunities for study overseas for teachers have been increasing. However, the program pays little attention to educational research of schooling and instruction in Japan (Scholtefield, 1997). Also there are several organizations among English teachers, for example, the Japan Association for Language Teaching, in order to make changes in English education in Japan. However, less than half of the memberships or contributors of those organizations are Japanese and there seems to be little impact on the secondary school levels (Scholtefield, 1997).
IV. Traditional instruction

As mentioned in Chapter 1, because of the traditional teaching methods that have been used in Japan, students are not able to acquire communicative skills in English. Teaching methods in Japanese language classes put emphasis on traditional techniques such as memorization, repetition, and drill rather than creativity and innovation (Kubota, 1999). Because the goal of studying English is to pass the entrance exams, English teaching in Japan has traditionally emphasized methodology and materials (Offner, 1997). The class is overcrowded with many students and Japanese students are accustomed to a rote learning style, which focuses on memorization and test taking (Claire, 1999). English education in Japan 'dehumanizes' and 'decontextualizes' English language by preoccupying students with reading and translating (Lo Castro, 1990 as cited in Hashimoto, 2000). Japanese students tend to lack “critical thinking” and “problem solving” abilities (Claire, 1999).

Schoefield (1997) explains the history of the teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) toward oral approach since 1950s’ in Japan. During 1950s’ and 1960s’, ELEC (The English Language Exploratory Committee) established in 1956 stressed two areas of English education, teacher education and the production of teaching for the oral approach. However, many teachers found it difficult to accept oral approach since they were not used to it and it was difficult to see how this approach would benefit students with regard to their examination. In the mid 1960s, audio-lingual movement began, which moves away from the grammar-translation method and let students acquire the ability to produce all of the sound system with basic grammar within a limited vocabulary. However, according to the survey in 1975, 55%
to 64% of 500 junior and senior high school teachers used combination of grammar-translation and some oral practices (Uemura and Sato, 1985 as cited in Scholefield, 1997). Reasons for the reluctance of transition among teachers were oral practice was confined to 'parrot reading' of textbook (Sato, 1978 as cited in Scholefield, 1997) and Japanese schools were not suited to the audio-lingual approach since teaching hours are short and the classrooms are overcrowded (Okuda, 1978 as cited in Scholefield, 1997). Imamura (1978) blames teachers who were low in English proficiency, reluctant to serve as models for students and prefer traditional styles because they are accustomed to it (as cited in Scholefield, 1997).

There are several high school teachers who discuss the reasons for teachers’ preference of traditional teaching methods. Reasons cited by Scholefield (1997), for continuing to use grammar-translation include the teachers’ low proficiency in English and their explanation that ‘it is convenient to carry out our lessons in Japanese’ (Kumamoto Prefecture Kumamoto Senior High School 1992, Morrow 1987), and students are still threatened of face-to-face communication (Mie Prefecture Iino High School 1992). Many teachers feel powerless to alter these factors and continue to work within a system they may find theoretically indefensible but which they assume ‘will remain for the time being’ (Ibaraki Prefecture Fujishiro Senior High School 1992).

V. Students’ perception toward English instruction

It is important to know what kind of instruction students prefer and how they want to study English. Several authors have analyzed students’ perspective toward English instruction. Furuhat (1999) discusses Japanese students’ preferred styles of learning. The questionnaires were distributed to 237 Japanese students who
were attending intensive English language schools in the United States. Questionnaires asked about their preferred teaching methods, traditional methods, natural approach, TPR (Total Physical Response), and error corrections. The result showed that most Japanese students preferred new methods to traditional approaches, however, to some extent, students wanted traditional methods because of their educational background. As far as the error correction is concerned, most students considered error correction as a positive approach to improve their language skills and they did not feel embarrassed. However, since Japanese culture greatly values an 'face' in public and Japanese have to save 'face' by not making mistakes, instructors need to take into consideration the techniques for error correction in order not to make students fear (Fukuhata, 1999). Fukuhara (1999) gives some suggestions for classroom instructions. Classroom techniques should use Natural Approach which has emphasis on listening and speaking. With regard to error correction and rote memorization, traditional approaches should be used. The teacher should try to use tactful techniques to reduce students' anxiety, such as group work or cooperative group. The use of TPR techniques should be useful. Teachers need to allow ample time in order to lower anxiety levels and help to create the classroom atmosphere in which students feel comfortable about speaking up.

