

# A Study of Learner Attitudes and Perspectives in Japanese Communicative Language Teaching EFL Contexts

FENTON, Anthony L.

Key Words: policy reform, learner attitudes, learner perceptions, adoption, methodology, context-based, communicative, integration

## Abstract

There is a challenged movement toward the adoption of a more communicative approach to English language learning in Asian contexts, in particular, Taiwan, Thailand, Korea, Japan, and more recently—China. Such is evidenced with the curricular changes undertaken by the respective ministries within the region. The impact of these policy reforms must eventually be validated through analysis in the learning environment itself, as there is in existence considerable research findings demonstrative of the various barriers related to the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) in EFL contexts. Although there are a number of studies that assess teachers' perceptions in adopting communicative language teaching practices, only a limited number have taken account of learner attitudes and perceptions with regard to classroom practice. This paper investigates Japanese EFL learners' attitudes and perceptions with respect to classroom practices identified as primarily meaning-based and form-focused. My research reveals a mismatch between learner preferences, as well as their reported experience of classroom instruction. There is clear evidence of a genuine interest in, if not desire for, communicative language teaching, which should not only proffer support for the curricular changes recently implemented, but also to the idea that CLT, if correctly interpreted and adequately integrated, is no less appropriate for modernizing Asian cultures than it is in the context of so many others. With a view to such, Asian EFL contexts-in-reform need to work toward a constructive bridging of classroom practice with the attitudes of young learners—that is, if the stakeholders are to realize successful change in the learners' environment.

## Review of the literature

If all the variables in L2 acquisition could be identified and the many intricate patterns of interaction between the learner and learning context described, ultimate success in learning to use a second language most likely would be seen to depend on the attitude of the learner.

(Savignon, 1997, p.107 *in* Crookes, 1997)

Research findings from qualitative studies consisting of hypothesis testing are shaped by a host of factors including: sample size and representation; hypothesis testing; the scale on which the variables were measured; the composition of the population from which the sample was taken; design of the survey instrument; translation of the instrument items; analysis and presentation of the data (Asraf & Brewer, 2004; Sirkin, 1995; Hinton, 2004; Cohen, 1998). While there is not a requisite for a minimum sample size in the use of statistics for descriptive purposes—no generalization of results beyond the sample size—there is a requirement when utilizing such for inferential purposes, as is the case in hypothesis testing and interval estimation.

A review of the literature suggests to us that the bulk of studies, as too, noted by Savignon and Wang (2003), examine the generalities of learner attitudes and notions about language learning, with only a few taking stock of such as they apply to instructional practices. Kern (1995) and Yang (1993) used Horwitz's (1998) questionnaire named "Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory" (BALLI) with findings that were in some way comparable. Bacon and Finnemann (1990) utilized an instrument consisting of more than one hundred items to better understand attitudes, motives, and learning strategies of university foreign language students. The majority of investigations, however, focus on 'learner attitudes and beliefs about language learning in general', with a limited number taking stock of 'learner attitudes and beliefs about instructional practices in particular' (Savignon & Wang, 2003, p.225).

In a bid 'to better understand the challenges facing curriculum reform in the EFL context of Taiwan', they designed a comprehensive five-part questionnaire consisting of seventy-two items on a scale in a seven-point Likert format, assessing 'learners' perceptions of the classroom practices they have experienced': 'learners' attitudes toward these classroom practices' as well as 'learners' beliefs about English language learning generally' (Savignon & Wang, 2003, p.226). Their findings revealed a 'mismatch between the needs and preferences of English language learners in Taiwan and their perceptions of instructional practice' (Savignon & Wang, 2003, p.238). Clearly, there was a 'learner preference for a meaning-based approach' (CLT); where

Learners sampled expressed strong agreement with such statements as "Learning English is learning to use the language". They disagreed with such statements as "Learning English is learning its grammar rules" and "I believe my English improves most quickly if I study and practice the grammar. (Savignon and Wang, 2003, p.238)

Not only did the ‘majority’ of those surveyed have an ‘expressed’ ‘preference for communicative practices’, opposing attitudes about form-focused (grammar translation method) instruction were strongest with those having had greater experience with learning English—especially those who had undertaken learning English prior to entering secondary school (2003, p.239).

Investigating students’ ‘personal feelings and beliefs in English learning’ in China, Rao (2002, pp. 87; 85) ‘discovered that the perceptions’ of learners ‘sometimes surprised their teachers’. Rao (2002) utilized a questionnaire comprised of 36 items, nearly all of which were accompanied by a “yes or no” response option. The three-part questionnaire was administered to 30 randomly selected Chinese university students majoring in English at Jianghi Normal University. The second part of the questionnaire was apparently configured to assess ‘an EFL class exclusively conducted by a teacher using CLT’ methods (Rao, 2002, p.88). It was concluded that ‘the students’ perceived difficulties caused by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) had their source in the differences between the underlying educational theories of China and those of Western countries’ (Rao, 2002, p.85).

In an attempt to inform on both ‘practitioner and student attitudes toward CLT and to consider whether the CA [communicative approach] paradigm is still appropriate’ (Jarvis & Atsilart, 2004, p.5)—the premise then being that CLT methodology ‘has firmly established itself on a worldwide basis’ (2004, p.2)—Jarvis and Atsilart surveyed eight hundred students at a university in Bangkok. They concluded that ‘responses to problems’ of students ‘indicated preference for a certain learning style’; coupled with ‘implementation’ ‘problems’, it might be easiest to contemplate an ‘alternative paradigm’ that ‘focuses on placing context above everything else’ (Jarvis & Atsilart, 2004, p.13). Their learner-administered instrument was comprised of two parts—the first part included seven *true or false* items, while the second part consisted of twenty items in a five-point scale in the Likert format.

## **Assessing Japanese EFL learner attitudes and perceptions**

### Design

For the purpose of acquiring an adequate understanding of the challenges confronting young Japanese EFL learners, and comparing those results with those other Asian studies discussed, we elected to utilize a slightly modified (a reduction only in the Likert format scale from 7 to 5) version of the questionnaire developed by Savignon and Wang (2003, p.226) to investigate students’ ‘perceptions of the classroom practices’ they have thus far experienced in their schooling ‘as well as

their beliefs about language learning in general.’ Similarly to Savignon and Wang’s (2003, p.226) work, the following research questions were addressed:

1. With respect to instructional, ‘what are learners’ perceptions of the classroom practices they have experienced?’
2. ‘What are learner’s attitudes toward these classroom practices?’
3. ‘What are learner’s beliefs about English language learning generally?’

