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Students' needs and attitudes: EFL education in Japanese high schools

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**STUDENTS' NEEDS AND ATTITUDES: EFL EDUCATION IN
JAPANESE HIGH SCHOOLS.**

BY

Michelle Perche (B.A., Grad. Dip. Ed., RSA Cert. TEFLA)

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award
of Master of Applied Linguistics**

**At the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences
(School of International, Cultural and Community Studies)
Edith Cowan University, Western Australia.**

Date of submission: July, 2002.

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

Much of the literature on EFL education in Japan describes a system that is fraught with problems. Over the last decade, the Japanese Education Ministry (*Monbusho*) has introduced a number of reforms and introduced some new EFL courses into Japanese schools. The stated aim of the new courses has been to focus on the development of students' communicative abilities in English. However, the effectiveness of these reforms has been questioned, particularly at the senior high school level. According to a number of commentators, difficulties occur because of a back wash effect of the university entrance examinations. Others criticise the teachers for continuing to use traditional teaching methods that may no longer satisfy the needs of present generation students.

This study is an investigation of Japanese students' views on EFL education in senior high schools in Japan. In particular, it examines students' English language needs¹ and their attitudes² towards their high school EFL studies. Unlike previous student attitude surveys that have been conducted in Japan, this study employed a multi-method approach to data collection and used both quantitative and qualitative research instruments to gather data. Data was collected from three sample groups, namely: a) academic high school students in Japan; b) vocational high school students in Japan and c) Japanese ELICOS³ students in Australia. Over 500 questionnaires consisting of 50 statements and an extended answer section were sent to senior high school students in Japan and responses were received from 365 students. In addition, 12 ELICOS students completed questionnaires and were also interviewed in Australia.

¹ In this thesis, the term 'needs' has been taken to include both objective needs and subjective needs.

² The term 'attitudes' in this thesis is taken to mean students' disposition to react either favourably or unfavourably to various aspects of their English language studies.

³ ELICOS is an acronym for English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students.

The data collected was both statistically analysed and qualitatively interpreted in order to formulate statements about Japanese students' attitudes and their needs in regard to their English language studies undertaken at high school. The theoretical framework upon which this study has been based is one that acknowledges the importance of considering students' needs and attitudes when developing innovation in education.

The findings of this study may have implications for syllabus design, curriculum planning and classroom practice in Japan.

It was found that the majority of students who participated in this study were dissatisfied with many aspects of their English language studies at high school. The results also revealed that the majority of high school students have negative attitudes towards their English language studies and that they may indeed be dissatisfied with the traditional teaching methods with which they are being taught English. Many students indicated that they find their English classes to be uninteresting and this has a negative effect on their motivation to study English. Most of the students surveyed consider that the important thing to learn when studying a foreign language is how to speak and understand it and as a consequence they would particularly welcome the opportunity to develop their English conversation skills at school.

Background information about the Japanese education system and EFL teaching in Japanese high schools has been presented and documentation which outlines the nature of the recent reforms is discussed in some detail. Previous studies conducted both in Japan and overseas that have examined learners' needs and their attitudes towards foreign language studies are also discussed before the findings of the current study are presented.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- I. incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- II. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- III. contain any defamatory material.

Signed : _____

Dated : 12/12/02

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of all those who have helped during the various stages of this study. Particular thanks are due to:

Dr Rhonda Oliver for not only supervising my work, but for her encouragement, expert guidance, and positive attitude. I appreciate that her support and commitment has assisted me greatly during the process of completing this study.

Ryoko Harmon for the tremendous work she did in producing a Japanese translation of the questionnaires, and for her assistance in translating the extended answer responses.

Misako Ichinose for her assistance in translating the extended answer responses.

Professor Noriko Hashimoto for her kindness and willingness to help me find participants for the study in Japan.

Yoko Hanazawa for her assistance and willingness to find participants for the study in Japan.

Jacqueline Norris-Holt for her feedback and assistance in conducting the pilot study in Japan.

Bianca Panizza, the Director of the Centre for English Language Teaching at the University of Western Australia, for allowing me to conduct interviews with the Japanese ELICOS students.

Dr Danielle Brady at The Graduate School, Edith Cowan University, for her useful statistical analysis advice.