Tajino and Walker (1998) discuss how to make team teaching more effective in Japan. Data were obtained by using a questionnaire that was distributed to 151 senior high school students. As far as the skills that students expect from the roles of the JTE and the ALT, students perceive ALTs as listening/speaking oriented and JETs as reading/writing oriented. Regarding the expectations of JETs and ALTs in the
classroom, students expect ALTs help with pronunciation and JETs help with grammar and guide how to study English. Students perceive ALTs as useful in the classroom and find team-teaching more fascinating. The authors believe that two-way communication among three parties, students, JET and ALT are necessary in order to improve the speaking as well as other communicative skills. It is concluded that team-teaching should move towards the process of team-learning, in which the three parties have opportunities to exchange ideas and convey a sense of their individual cultural values (Tajino and Walker, 1998).

Lin (1998) analyzes Taiwanese students’ perspective toward English learning. The survey was distributed to 346 college level English language learners in Taiwan. Looking at the result, the study indicated that the high percentage of students want to be able to listen and understand everyday English and agree with the idea that skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are equally important. A significant percentage of students disagree with the idea that being able to read in English is enough and focusing on only reading is the way of English learning. Regarding fear of learning English, a large number of students agree with the idea that studying English in junior and high school cause fear and unpleasant feelings. Analyzing the result, most students consider English communicative skills, such as, listening and speaking are as important as reading and writing and want to acquire those skills.

In this chapter, literature showed that Japanese English education is changing from tradition to communicative to assist with internationalization. However, there are still many cultural and social factors that hinder this transition in Japanese school settings. In order to identify these factors in recent school settings, I conducted
interviews to Japanese English teachers and Assistant Language Teachers by native speakers and a survey to high school students. Chapter Three will explain the methodology of the study.
Chapter 3
Methodology

This study investigated students' perceptions toward Oral communication, and Japanese English Teachers' and Assistant Language Teachers' perception toward English instruction. I gathered the data through interviews with four Japanese English teachers and six Assistant Language Teachers and a survey of forty students in a ippan high school. This study took place in several schools in a few cities in Gifu prefecture in Japan. They included three schools from Gifu city, the capital city, one school from Kakamigahara city, east of Gifu city, one school from Kani city, east of Kakamigahara city, and one school from Nakatsugawa city, a relatively small city where I taught English for three years in Gifu prefecture.

Subjects
Interviews

The subjects I interviewed were four Japanese Teachers of English (JTE) and six Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). I asked four of my previous colleagues to do the interviews. They looked for JTE and ALTs who are native speakers of English accepted and participated in the interviews. By Monbusho's guideline, usually one ALT is placed in each school, so each Japanese English Teacher asked each ALT to respond the questionnaire in his or her own school. Since one of the JTEs knew a few ALTs, he interviewed three ALTs. Over all, four JTEs and six ALTs accepted the interviews. I sent out consent forms to those ten teachers. They all accepted the conditions and signed
in the forms. (Please refer to the Appendix C for the consent form). ALTs are from several countries, one from Ireland, one from New Zealand and two from England, two from America. Compared to ALTs, JTEs were not willing to accept the interviews and I did not get as many responses as I got from ALTs. I suspect that this tendency was because of the topic and Japanese seniority system. JETs, especially older JETs are accustomed to traditional method and hesitated to change the method. My previous colleagues are around the age of 28 years old except one teacher and they hesitate to ask older teachers to accept the interviews. However, ALTs were used to oral method in their own countries and tended to think that instruction that has been used in Japan were boring and wanted to change it. Thus they were willing to accept the interviews.

Survey

The participants of the survey were forty freshman students in an ippan high school in Gifu city. This is the high school which I had graduated from. The school is located in the suburban area of Gifu city. There are 400 students in each grade, so total number of the students in this school is 1200. The school has three major courses in each grade. These are normal course in which students acquire general knowledge as high school students and prepare for college education, art course in which students acquire artistic skills, such as Japanese or western drawing, painting or sculpture other than general knowledge and music course in which students acquire music skills such as singing, playing some instruments. There are eight normal classes, one music and one art class in each grade. Each class has about forty students.

For the survey, I chose normal course since the curriculum in the other course
focuses on other artistic subjects. Also the method of English instruction that was used in
my school days was traditional, and we were not offered Oral Communication classes at
that time. So I wanted to see the recent tendency of learning style and students’
perceptions toward Oral Communication. One of my previous colleagues worked in the
high school so I asked her to do the survey. She selected one of the normal classes in the
first level of the high school, which is equivalent to the ninth grade in American school.
This school offered Oral Communication class only for the first grade students and the
students in the class were relatively active compared to other classes that she teaches. In
this first grade or the level of high school, students are fifteen or sixteen years old. There
are twenty girls and eighty boys in the class.