In the construction of their instrument, Savignon and Wang (2003, pp.226-7) account for:

Instructional practices with features that engage learners in meaning making were defined as communicative. These features may include use of the L2 as a medium of instruction, group work on tasks, tolerance of learner errors, and a general classroom atmosphere conducive to learner participation with a focus on selected grammatical features as appropriate (Savignon 1977). In contrast, *form-focused* instruction focuses learners’ attention on the forms of language and features explanation and practice of grammatical rules. The L1 is typically used for explanations of formal linguistic features whereas L2 use is limited to sentence repetition, L1 to L2 translation, and an assortment of structure and vocabulary drills. Statements highlighting features of these two contrasting instructional approaches were included in each section of the questionnaire subsequently developed for the use in the study (see Appendix).

## Method

This researcher gained access to a mid-level private co-ed university senior high school and administer a sample to 657 students in both grades 10 and 11 students—294 females and 363 males—56 of the returned questionnaires, however, were discarded owing to spoilage. Students attending at KUSH come from Greater Metropolitan Tokyo and are not confined to one particular school district. The questionnaire was professionally translated, trialed, and administered in Japanese. (The version included in the Appendix is in Japanese and English.) All respondents would have studied English in Japan between three and four years. Synonymous to the instrument description provided in Savignon and Wang (2003): The questionnaire was made up of 72 statements in the five part questionnaire, wherein responses were scored from 1 to 5 on a scale in the Likert format and the scores then converted to a scale from -3 to +3 for ease in interpretation. Reliability estimates were calculated and are shown in Table 1. Parts 1, 2, 4 and 5 each consists of eleven statements relating to perceptions of classroom learning experiences. Five statements relate to form-focused classroom practices; another five statements relate to meaning-based classroom practices. An eleventh statement in each of parts 1, 2, 4, and 5 takes stock of attitudes toward error correction. Part 3 of the questionnaire is comprised of 29 statements pertaining to general beliefs about English language learning. Items 1 through 11 are in essence similar to the eleven statements in parts 1, 2, 4 and 5 of

the questionnaire defined above. In addition, statements 12 to 16 specifically consider beliefs about grammar-focused instruction; statements 17 to 19 concern beliefs about meaning-based instruction; statements 20 and 21 are related to beliefs about error correction; 22 and 23 are related to pronunciation; 24, 25 and 28 relate to the importance of English; and, 26 and 27 connect with learner perceptions of the interrelationship of language learning ability and intelligence.

Table 1. Summary Statistics and reliability estimation for the questionnaire (n=601)

| Variable                        | Subjects | Items | Mean  | SD    | KR20<br>(reliability) |
|---------------------------------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------|
| Classroom practices             |          |       |       |       |                       |
| Senior high form-based          | 601      | 5     | 3.27  | 6.56  | 0.81                  |
| Senior high communication-based | 601      | 5     | -3.44 | 7.17  | 0.60                  |
| Junior high form-based          | 601      | 5     | 1.76  | 7.00  | 0.77                  |
| Junior high communication-based | 601      | 5     | 2.64  | 7.46  | 0.87                  |
| Attitude                        |          |       |       |       |                       |
| Senior high form-based          | 601      | 5     | -0.19 | 7.06  | 0.64                  |
| Senior high communication-based | 601      | 5     | 2.32  | 7.15  | 0.83                  |
| Junior high form-based          | 601      | 5     | -0.70 | 7.53  | 0.68                  |
| Junior high communication-based | 601      | 5     | 2.53  | 6.95  | 0.86                  |
| Belief                          |          |       |       |       |                       |
| Form-based                      | 601      | 10    | 3.18  | 12.53 | 0.69                  |
| Communication-based             | 601      | 8     | 5.60  | 10.07 | 0.87                  |

There are several reliability formulas available for use by researchers—Alfa-Cronbach, Kurder-Richardson 20 (KR 20), and Kurder-Richardson 21 (KR 21)—the latter two are essentially later variations of the former. While Alfa-Cronbach is most commonly used as a measure of various types of reliability, for an easier comparison with the results of Savignon & Wang (2003), we opted to employ the KR 20. Its simplicity makes for a very useful estimate of reliability; for our purposes, we were particularly keen to assess “internal reliability”. In this study, the KR 20 values ranged from a low of .60 to a high of .87, with all expect one being in excess of .60. It is common knowledge among statisticians and researchers alike that the minimum scale for reliability for the KR 20 formula is .60. Three instructors employed at the high school who hold research degrees, and who are familiar with the research project, were enlisted for the purpose of administering the questionnaire in-class to the students, thereby increasing the probability of an assured response rate.

Data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet to obtain descriptive statistics and both hypothetical and matched-groups *t*-values as well as correlation coefficients. Data analysis included *t*-tests to identify the general tendency of the participants’ perceptions of classroom practices, in addition to their attitudes with regard to these

practices.

## Results

A summary of learner *perceptions of classroom practice in the senior high school* in Table 2 reveals those *participants' perceptions* of the English language classroom instruction, which they are currently experiencing in their senior high school. Most agreed that their experiences are largely grammar-focused (Total M=3.27 on a scale of -3 to +3 multiplied by 5, or the total number of items; SD=6.56). Use of Japanese as the language of instruction was highly reported; sentence drilling and repetition, grammar rule explanation and practice, it seems, are most common. Communication for the purposes of meaning-based interaction was indeed uncommon, with students having very few opportunities, or need to, engage in interactive activities. While large class sizes consisting on average of 44–46 students may be a significant barrier to a reported non-atmosphere for the use of English, the reported use of instructional methods which involve sentence drilling, repetition of sentences, the prevailing use of Japanese in the classroom, the explanation and practice of grammar rules—all coupled with the students' lack of need to engage meaningful forms of discourse, likely lend heavily to such perceptions.