Interviews

I sent interview questions to four of my previous colleagues by e-mail. JTEs
read the questionnaire aloud and responded on the cassette tape themselves. For ALTs,
JTE gave them the questionnaire and ALTs responded on the cassette tape. My
previous colleagues responded their answers on the cassette tape and they made type-
written forms, too. It took about twenty minutes for each interview. The questions of the
interviews are about their preference of Oral Communication and their perception of the
students and how they prepare for or instruct the class. (Please refer to Appendix A for
the questions of the interviews)

Survey

I sent a survey form to a friend of mine who works in the high school which
I graduated from in Gifu city. She teaches Oral Communication for the first grade
students in the high school. She explained that I wanted to know how students perceive
Oral communication class and English learning. The students were willing to accept the survey. The survey was distributed during a normal Oral Communication class. It took about twenty minutes to complete. My friend, JET and her ALT from Ireland administered the survey in the class. The questions of the survey are about students’ perception about Oral Communication and their attitude toward English learning. I developed some of the survey questions by myself and used some questions that was used by Hamako Furuhara (1999) in Traditional and TRP Approaches to ESL: A study of Japanese Students Language, Culture and Curriculum, v11,n1, (p132-133) and designed in a Likert Scale format. (Please refer to Appendix B for the questions of the survey questions.)

Data Analysis

For interviews, my previous colleagues sent the cassette tapes which contained their answers to me in the U.S. Some of them made written forms and sent them to me through e-mail. I received answers from four JTEs and six ALTs. I typed all of their answers, listed them by questions and divided them into JTEs and ALTs. Looking at their answers, I summarized and categorized them, and also I recorded some of the important comments. For the survey, my friend collected the answers from forty students during the normal class and put numbers into the table. She had a chance to visit me in the U.S in the winter vacation, so she brought the results to me when she came over and we were able to discuss the process for data collection that she had done for me. Chapter 4 discusses how I analyze the data and gives the results of the data. For the interview, there are similarities and differences among the answers. Similar answers were grouped into one sentence and will be displayed in a table.
Chapter 4  
Data Analysis  

In this chapter, I will analyze the data that I received from the interviews with JTEs and ALTs and the survey of forty students regarding the effectiveness of oral communication techniques as taught in Japan. First, I will present results of the interviews in the tables which are divided into two categories: JTEs and ALTs. On each question, I will include an analysis of their answers. And then I will present results of the survey in the table along with an analysis.

Interview

Question #1: What do you like about teaching Oral Communication Class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>Q1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of them like teaching Oral Communication.</td>
<td>All of them like Oral Communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It is easy to make class fun.&quot;</td>
<td>It relates to real life situations, students are eager to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students become creative and they show more interests than other English classes.</td>
<td>&quot;I can meet and interact with many students.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I like to teach students practical, useful English expressions.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis

All of the teachers like teaching Oral Communication. Compared to general English class, it is more creative and interactive. In general English class, JTEs use only textbooks and tend to make students translate the textbook. However, in Oral communication, there are more chances for interaction between teachers and students.
Also Oral communication is the only class where team-teaching is taking place. This is the only chance that students can communicate with native speakers. So teachers like to see students’ excitement in learning from native speakers.

Question #2: What do you dislike about teaching Oral Communication class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>It takes time for preparation.</td>
<td>Q2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It sometimes tends to be boring.</td>
<td>Classroom size.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because students speak English only in the class, so it is hard to</td>
<td>Textbooks are boring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>make them think in a real situation.</td>
<td>Closed-minded teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes it gets boring, so it is difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to come up with new ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis**

For JTEs, Oral Communication class is challenging because it has been only about ten years since Oral Communication was included in the curriculum. So JTEs are still finding out effective ways of teaching Oral Communication. Also JTEs are not trained in communication skills, so it is hard for them to instruct only in English and takes more time for preparation with ALTs. And as the last comment says, students speak English only in the class, so it tends to be repetition of certain phrases or imitation of the textbook and lacks variety.

For ALTs, classroom size is too big compared to second language education in their own countries, so it is hard to instruct so many students at the same time. Most ALTs mentioned that textbooks are boring. Several topics are introduced in Oral Communication textbooks, such as shopping, travel, restaurant, or talking on the phone. However, students learn limited phrases in each lesson, so they tend to memorize certain phrases in certain situations. ALTs make supplements to the lesson by their own ideas,
but JTEs tend to depend on ALTs for preparation, so ALTs have to think about new ideas all the time. One person mentioned some JTEs are closed-minded. Some JTEs, especially, older JTEs, prefer using traditional methods, and hesitate to bring new ideas, so it is sometimes difficult for ALTs and JTEs to negotiate or compromise with each other.