Table 2. Perceptions of classroom practice in senior high school

| Item  | N   | Mean  | SD   | t      | p      |
|---|-----|-------|------|--------|--------|
| Form-based  |     |       |      |        |        |
| I1. Grammar-focused English teaching                            | 601 | 0.81  | 1.18 | 16.95  | P<0.01 |
| I2. Sentence drilling and sentence repetition                   | 601 | -0.03 | 1.66 | -0.44  | n.s.   |
| I3. Japanese used most of the time                              | 601 | 1.37  | 1.32 | 25.54  | P<0.01 |
| I4. Most time spent on grammar rules explanation                | 601 | 0.77  | 1.23 | 15.44  | P<0.01 |
| I5. Seldom needed to open my mouth                              | 601 | 0.35  | 1.16 | 5.67   | P<0.01 |
| Total   | 601 | 3.27  | 6.56 | 12.63  | P<0.01 |
| Communication-based   |     |       |      |        |        |
| I6. Communication-based teaching practices                      | 601 | -0.94 | 1.31 | -17.53 | P<0.01 |
| I7. Many activities involving communication                     | 601 | -1.68 | 1.32 | -31.47 | P<0.01 |
| I8. Communication-focused with grammar explained when necessary | 601 | -0.09 | 1.53 | -1.44  | n.s.   |
| I9. Trial-and-error attempts allowed                            | 601 | 0.09  | 1.56 | 1.40   | n.s.   |
| I10. Atmosphere created for the use of English                  | 601 | -0.83 | 1.46 | -14.12 | P<0.01 |
| Total   | 601 | -3.44 | 7.17 | -12.63 | P<0.01 |
| Error correction  |     |       |      |        |        |
| I11. Teachers corrected my errors in class                      | 601 | -0.40 | 1.31 | -7.54  | P<0.01 |

A summary of learner *perceptions of classroom practice at their junior high school* in Table 3 reveals that those *participants' perceptions* of the English language class as being some way dissimilar to that at their current high school, with most agreeing

that their experiences are somewhat more communicative-based (Total M=2.64 on a scale of -3 to +3 multiplied by 5, or the total number of items; SD=7.46). While there was a notable emphasis on sentence drilling and repetition, with considerable usage of Japanese, there was somewhat of a better atmosphere for use of English, as well more opportunities for attempts at trial and error; activities involving communication, albeit with marginally improved communication-based teaching practices. In contrast to the findings reported in Savignon and Wang's (2003, p.229) study, where 'the majority of participants' 'felt that classroom practices followed in their English language classroom instruction in both junior and senior high school were primarily form-focused, as opposed to meaning-based', these findings revealed a dramatic reduction in communication-based activities from their junior high school experience.

This reported difference may be attributable to greater stress on preparation for the prevailing largely discrete point university entrance examinations at the high school level. With the dramatic decline in demographics here in Japan, competition into the lot of high schools and universities, has been somewhat relaxed in recent years.

Table 3. Perceptions of classroom practice in junior high school

| Item  | N   | Mean  | SD   | t     | p      |
|---|-----|-------|------|-------|--------|
| Form-based  |     |       |      |       |        |
| IV.1. Grammar-focused English teaching                            | 601 | 0.22  | 1.45 | 3.77  | P<0.01 |
| IV.2. Sentence drilling and sentence repetition                   | 601 | 1.03  | 1.42 | 17.89 | P<0.01 |
| IV.3. Japanese used most of the time                              | 601 | 0.57  | 1.60 | 8.96  | P<0.01 |
| IV.4. Most time spent on grammar rules explanation                | 601 | 0.38  | 1.29 | 7.21  | P<0.01 |
| IV.5. Seldom needed to open my mouth                              | 601 | -0.44 | 1.24 | -6.55 | P<0.01 |
| Total   | 601 | 1.76  | 7.00 | 6.26  | P<0.01 |
| Communication-based   |     |       |      |       |        |
| IV.6. Communication-based teaching practices                      | 601 | 0.11  | 1.53 | 1.79  | n.s.   |
| IV.7. Many activities involving communication                     | 601 | 0.52  | 1.60 | 8.03  | P<0.01 |
| IV.8. Communication-focused with grammar explained when necessary | 601 | 0.51  | 1.40 | 9.08  | P<0.01 |
| IV.9. Trial-and-error attempts allowed                            | 601 | 0.96  | 1.41 | 16.67 | P<0.01 |
| IV.10. Atmosphere created for the use of English                  | 601 | 0.54  | 1.52 | 8.75  | P<0.01 |
| Total   | 601 | 2.64  | 7.46 | 8.86  | P<0.01 |
| Error correction  |     |       |      |       |        |
| IV.11. Teachers corrected my errors in class                      | 601 | 0.54  | 1.29 | 10.31 | P<0.01 |

A summary of learner *attitudes toward perceived classroom practice in senior high school* in Table 4 shows those *participants' attitudes* toward those classroom practices they claim to be experiencing in their senior high school. The majority of respondents expressed a slightly unfavorable feeling toward form-based instruction (Total M=-0.19 on a scale of -3 to +3 multiplied by 5, or the total number of

items; SD=7.06) and a more favorable feeling toward communicative practices that engaged them in meaning-making (Total M=2.32 on a scale of -3 to +3 multiplied by 5, or the total number of items; SD=7.15). While there was some expressed preference for having Japanese as a language of instruction—which would be inconsistent with their general preference for meaning-based classroom tasks—it was not as pronounced as Savignon and Wang’s (2003) findings in their Taiwan context. As Savignon and Wang (2003, p.229) suggested, the identified learner preference expressed in their study may be attributable to ‘the reportedly heavy classroom emphasis on learning grammatical rules’. Simply put, the students lack the necessary L2 communicative competence for understanding explanations of various grammatical rules. While this analysis—as did Savignon and Wang’s (2003, p.230)—revealed some dissatisfaction with form-focused teaching overall, but dissimilar to their findings, not with the allotment of time for sentence drilling and repetition. Conversely, our respondents indicated some attitudinal reluctance toward the idea of partaking in those activities, which would require some communicative production. This finding is likely attributable to some assortment of perceived institutional priorities; perceived individual competence; as well as culturally grounded inhibitions.

As indicated in Item II.11 there is a heavy emphasis on error detection and correction, with an expectation on the part of students’ that teacher’s should correct their errors in all types of English classes.

Table 4. Attitude toward perceived classroom practice in senior high school

| Item  | N   | Mean  | SD   | t     | p      |
|---|-----|-------|------|-------|--------|
| <b>Form-based</b>   |     |       |      |       |        |
| II.1. Grammar-focused English teaching                            | 601 | -0.38 | 1.60 | -5.79 | P<0.01 |
| II.2. Sentence drilling and sentence repetition                   | 601 | 0.73  | 1.28 | 13.96 | P<0.01 |
| II.3. Japanese used most of the time                              | 601 | 0.03  | 1.54 | 0.52  | n.s.   |
| II.4. Most time spent on grammar rules explanation                | 601 | -0.42 | 1.47 | -6.97 | P<0.01 |
| II.5. Seldom needed to open my mouth                              | 601 | -0.16 | 1.18 | -2.50 | P<0.01 |
| Total   | 601 | -0.19 | 7.06 | -0.15 | P<0.01 |
| <b>Communication-based</b>  |     |       |      |       |        |
| II.6. Communication-based teaching practices                      | 601 | 0.32  | 1.52 | 5.20  | P<0.01 |
| II.7. Many activities involving communication                     | 601 | -0.17 | 1.55 | -2.66 | P<0.01 |
| II.8. Communication-focused with grammar explained when necessary | 601 | 0.41  | 1.46 | 6.94  | P<0.01 |
| II.9. Trial-and-error attempts allowed                            | 601 | 1.06  | 1.33 | 19.85 | P<0.01 |
| II.10. Atmosphere created for the use of English                  | 601 | 0.69  | 1.30 | 12.99 | P<0.01 |
| Total   | 601 | 2.32  | 7.15 | 8.46  | P<0.01 |
| <b>Error correction</b>   |     |       |      |       |        |
| II.11. Teachers corrected my errors in class                      | 601 | 1.30  | 1.13 | 28.09 | P<0.01 |

The data in Table 5 pertains to *participants’ attitudes toward perceived classroom*



*practice in junior high school*. While my analysis—as did Savignon and Wang’s (2003, p.230)—revealed significant dissatisfaction toward form-focused teaching, as too with the allotment of class time for explanation and practice of rules of grammar, in comparison to the positive attitudes expressed toward sentence drilling and repetition in senior high school, II.2 (M=0.73 on a scale of -3 to +3, SD1.28, t=13) this study’s respondents did not favor such practices in their junior high school years, item V.2 (M=-0.06 on a scale of -3 to +3, SD1.43, t=-1.11). This finding contrasts markedly with that of Savignon and Wang’s (2003, pp.230-1), as well as from the broader expressed preferences at the high school level, which we speculate may be attributable to the emphasis on preparation for the discrete point entrance examinations still utilized at Japanese universities, but no longer at their counterparts in Taiwan. The expressed preference for the use of Japanese as the preferred language of instruction among learners in their junior high years was somewhat greater than at their current high school. Similar to their chosen preferences with their senior high school ELT practice, learners in this study indicated a preference for communicative learning activities related to a meaning-based approach (Total M=2.53 on a scale of -15 to +15, SD1.28, t=6.95), and similar to, albeit not as marked as Savignon and Wang’s (2003) findings in their research context. It is interesting to observe that nearly an equal amount, in both school settings’ respondents indicated a desire that an atmosphere should be created for the use of English (item V.10 table 5; item 11.10 table 4).

Table 5. Attitude toward perceived classroom practice in junior high school

| Item   | N   | Mean  | SD   | t     | p      |
|--|-----|-------|------|-------|--------|
| <b>Form-based</b>  |     |       |      |       |        |
| V.1. Grammar-focused English teaching                            | 601 | -0.15 | 1.58 | -2.40 | P<0.05 |
| V.2. Sentence drilling and sentence repetition                   | 601 | -0.06 | 1.43 | -1.11 | n.s.   |
| V.3. Japanese used most of the time                              | 601 | 0.17  | 1.55 | 2.73  | P<0.01 |
| V.4. Most time spent on grammar rules explanation                | 601 | -0.22 | 1.47 | -3.66 | P<0.01 |
| V.5. Seldom needed to open my mouth                              | 601 | -0.43 | 1.51 | -7.04 | P<0.01 |
| Total  | 601 | -0.70 | 7.53 | -2.30 | P<0.01 |
| <b>Communication-based</b>                                       |     |       |      |       |        |
| V.6. Communication-based teaching practices                      | 601 | 0.34  | 1.41 | 5.85  | P<0.01 |
| V.7. Many activities involving communication                     | 601 | 0.18  | 1.53 | 2.95  | P<0.01 |
| V.8. Communication-focused with grammar explained when necessary | 601 | 0.41  | 1.42 | 7.11  | P<0.01 |
| V.9. Trial-and-error attempts allowed                            | 601 | 0.94  | 1.26 | 18.41 | P<0.01 |
| V.10. Atmosphere created for the use of English                  | 601 | 0.65  | 1.32 | 12.02 | P<0.01 |
| Total  | 601 | 2.53  | 6.95 | 9.27  | P<0.01 |
| <b>Error correction</b>  |     |       |      |       |        |
| V.11. Teachers corrected my errors in class                      | 601 | 1.03  | 1.27 | 19.90 | P<0.01 |

These comparative results of *participants’ perceptions and attitudes* refer to classroom

practices as they were experienced by participants at their current senior high and previous junior high school settings, as well as the attitudes of these same participants toward these practices. Overall, students reported having experienced considerably more grammar-based than meaning-based instruction at both levels of high school. They expressed markedly negative attitudes with respect to the former and positive attitudes toward the latter. The participants in this study revealed a preference for error detection and correction, as well as a desire for Japanese as a primary language of instruction. When the classroom experiences reported by the student participants were contrasted with their attitudes, the dissimilarity is clearly in evidence. A comparison of learner attitudes with reported classroom practices in senior high school for each item in parts 1 and 2 reveals significant differences (see Table 6); moreover, a clear mismatch in senior high school between learner attitudes and their perceptions of classroom practices most evident in Figure 2. Likewise, the findings displayed in Table 7 and Figure 3 reveals the extent to which communication-based practice was favored and not perceived for learners at their respective junior high schools.

Table 6. Needs and perceived classroom practice in senior high school

| Emphases/Attitudes (Item)                                     | N   | Emphases Mean | SD   | Needs Mean | SD   | t      | p      |
|---|-----|---------------|------|------------|------|--------|--------|
| 1 Grammar-focused English teaching                            | 601 | 0.81          | 1.18 | -0.38      | 1.60 | 14.42  | P<0.01 |
| 2 Sentence drilling and sentence repetition                   | 601 | -0.03         | 1.66 | 0.73       | 1.28 | -9.21  | P<0.01 |
| 3 Japanese used most of the time                              | 601 | 1.37          | 1.32 | 0.03       | 1.54 | 16.72  | P<0.01 |
| 4 Most time spent on grammar rules explanation                | 601 | 0.77          | 1.23 | -0.42      | 1.47 | 15.67  | P<0.01 |
| 5 Seldom needed to open my mouth                              | 601 | 0.35          | 1.16 | -0.16      | 1.18 | 6.34   | P<0.01 |
| 6 Communication-based teaching practices                      | 601 | -0.94         | 1.31 | 0.32       | 1.52 | -15.67 | P<0.01 |
| 7 Many activities involving communication                     | 601 | -1.68         | 1.32 | -0.17      | 1.55 | -18.93 | P<0.01 |
| 8 Communication-focused with grammar explained when necessary | 601 | -0.09         | 1.53 | 0.41       | 1.46 | -5.96  | P<0.01 |
| 9 Trial-and-error attempts allowed                            | 601 | 0.09          | 1.56 | 1.06       | 1.33 | -13.19 | P<0.01 |
| 10 Atmosphere created for the use of English                  | 601 | -0.83         | 1.46 | 0.69       | 1.30 | -19.24 | P<0.01 |