Question #3: How do you prepare for Oral Communication class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q3 It is based on the textbook. ALTs help for supplements, culture and Expressions.</td>
<td>Q3 It depends on JTEs. But usually based on textbook, they make supplementary materials of the class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis

As mentioned in Question #2, there are several topics introduced in Oral Communication textbooks. Using these topics, JTEs and ALTs give their own ideas, mainly ALTs introduce their cultures or customs and make supplements.

Question #4: How do you work with ALT (JTE)?
(Describe the procedure and materials used for Oral Communication)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q4 Preparation for the lessons. ALT gives main directions and JTE follows and supports them, such as translation.</td>
<td>Q4 It depends on JTE. Preparation for the lessons. Mostly JTE leads and ALT follows.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis

They prepare for the class together. It is interesting to know that JTEs and ALTs stated opposite things about each other. JTEs said that the ALT leads and the JTE follows, on the other hand, ALTs said that the JTE leads and the ALT follows. Both
groups seemingly want to lead the class or possibly depends upon the other to take the lead, however, they have to cooperate with each other.

Question #5: What percentage of the class do you instruct the class in English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>50–80 %</td>
<td>Q5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90–100 %</td>
<td>90–100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis

Most ALTs are not able to speak Japanese, so they instruct the class in English. JTEs sometimes help students with translation, so they use both English and Japanese in class.

Question #6: How frequently do you offer translation in Japanese in Oral Communication class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>As little as possible. They want to instruct in English most of the time. In the introduction of each lesson, usually let students translate English into Japanese.</td>
<td>Q6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis

If JTE offers translation in Japanese, students will depend on the translation. Some students want to translate each sentence, however, the meaning of Oral Communication is not translation but communication in English without thinking in Japanese, so teachers offer translation as little as possible. All ALTs did not agree with the idea of translation since they are the only native speaker in the class and their individual interpretations are valuable. Some of the ALTs understand Japanese and
speak Japanese in daily life, but most of them do not speak Japanese since Japanese
teachers who are in charge of ALTs speaks English to them and deals with their personal
stuff. The reason that JTEs offer translation to students is that sometimes students seem
not to understand ALTs' English and JTEs catch students' reaction quicker than ALTs.

Question #7: How do you encourage students to give their opinions or express
themselves in class?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q7  They want to evaluate their motivation or participation for the class. Not their abilities but their attitudes.</td>
<td>Q7  Most people said it is difficult to make the whole class listen. Relax them in order to make them feel comfortable speaking in class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis

It is important to evaluate not only students' English abilities but also their motivation or participation toward Oral Communication class. As you can see in the the first ALT's comment, they have to instruct twenty or forty students at the same time, so it is hard to make the whole class listen. The aim of Oral Communication is to enable students to acquire communicative skills in English, so teachers have to provide an atmosphere that students feel comfortable speaking up in class. For example, never make students feel bad when they make mistakes, let them think of the situation when they go overseas, since when they go overseas, everyone is watching them speak so they have to accustomed to the situation. One JTE mentioned that it is important to make students feel good when they speak up providing compliment such as, 'good', 'well-done' or 'excellent'.

29
Question #8: What are the skills that you emphasize when you teach Oral Communication?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q8 Listening and speaking.</td>
<td>Q8 Mainly listening and speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their positive attitude.</td>
<td>Fluency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis

Mainly they want students to acquire listening and speaking skills. In Oral Communication class, students do not take notes, so reading or writing skills are not really important. It is focused on communication skills. One ALT mentioned fluency as a skill in communication. Even JTEs are not able to communicate in English fluently since they are not trained. Because of the lack of fluency, Japanese English learners cannot communicate with native speakers of English smoothly. I suppose that ALTs want both students and JTEs to acquire fluency in English. Also it is important to create activities in which three parties, ALT, JTE and students can interact with each other.

Question #9: What goals do you want students to accomplish through learning English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Q9 Not only language but also cultures. | Q9 To communicate in real life situations.  
To have them confidence.  
They want them to enjoy English and feel comfortable speaking. |

Analysis

Oral Communication is the only class that ALTs (native speakers of English) join. So students can immerse themselves in an English speaking atmosphere by interacting with the ALT. As one ALT mentioned, Japanese students are often afraid of making
mistakes and do not have confidence for speaking. Especially, they are so much
cconcerned about slight grammatical mistakes. So ALTs always try to encourage
students to have confidence on speaking English. It is important for students to enjoy
themselves when they learn something. As JTEs mentioned, students can learn more
about the world and gain the knowledge behind the language by teaching not only
language itself but also cultures where English is spoken.