Table 7. Needs and perceived classroom practice in junior high school

| Emphases/Attitudes (Item)                                     | N   | Emphases Mean | SD   | Needs Mean | SD   | t     | p      |
|---|-----|---------------|------|------------|------|-------|--------|
| 1 Grammar-focused English teaching                            | 601 | 0.22          | 1.45 | -0.15      | 1.58 | 4.57  | P<0.01 |
| 2 Sentence drilling and sentence repetition                   | 601 | 1.03          | 1.42 | -0.06      | 1.43 | 13.93 | P<0.01 |
| 3 Japanese used most of the time                              | 601 | 0.57          | 1.60 | 0.17       | 1.55 | 5.21  | P<0.01 |
| 4 Most time spent on grammar rules explanation                | 601 | 0.38          | 1.29 | -0.22      | 1.47 | 7.30  | P<0.01 |
| 5 Seldom needed to open my mouth                              | 601 | -0.44         | 1.24 | -0.43      | 1.51 | -0.06 | P<0.05 |
| 6 Communication-based teaching practices                      | 601 | 0.11          | 1.53 | 0.34       | 1.41 | -2.84 | P<0.01 |
| 7 Many activities involving communication                     | 601 | 0.52          | 1.60 | 0.18       | 1.53 | 4.29  | P<0.01 |
| 8 Communication-focused with grammar explained when necessary | 601 | 0.51          | 1.40 | 0.41       | 1.42 | 1.40  | n.s.   |
| 9 Trial-and-error attempts allowed                            | 601 | 0.96          | 1.41 | 0.94       | 1.26 | 0.19  | P<0.05 |
| 10 Atmosphere created for the use of English                  | 601 | 0.54          | 1.52 | 0.65       | 1.32 | -1.49 | n.s.   |

Learner beliefs about language learning are presented in Table 8 and show that *participant attitudes and/or beliefs* about English language learning in general, Part 3 of the questionnaire. As one would expect, students essentially prioritized those same classroom emphases for which they expressed a preference. Those items measuring the same variable are grouped. Items 1-5 and 12-16 pertain to grammar-based teaching and learning; items 6-10 and 17-19 pertain to meaning-based teaching and learning. The *t*-test findings reveal that in general participants hold to the view that language teaching should focus both on communication (M=5.60 on a scale of -24 to +24, SD 10.07,  $t=13.79$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and form-focused (M=3.18 on a scale -30 to +30, SD=12.53,  $t=6.07$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Items 24, 25, and 28 reveal positive attitudes toward English (M=3.21 on a scale of -9 to +9, SD=4.52,  $t=17.77$ ,  $p <0.05$ ) with a belief that teachers should correct errors. Items 26 and 27 reveal that participants did not believe there to be a correlation between intelligence and the ability to learn a new language.

Table 8. Beliefs about learning English

| Item                                     | N   | Mean  | SD    | t     | p      |
|--|-----|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Grammar-based: III. 1-5 and 12-16        | 601 | 3.18  | 12.53 | 6.07  | P<0.05 |
| Communication-based: III. 6-10 and 17-19 | 601 | 5.60  | 10.07 | 13.79 | P<0.05 |
| Correction: III. 11, 20 ,21              | 601 | 1.90  | 3.73  | 14.39 | P<0.05 |
| Pronunciation: III. 22, 23               | 601 | 0.42  | 3.03  | 3.53  | P<0.05 |
| Attitude toward English: III. 24, 25 ,28 | 601 | 3.21  | 4.52  | 17.77 | P<0.05 |
| Intelligence: III. 26, 27                | 601 | -0.64 | 2.95  | -5.29 | P<0.05 |

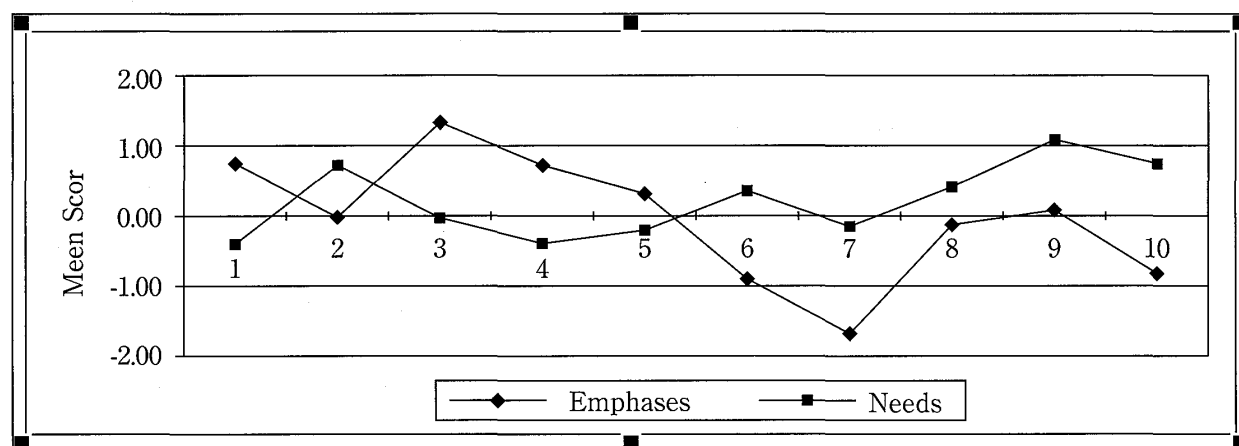


Figure 2. Comparison of perceived classroom practice and learner needs in senior high school (Items in Parts 1 and 2 of the questionnaire)