Question #10: What does each individual Japanese need to improve in order to acquire
communicative skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q10 The skills of expression.</td>
<td>Q10 Confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-mindedness.</td>
<td>Willing to try and not worry about slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude about acquiring language.</td>
<td>Errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governments' worthless guidelines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis

Both JTE and ALT mentioned that attitudes are important for language learning
since attitudes affect learning a lot. As mentioned in Question #9, it is important for
students to have confidence. Most Japanese students hesitate to speak up in the
classroom even in their native language. This is one of the characteristics among
Japanese. So the first step for Japanese students is not to be shy in front of classmates
and be open-minded. One ALT mentioned Government worthless guidelines. Teachers
are encouraged to use structured instructions in Monbusho’s guideline and ALTs are also
trained to follow those instructions in several workshops. JTEs are used to following the
guidelines, however, those guidelines seem a little annoying for ALTs who are
accustomed to their original way of instruction in their countries.
Question #11: What are the factors that you think might hinder the acquisition of strong Communication skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q11 Each said different things.</td>
<td>Q11 Sleep in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;lack of opportunities</td>
<td>No textbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;afraid of making mistakes.</td>
<td>Curriculum focusing on grammar and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;class size.</td>
<td>Government’s worthless guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;Too much emphasis on English grammar</td>
<td>Entrance examinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and translation.</td>
<td>Lack of time and opportunities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis

This question is the theme of this thesis. Both JTEs and ALTs mentioned lack of opportunities to speak English, since Oral Communication class is the only class in which English will be a language of communication. Outside of the classroom, they have no chance to speak English. Many teachers mentioned the same answer as they mentioned in question #10, students’ attitude toward language learning, such as being afraid of making mistakes or lack of confidence. Also they, especially ALTs, complained about the curriculum that emphasizes too much on English grammar. This is because of Monbusho’s guideline and entrance examination system in Japan. I will discuss more on this topic in Chapter 5. One ALT claimed the laziness of the students. ALTs are surprised to see that some students sleep in the class, which is not so unusual in Japan. Japanese students are often tired from studying and club activities and they sometimes cannot concentrate on the class. JTEs sometimes wake them up, however, they often just let them sleep, so ALTs who are not used to see those attitudes and think the students are rude and lazy.
Question #12: In what ways do you think teaching English communication skills can be improved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>Q12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are not really sure.</td>
<td>Less pressure on exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;evaluation</td>
<td>Small class size.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;Team-teaching that they are doing.</td>
<td>Abolition of grammar teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student-centered-interesting and communicative class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis**

It has been only about ten years since Oral Communication was included in the curriculum, so JTEs are not certain how they can teach and find out good ways of teaching now. One JTE mentioned the way of evaluation, which relates to entrance examination of University.

Each ALT mentioned different things. Again, they stressed abolition of grammar teaching because students are so much concerned about slight grammatical mistakes and it takes time for them to start communication. As you can see on the last ALT’s comment, it is important to let students speak as much as possible.

Question #13: What are the learning characteristics of Japanese students that you have noticed so far?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JTE</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shy about speaking up.</td>
<td>Emphasizing on memorization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about entrance examination.</td>
<td>Most of the students are shy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students like Oral Communication.</td>
<td>They are very enthusiastic about learning and willing to work hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They hesitate to expressing themselves, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They are good at cooperation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis

Both JTEs and ALTs mentioned that Japanese students are shy about speaking up. Although most students like Oral Communication class, they hesitate to express themselves and tend to be quiet in class. ALTs answered this question, comparing the students in their own countries. Japanese students usually work hard and are good at cooperating with each other. This is one of the characteristics among Japanese people in general, they are good at working in a group with keeping harmony since Japan is a group society.

Survey

I sent the survey questions to one of my previous colleagues in December. She passed out the forms to forty students and students responded on the form. It took about twenty minutes for them to fill out the form.

First, I will present the number of responses for each question on the table and then I will cluster similar questions to analyze the responses for patterns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>1. I prefer studying in a small group rather than a whole class in Oral Communication.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5. I feel embarrassed when the teacher corrects my errors in front of the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6. I have no problem of expressing myself or give my opinions in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7. I hesitate to communicate with ALTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8. I see ALTs as one of English learning resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9. Learning English is easier when the teacher speaks only English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10. I think it is easier to learn to speak English by spending a lot of time in class listening to English being spoken, instead of concentrating on reading and writing English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11. I study English in order to pass the entrance examination for University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12. I want to improve my communication skill rather than learning many words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35
Question 1
☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Agree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

I prefer studying in a small group rather than a whole class in Oral Communication.