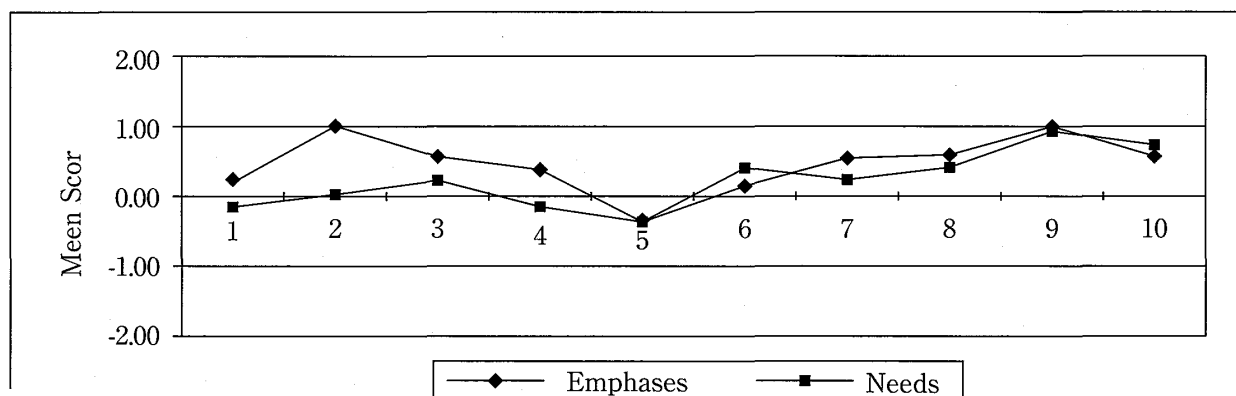


Figure 3. Comparison of perceived classroom practice and learner needs in junior high school (Items in Parts 4 and 5 of the questionnaire)

To Summarize: In an endeavor to gain greater insight into the challenges related to curriculum reform in the EFL school context of Japan, I elected to administer Savignon and Wang's (2003) proven—well designed, tested, comprehensive, and reliable survey instrument utilized in their Taiwan study—to a large sample of Japanese learners of English, attending at a mid-ranked traditional private university senior high school in Tokyo. This study investigated students' current perceptions of previous and existing classroom practices, as too, their beliefs about language learning in general.

The majority of respondents identified their current experience as being largely grammar-focused. As well, general use of Japanese as the language of instruction in their English classes where students have very few opportunities to engage in meaning-based interactive tasks remains commonplace. Students' attitudes toward perceived classroom practice in their senior high school is significantly unfavorable toward the predominance of form-based over that of communication based instruction, but was not as marked when contrasted with their recalled junior high school experience. This finding, coupled with the high expectation on the part of students that teachers should correct their errors in all types of English classes, we postulate, may be attributable to the preparation for the prevailing discrete point university entrance examination. A comparison of learner attitudes with reported classroom practices at their senior high school shows a clear mismatch between learner attitudes toward—and perceptions of—classroom practices. When asked to reflect on their previous junior high school experience, learners' responses indicated some mismatch between perceived practice and attitudes toward such regarding form-based instruction. There is, however, a notable match between emphasis on and desire for communication-based instruction, which could be indicative of a shift toward a greater instructional emphasis on such practices owing to recent curriculum reforms.

## Conclusion

The effective implementation of changed educational policy reforms requires a concerted and prolonged commitment by policy producers, administrators, curriculum designers, and educators—that is if they are to succeed. Recent reforms in the Asian Pacific region place a developing emphasis on civic knowledge, skills and values, reflecting that of a broader changing world. In this era of rapid globalization, underpinned by expansive trade, vast movements of migrant workers, increased tourism and purposeful student exchanges, along with marked advances in informational technology, there exists a progressive need for a more humanistic communicatively competent citizenry. Administrators and educators need to proactively seek out new methods, interpret, embrace and apply such to their co-learning environment; with a cognizance of multifarious composite of characteristics, factors, and constructs which are active in shaping their particular operational domain. Of particular interest to this researcher were matters pertaining to learners' perceptions of those classroom practices that they have experienced, their attitudes toward those practices, and their beliefs about English language learning in general. The findings in this study reveal clear evidence of a genuine interest in, if not desire for greater communicative language teaching practice, as too, for the creation of a curriculum and learning environment which lends support to such an endeavor. 'Communicative language teaching, if correctly interpreted and adequately integrated, is no less appropriate for modernizing Asian cultures than it is in the context of so many others.' (Fenton & Terasawa, 2006)

## Appendix

### Questionnaire

To what extent do you agree with these statements? Tick the box which best applies.

以下の質問に対し、もっとも当てはまるところにチェックして下さい。

| 5              | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1                 |
|----------------|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Strongly agree |   |   |   | Strongly disagree |
| 全くそう思う。        |   |   |   | 全くそう思わない。         |

## I. English practice in the classroom in my Senior high school

### I. 私の高校での英語の授業

- 1 English teaching in my high school is grammar-focused.  
私の高校の英語教育は文法中心である。
- 2 My English teachers in high school often ask us to do sentence drilling and repeat sentences after them.  
私の高校の英語の先生は、英作文のドリルや、先生が言った後、復唱をよくさせる。
- 3 The language used in the classroom by my teachers is mostly Japanese.  
私の英語の先生が、授業中話す言葉は、ほとんど日本語である。
- 4 English teaching in my high school is mainly explaining and practicing grammar rules.  
私の高校の英語教育は文法の説明と演習が主体である。
- 5 I seldom need to open my mouth in the classroom.  
私は、授業中ほとんど口を開かなくて良い。
- 6 English teaching in my high school is communication-based.  
私の高校の英語教育は、会話が基本である。
- 7 My teachers often design activities to have us interact in English with peers.  
私の英語の先生は同級生と英語で交流するような活動をよく企画する。
- 8 Our focus in class is communication, but the teacher would explain grammar when necessary.  
授業での焦点は会話だが、私の英語の先生は必要に応じて文法も説明する。
- 9 English teachers in my high school allow us trial-and-error attempts to communicate in English.  
私の高校の英語の先生は、英語で会話するために、間違えても良いからトライさせるという方法で学ばせる。
- 10 My English teachers often create an atmosphere for us to use English.  
私の英語の先生は、英語を使わなければならないような状況をよく作る。
- 11 My English teachers often correct my errors in class.  
私の英語の先生は、授業中よく私の間違いを直す。

## II. My attitude toward the instructional practice in my senior high school

### II. 高校での英語教育に対する私の考え方

- 1 I like grammar-focused English teaching in my high school.  
私は文法中心の英語教育が好きである。
- 2 I like sentence drilling and repeating sentences after my teachers in my high school English class.  
私は授業中、英語の先生が、英作文のドリルや、先生が言った後、復唱させることは良いと思う。