Question 2

When I speak English, I am afraid of making grammatical or word mistakes.

Question 3

I have a pressure of memorizing English words, phrases and structures for term tests.

Question 4

Memorization of words, phrases and grammatical structure helps me to learn to speak English.

Question 5

I feel embarrassed when the teacher corrects my errors in front of the class.

Question 6

I have no problem of expressing myself or give my opinions in class.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 7</th>
<th>Question 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I hesitate to communicate with ALTs.</td>
<td>I see ALTs as one of English learning resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 9</th>
<th>Question 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning English is easier when the teacher speaks only English.</td>
<td>I think it is easier to learn to speak English by spending a lot of time in class listening to English being spoken, instead of concentrating on reading and writing English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 11</th>
<th>Question 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I study English in order to pass the entrance examination for University.</td>
<td>I want to improve my communication skill rather than learning many words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis

Instructional or Learning Preference (Question 1, 4 and 12)

Two-thirds of the students agree with small group work. This is a little
different from what I had expected. I did not expect that there are still some
students who prefer whole class instruction. Most students prefer small group
work, but students who are accustomed to a whole class instruction disagree with the
idea. It is a surprising fact that two thirds of the students think memorization of words,
phrases and grammatical structure helps them to learn to speak English. Students try to
memorize words, phrases and structures for tests, however, in order to communicate, we
need to acquire more practical skills that can apply for any conversation. It is true if they
memorize many words, they can utilize those words in any conversation and useful. As
far as the skills they want to acquire, almost everyone say that they want to acquire
communication skills. Although students have pressure for examination and study
English for that, they want to improve communication skills.

Grammatical Mistakes (Question 2 and 5)

As I expected, many students are afraid of making grammatical or word mistakes
because in other English classes, instructions are focused on grammar or structure.
Two-thirds of the students feel embarrassed when the teacher corrects errors in front of
the class. This is one of the characteristics among Japanese people. They are shy and
hesitate to speak up in front of everyone.

Entrance Examination (Question 3 and 11)

Regarding the pressure for examination, three-fourth of the students have a
pressure of memorization for term tests. In term tests, students are usually tested on
memorization of words, phrases and structures. About half of the students say that they study English for entrance examination. That means they do not enjoy learning language. They think they have to study English for examination.

Japanese Shyness (Question 6 and 7)

About half of the students are confident about expressing themselves in class. Compared to my school days, students are becoming more expressive and open about their ideas. The attitude toward ALTs varies depending on students' personalities and their preference of Oral Communication. If their motivations are high and they have positive attitude about language learning, they do not hesitate to communicate with ALTs. The surprising fact is that half of the students see ALTs as resources. I suppose this is because the survey was conducted in an academic high school where students have more pressure on tests or examinations. If students do not have pressure on tests, they will have more time for enjoying language learning and be willing to communicate with native speaker. And if students learn not only language but also culture and acquire unbiased views toward different kind of people, they will see ALTs as the same human-beings like us even though their skin color or hair color are different.

Listening (Question 9 and 10)

Only one-forth of the students want their teacher to speak only English. It is important to immerse students into English speaking environment as much as possible. However, students tend to depend on JTE’s translation. Most students know that reading and writing are for tests, however, listening and speaking are for communication. So they consider listening is important in order to improve their communication skills.

In this chapter, I presented the results of the study. Looking at their answers, I
summarized and categorized them on each question. In next chapter, Chapter 5, I will
discuss the findings and questions of this study. Also I will consider implications
for future studies.
Chapter 5
Discussion, Implication and Conclusion

In this chapter, I will discuss how the findings in this study related to the original research questions discussed in Chapter 1. I will also compare the findings with the previous research discussed in Chapter 2. Then I will list and consider the implications for further action.

1. What are the approaches and conditions of learning English as a second language?

The findings of interviews were mostly about team-teaching. Both JTEs and ALTs like teaching Oral Communication since students get excited compared to general English class. However, there are some misunderstandings between ALTs and JTEs in their team teaching. Both want to lead the class, however, they do not work well yet. JTEs, especially older JTEs, are not accustomed to work with native speakers of English and tend to use traditional methods. ALTs see those JTEs as closed-minded. Also some JTEs comment that ALTs tend to lead the class and some ALTs make the opposite comment. The ideal way of team teaching is interacting among three parties, JTE, ALT and students. However, currently, the interaction is taking place between one of the teachers and students. When ALT is interacting with students, JTE usually helps students with translation. And when JTE is interacting with students, ALT is usually listening their interaction. The situation is still far from the ideal way.
The classroom size for Oral communication varies depending on the school. In academic high schools, classroom size is usually big, about forty students in a class since curriculum is focused on general English in order to make students prepare for the entrance examination. Students there do not have much time for improving communicative skills. Claire (1999) criticized classroom size in Japan while stating that the class is overcrowded with many students and Japanese students are accustomed to a rote learning style, which focuses on memorization and test taking. In the survey, many students (two-third of the students) answered that memorization of words, phrases and grammatical structure helps them to learn speak English. This finding agrees with what Claire(1999) states in her article. It also relates to Asian culture. Nimmannit (1998) states that most Asian are group oriented and feel comfortable following rules since Asian culture is group oriented and value harmony.