- 3 I like the language used in the classroom by my English teachers in high school to be mostly Japanese.  
私は、英語の先生が授業中に話す言葉は、ほとんど日本語で良いと思う。
- 4 I like much of the time in the classroom to be spent in explaining and practicing grammar rules.  
私は、授業中のほとんどが文法の説明と練習で良いと思う。
- 5 I like an English class in which I do not need to open my mouth.  
私は、口を開く必要がない英語の授業が好きである。
- 6 I like communication-based English teaching.  
私は、会話が基本の英語教育が好きである。
- 7 I like communicative activities so that we can interact in English with peers.  
私は、同級生と英語で交流できる英会話活動が好きである。
- 8 I like my English class to be focused on communication, with grammar explained when necessary.  
私は、必要に応じて文法の説明がある、会話中心の英語の授業が好きである。
- 9 I like English teachers in my high school to allow us to make trial-and error attempts to communicate in English.  
英語の先生が、私達が英語で会話するために、間違えても良いからトライさせるという方法で学ばせるのは良いと思う。
- 10 I like my English teachers to create an atmosphere that encouraged us to use English in class.  
私の英語の先生が、英語を使うよう後押ししてくれるような状況を作ることは好ましい。
- 11 I like my errors in speaking English to be corrected by my teachers.  
私は英語で話していて間違えたら、先生に訂正されるのは良いと思う。

### III. My beliefs about learning English

#### III. 英語学習に関する私の信条

- 1 Learning English is learning its grammar rules.  
英語を学ぶということは、文法を学ぶことである。
- 2 English learning through sentence drilling is effective.  
英作文のドリルによる英語学習は効果的である。
- 3 I believe Japanese should be frequently used in my English class for my better understanding of the lessons.  
授業内容をより理解するために、英語の授業で日本語が頻繁に使われるべきだと思う。
- 4 I believe the more grammar rules one memorizes, the better he/she is at using English.  
文法を覚えれば覚えるほど、英語を上手く使えるようになると思う。
- 5 Opening one's mouth to practice speaking in the classroom is not essential for

English learning.

英語学習において授業中に口頭で話す練習は、絶対に必要なものではない。

- 6 A language classroom should be communication-focused.

英語の授業は英会話中心であるべきだ。

- 7 It is important to practice English in real-life or real-life like situations.

実生活または、それに近い状況での英語練習は重要である。

- 8 Languages are learned mainly through communication, with grammar rules explained when necessary.

英語は主に会話により学ばれるもので、文法は必要に応じて説明されれば良い。

- 9 I believe making trial-and-error attempts to communicate in English helps me to learn English.

会話するために、間違えても良いからトライさせるという方法で英語を学ばせるのは良いと思う。

- 10 A teacher should create an atmosphere in the classroom to encourage English interaction as a class or in groups.

先生は、クラス全体やグループで英語での交流を促す状況作りをするべきである。

- 11 It is important for the teacher to correct students' errors in class.

授業中、先生が生徒の間違いを訂正することは大切である。

- 12 The formal study of grammar is essential to eventual mastery of English.

正式な文法の勉強は、英語を最終的にマスターするために絶対に必要なものである。

- 13 I believe my English improves most quickly if I study and practice the grammar.

文法を勉強するのが、私の英語を上達させるために一番早い方法だと思う。

- 14 There should be more formal study of grammar in English class.

英語の授業でもっと本格的に文法の勉強がされるべきである。

- 15 It is more important to study and practice grammatical patterns than to practice English in an interactive way in the classroom.

授業中、文法のような法則を勉強する方が、対話式の英語練習よりも重要である。

- 16 Grammar rules should be explicitly explained in class.

文法は授業中、明確に説明されるべきである。

- 17 Learning English is learning to use the language.

英語学習とは、英語の使い方を学ぶことである。

- 18 Learning English by practicing the language in communicative activities is essential to eventual mastery of a foreign language.

会話の練習による英語学習は、英語を最終的にマスターするために絶対に必要なものである。

- 19 A communication-focused language program often meets the learner's needs.

会話中心の英語学習プログラムは、生徒のニーズによく合っている。

- 20 I believe it is important to avoid making errors in the process of learning English.

英語を学ぶ上で、間違いを避けるのは大切だと思う。



- 21 Teachers should correct students' pronunciation or grammatical errors in class.  
先生は授業中、生徒の発音や文法の間違いを訂正するべきである。
- 22 A good language learner usually pronounces beautifully.  
英語が出来る生徒は一般的に発音が上手い。
- 23 A person's good pronunciation usually indicates good English.  
発音が上手いことは、一般的に良い英語を意味する。
- 24 Learning English is important for people in Japan.  
日本人にとって英語を学ぶことは重要である。
- 25 English is useful in getting a good job.  
良い仕事に就くために英語は役に立つ。
- 26 Good language learners are intelligent.  
英語が出来る生徒は、頭が良い。
- 27 Students who have good grades in other subjects are likely to be good language learners.  
他の教科で成績が良い生徒は大抵、英語も出来る生徒である。
- 28 English education should begin in elementary school.  
英語教育は、小学校から始められるべきである。
- 29 I wish to speak like English native speakers.  
ネイティブ・スピーカー（英語を母国語とする人）のように英語を話したい。

#### IV. English practice in the classroom when I was a junior high school student

#### IV. 私が中学生の時の英語の授業

- 1 English teaching in my school was grammar-focused.  
私の学校の英語教育は文法中心だった。
- 2 My English teachers in school often asked us to do sentence drilling and repeat sentences after them.  
私の学校の英語の先生は、英作文のドリルや、先生が言った後、復唱をよくさせた。
- 3 The language used in the classroom by my teachers was mostly Japanese.  
私の英語の先生が、授業中話す言葉は、ほとんど日本語だった。
- 4 English teaching in my school was mainly explaining and practicing grammar rules.  
私の学校の英語教育は文法の説明と演習が主体だった。
- 5 I seldom needed to open my mouth in the classroom.  
私は、授業中ほとんど口を開かなくて良かった。
- 6 English teaching in my school was communication-based.  
私の学校の英語教育は、会話が基本であった。
- 7 My teachers often designed activities to have us interact in English with peers.  
私の英語の先生は同級生と英語で交流するような活動をよく企画した。
- 8 Our focus in class was communication, but the teacher would explain grammar

when necessary.