In the class, instructions are mostly offered in English in order to immerse students into English speaking atmosphere and teachers try not to offer translation in Japanese (95% ALT, 65% JTE). However, sometimes JTEs offer translation since some of the students seem not to understand what ALTs speak in the class and JTEs catch those students’ reactions quickly.

It has been over ten years since the program was established and there is still debate going on concerning whether this program has improved the quality of communicative language teaching in Japan. Browne and Wada (1998) state that this program had an impact on English ability of Japanese English Teachers and their confidence in working with native speakers. I did not investigate regarding the confidence of English communicative skills among Japanese English teachers in this
study. However, from my experience and observation of other teachers, I could say that this program has improved English speaking abilities of Japanese English Teachers since JTEs have to communicate in English with native speaker of English for the preparation of the class and instruct in English in the class.

2. What kind of social and cultural factors might hinder or affect Japanese to acquire communicative English?

The evident finding was that most students have pressure of memorization for term tests or the entrance examination. This is because of the current curriculum which focuses on general English rather than Oral Communication and the entrance examination system for the University. Currently, most universities or colleges evaluate students’ reading and writing skills in the entrance examination. There is a listening part, however, there is no part which evaluates students’ communicative skills. Therefore, students tend to study English just for the examination by using their accustomed way, rote-memorization. They do not really enjoy learning language although they want to improve their Oral Communication skills.

Another finding from the survey was that a characteristic of Asian culture, culture of shame or losing face, hinders students from improving their communicative skills. Most students answered that they feel embarrassed when the teacher corrects errors in front of the class, or they hesitate to speak up in the class. And half of the students hesitate to communicate with ALTs. These findings agree with what Claire (1998) states in her article. Japanese students are not good at self-expression and seek the “right” answers to the teachers. Also Nimmanit (1998) mentions that students feel more secure working in pairs or in groups since many Asian students fear of losing face, in security, and lack of confidence in class. However, I cannot over-generalize this finding.
Students’ attitudes toward ALTs also depend on their personalities and their preferences regarding Oral Communication. If their motivations are high and they have positive attitudes about language learning, they do not hesitate to communicate with ALTs. In the interview, both JTEs and ALTs agree with this idea. Some teachers mentioned that students’ attitude toward Oral Communication class is very important. Therefore, students need to be evaluated not only for language skills but also their attitudes for language learning.

However, we cannot blame only students, JTEs also need to train their communication skills. As mentioned in the literature review, Japanese English teachers’ major in their undergraduate degree, the system of obtaining teachers’ license and the system of appointments and lack of training of Oral communication skills contribute to the difficulties students have in the acquisition of this skill.

3. How might the Japanese educational condition and approaches of teaching English might be improved in the way of communicative skills?

English education so far has been only focused on ‘importing’ other cultures and students try to understand cultures and customs of other countries through English curriculum. However, for Japan’s internationalization, Japanese people have to not only learn about other countries, but also convey a Japanese way of thinking and Japanese culture to the rest of the world (Suzuki, 2000). In order to produce students who can express their opinions in English, the English curriculum needs to be focused on Oral communication skills.

Both JTEs and ALTs mentioned that students need more opportunities to speak English in their real life. Students speak English only in Oral Communication class;
outside the classroom, they do not have a chance to speak English. Even in Oral Communication class, because of the class size, there is little opportunity for everyone to speak up in the class. In order to let all students in the classroom listen, both JTEs and ALTs tend to control the class. The smaller the class size is, the more opportunities to speak English students can get in class. Also if teachers lead the class all the time, students will get bored soon. So in order to let them speak, JTEs and ALTs have to make the classroom interesting. The ideal classroom size would be ten students in a class, as one teacher mentioned. I think team-teaching is the best way to improve students’ speaking abilities since they can actually talk with a native speaker of English. I agree that the ideal way of team teaching is interacting among three parties, students, JTE and ALT as Tajino and Walker (1998) state.