授業での焦点は会話だったが、私の英語の先生は必要に応じて文法も説明した。

- 9 English teachers in my school allowed us trial-and-error attempts to communicate in English.

私の学校の英語の先生は、英語で会話するために、間違えても良いからトライさせるという方法で学ばせた。

- 10 My English teachers often created an atmosphere for us to use English.

私の英語の先生は、英語を使わなければならないような状況をよく作った。

- 11 My English teachers often corrected my errors in class.

私の英語の先生は、授業中よく私の間違いを直した。

- V. My attitude toward the instructional practice when I was a junior high school student

- V. 中学生当時の英語教育に対する私の考え方

- 1 I liked grammar-focused English teaching in my school.

私は文法中心の英語教育が好きだった。

- 2 I liked sentence drilling and repeating sentences after my teachers in my school English class.

私は授業中先生が、英作文のドリルをさせたり、先生が言った後、復唱させたりするのは好きだった。

- 3 I liked the language used in the classroom by my English teachers in school to be mostly Japanese.

私は、英語の先生が授業中に話す言葉は、ほとんど日本語で良いと思っていた。

- 4 I liked much of the time in the classroom to be spent in explaining and practicing grammar rules.

私は、授業中のほとんどが文法の説明と練習で良いと思っていた。

- 5 I liked an English class in which I did not need to open my mouth.

私は、口を開く必要がない英語の授業が良いと思っていた。

- 6 I liked communication-based English teaching.

私は、会話が基本の英語教育が好きだった。

- 7 I liked communicative activities so that we can interact in English with peers.

私は、同級生と英語で交流できる英会話活動が好きだった。

- 8 I liked my English class to be focused on communication, with grammar explained when necessary.

私は、必要に応じて文法の説明がある、会話中心の英語の授業が好きだった。

- 9 I liked English teachers in my school to allow us to make trial-and-error attempts to communicate in English.

英語の先生が、私達が英語で会話するために、間違えても良いからトライさせるという方法で学ばせるのは良いと思っていた。

- 10 I liked my English teachers to create an atmosphere that encouraged us to use English in class.  
私の英語の先生が、英語を使うよう後押ししてくれるような状況を作ることは好ましいと思っていた。
- 11 I liked my errors in speaking English to be corrected by my teachers.  
私は英語で話していて間違えたら、先生に訂正されるのは良いと思っていた。

### Acknowledgement

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to:

*Mr. Yuji Terasawa*, for your moral support, assistance with data analysis, translation work, and co-authorship in an extended version of this paper.

*Dr. Paul Robertson*, Asian EFL Journal - for peer review and insights

*Dr. Roger Nunn*, - for peer review and insights

*Ms. Yuka Minowa*, Waseda University - assistance with data collection

*Mr. Yasuhiro Tomita*, GignoSystem Japan, Inc. - software assistance

### Bibliography

Asraf, R.M. & Brewer, J.K. (2004) 'Conducting Tests of Hypothesis: The Need for an adequate Sample Size', *The Australian Educational Researcher*, vol.3, no.1, pp.79-93.

Bacon, S.M. & Finneman, D. (1990). 'A study of attitudes motives and strategies of university foreign language students and their disposition to authentic oral and written input', *Modern Language Journal*, 74, pp. 459-473.

Cohen, J. (1988) *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Limited.

Crookes, G. (1997) What Influences How and What Teachers Teach? *Modern Language Journal*, Vol. 81, No. 1, Special Issue: How Language Teaching Is Constructed, pp. 67-79.

Fenton, A. L. & Terasawa, Y. (2006) 'Paradigm Lost? A Belated Reply to Jarvis and Atsilarat from Japan', *Asian EFL Journal*, March 2006, vol. 8, issue 1, Article 10. Published Online [http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/March\\_06\\_af&yt.php](http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/March_06_af&yt.php)

Hinton, P.R. (2004) *Statistics Explained*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. NY: Routledge.

Horwitz, E. K. (1998) 'The beliefs about language learning of beginning university foreign language students', *The Modern Language Journal*, 72, pp. 285-294.

Hu, G. (2002) 'Potential Cultural Resistance to Pedagogical Imports: The Case of Communicative Language Teaching in China', *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 93-105.

Kern, R.G. (1995) 'Students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning', *Foreign Language Annals* 28, pp. 72-92.

Rao, Z. (2002) 'Chinese students' perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in EFL classroom', *System*, 30, pp. 85-105.

Savignon, S.J. & Wang, C. (2003) 'Communicative language teaching in EFL contexts: Learner attitudes and perceptions', *IRAL* 41, pp. 223-249.

Sirkin, M.R. (1995) *Statistics for the Social Sciences*. UK: Sage Publications, Incorporated.

## [抄 録]

アジア諸国（台湾、タイ、韓国、日本）、そして最近では中国の英語教育の現況として、コミュニカティブ・アプローチ（コミュニケーション能力上達に重点をおく教授法）の採用に、より一層、取り組む傾向が挙げられる。そしてその傾向は、各国それぞれの省庁により推進されている英語教育カリキュラムの変更により確認出来る。これらの教育改革の影響は、最終的に学習環境それ自体を分析することにより、その正当性を判断しなければならない。何故なら、EFL（外国語としての英語）教育に於いて、CLT（コミュニケーションに関する言語教授法）の導入に際し、様々な障壁を示す数多くの研究結果が存在するからである。CLTの導入に関して、教師の認識を評価する研究は幾つもあるが、実際の授業内容に対する生徒の考え方や認識まで考慮したものは、残念ながら限られている。従って、この研究では、EFLを学習する日本人学生の授業内容に対する考え方や認識を、主として‘meaning-based’（CLT、コミュニケーションに関する言語教授法）と‘form-focused’（文法訳読式教授法）に分類して調査して行くこととする。この論文は、生徒が必要、又は要求しているものと、今まで体験して来た授業内容との間の不整合を浮き彫りにしている。しかし、生徒がCLTに対し、切望しているとは言えないまでも、純粋に興味を示していることも明らかになる。よって、CLTは、その内容が正確に解釈され適切に統合されれば、現在のアジア文化圏にとって他の文化圏同様に、近年導入されている英語教育カリキュラムの変更を単に後押しするだけのものに止まらず、最適で有効なものだと言えるであろう。これらを視野に入れ、改革の局面にあるアジア諸国のEFL教育は、（学習環境において成功をもたらすよう）授業での教授法と生徒の考え方との間の建設的な橋渡しに向けて慎重に邁進していく必要がある。