Some of the teachers mentioned the way evaluation affects students’ acquisition of communicative English. Oral Communication class is the only class in which students can speak English with other students and ALTs or JTEs. If students are shy and afraid of making slight mistakes, they cannot improve their communicative skills. It is important for students to be positive, open minded, and unafraid of making mistakes. It might take time to overcome this attitude since this is one of the characteristics among Asians for long time. However, for language learning, students need to overcome this shyness. By making mistakes, their English abilities are improved. Also teachers need to consider the way of evaluation. Teachers need evaluate not only students’ language skills but also their attitude toward language learning.

As far as other English classes, such as general English or reading, instructions are mostly grammar focused and taught in Japanese by JTEs. Because of this instruction,
students learn English while thinking in Japanese and tend to translate each sentence.
Also students are accustomed to memorizing words, phrases for examinations in those
classes and tend to apply this learning style to Oral Communication class as mentioned in
part 2.

Conclusion

Japan is in the process of its internationalization and English education has a key
for Japans' internationalization as mentioned in the beginning of this thesis. I believe the
examination system for universities and English curriculum which puts emphasis not on
creativity or self-expression but on memorization are the two main factors that hinder
Japanese acquire communicative English. In order to promote each individual student
who can contribute to future international society, those two factors need to be changed.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What do you like about teaching Oral Communication class?

2. What do you dislike about teaching Oral Communication class?

3. How do you prepare for Oral Communication class? (Describe the procedure and materials used for O.C.)?

4. How do you work with ALTs (JETs)?
   (Describe the procedure and materials used for Oral Communication)

5. What percentage of the class do you instruct the class in English?

6. How frequently do you offer translation in Japanese in Oral Communication class?

7. How do you encourage students to give their opinions or express themselves in class?

8. What are the skills that you emphasize when you teach Oral Communication?

9. What goals do you want your students to accomplish through learning English?

10. What does each individual Japanese need to improve in order to acquire communicative skills?

11. What are the factors that you think might hinder the acquisition of strong communication skills?

12. In what ways do you think teaching English communication skills can be improved?

13. What are the learning characteristics of Japanese students that you have noticed so far?
## Appendix B

### Survey Questions

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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1. I prefer studying in a small group rather than a whole class in Oral Communication.

2. When I speak English, I am afraid of making grammatical mistakes or word mistakes.

3. I have a pressure of memorizing English words, phrases and structures for term tests.

4. Memorization of words, phrases and grammatical structure help me to learn to speak English.

5. I feel embarrassed when the teacher corrects my errors in front of the class.

6. I have no problem of expressing myself or give my opinions in class.

7. I hesitate to communicate with ALTs.

8. I see ALTs as one of English learning resources.

9. Learning English is easier when the teacher speaks only English.

10. I think it is easier to learn to speak English by spending a lot of time in class listening to English being spoken, instead of concentrating on reading and writing English.

11. I study English in order to pass the entrance examination for University.

12. I want to improve my communication skill rather than learning many words.
Appendix C

CSU Monterey Bay M.A. In Education
Consent Form

Project Title: Communicative English for Japanese
: What kind of cultural or social factors assist or hinder
Japanese learners in acquiring communicative skills in English?

Description of role that human subjects will play in the project, including what they will be asked
to do, how much time it will take, questions they will be asked (if applicable), how their privacy
will be maintained, risks and benefits they may incur.

This study will involve my doing research in an attempt to identify the factors that assist and
hinder Japanese learners of English to acquire communicative English. 10 subjects will be asked
to respond to an electronic questionnaire regarding their teaching methods and perceptions toward
students. Participants will assume a code name and the data will be used only for statistical
analysis purposes. I will destroy the tapes after doing the research and the privacy of participants
will be protected.

I, ________________ (Name of participant) state that I am over eighteen (18) years old and I
wish to participate in a research project conducted by Miyuki Murase (Name of Investigator)

In the case of a minor, I am the parent of ________________ (Name of the child), I hereby
give my consent for my child to participate in the research project conducted by
________________________ (Name of Investigator).

I acknowledge that Miyuki Murase (investigator) has fully explained to me the
risks involved and the need for the research; has informed me that I may withdraw from
participation at any time without prejudice; has offered to answer any inquiries which I may make
concerning the procedures to be followed; and has informed me that I will be given a copy of this
consent form.

In the event that I believe that I have suffered any physical injury as the result of
participation in the research program, I may contact the Director for the M.A. Program,
Dr. Christine E. Sleeter at (831) 582-3641.

I freely and voluntarily consent to my participation and/or my child in the research project.

________________________ ________
Signature of Participant or a parent
in case of a minor  Signature of Investigator

________________________ ________
Date Date

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