And finally, my husband, Jacques-Olivier, for encouraging me to complete this thesis, and for his good-natured support and patience during the entire process. Thanks also to my son Chad for being so understanding.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALT = Assistant Language Teacher

CLT = Communicative Language Teaching

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

ELICOS = English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students

JET Program = The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program

JTE = Japanese Teacher of English

NET Scheme = Native English Teacher Scheme in Hong Kong

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

In order for the context of the study to be fully appreciated, this chapter provides some background information about education in Japan. It examines some of the strengths and limitations of the Japanese education system and outlines some of the major educational reforms that have taken place in the country over the last century. The information provided here focuses on senior high schools, as this has been the area of investigation for this study. An attempt has been made to describe a so-called “typical” Japanese classroom and the traditional modes of teaching in Japan, based on both the relevant literature and the author’s experience of working at two public high schools in Japan.

The system of English language education in Japan is introduced in this chapter, but the pertinent issues and identified problems relating to the study of English in Japan are explored in greater depth in the literature review in Chapter 2. Private preparatory schools (cram schools), and English language conversation schools are discussed here in terms of the role they play in the education system and the services they provide.

The purpose of the study as well as an explanation of how it originated is presented in the latter part of this chapter. The study’s significance in the field of EFL research relating to the Japanese education context is also described. Finally, an outline of the organisation of the thesis has been provided.

Background

The Japanese Education System

At first glance, the Japanese education system appears to be largely successful.⁴ It has an enviable record in many regards, and has played a crucial role in the country's remarkable development over the last century (Anderson, 1975). Hall (1975) (as cited in the preface to Anderson, 1975) describes the Japanese education system as being very efficient, with few other nations being able to boast comparable statistics of school attendance, literacy, and percentage of students going on to study at a tertiary level. Others have characterised Japanese schooling by its "relative egalitarianism and consistency of outcomes" (Green, 2000, p.419). Studies by White (1987) and Dore and Sako (1989) both emphasise how successful Japanese schools are in encouraging the majority of children to achieve highly, and the relative equality of performance outcomes amongst the students. The fact that average standards of academic achievement are high is exemplified by the consistently high results achieved by Japanese children in the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) surveys (Lynn, 1988; IEA, 1988).

In Japan it is widely believed that achievement is largely due to effort, rather than innate ability (Takeuchi, 1991), and this prevailing view serves as an equalising force. An ethnographic study of Japanese high schools conducted by Rohlen during 1974 - 75, revealed that 90% of all young Japanese graduated from high school (Rohlen, 1983). However, despite this excellent record, closer examination reveals that the Japanese system does have its own unique problems.

⁴ The system has been "successful" in terms of the favourable outcomes achieved by the majority of students and the high proportion of students graduating from high school.

The education system in Japan is highly centralised and has been admired for its relative uniformity and consistency of standards (Green, 2000). However, Japanese policy-makers are increasingly criticising the system's relative "homogeneity, egalitarianism and orderliness" as being "barriers to creativity and personal growth amongst children" (Green, 2000, p.418). The Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, (generally known as *Monbusho*), oversees all schools and designates what subjects will be taught, curricula, assessment methods and which textbooks will be used (Orikasa, 1989; Green, 2000). Education is compulsory until the end of Year 9, and students attend elementary school (Years 1 - 6), followed by junior high school (Years 7 - 9) and senior high school (Years 10 - 12).

Upper secondary education in Japan is highly differentiated. High school programs in Japan can be classified as general (academic), or vocational and technical (Anderson, 1975). Sixty-eight percent of all secondary schools in Japan, both public and private, are classed as academic schools, with a general curriculum geared to students entering university (Rohlen, 1983). These academic schools are distinguished by their place in a hierarchy that is constructed according to how successful they are at preparing students to enter the country's most prestigious universities.

The majority of vocational school students, on the other hand, are not pressured by university entrance examinations because the majority of students will not go on to study at a tertiary level. According to Rohlen (1983), vocational schools carry a stigma, and as high as 80% of vocational students would have liked to enter an academic high school, but had not been able to pass the entrance exams at the end of junior high school. Student motivation is reportedly low in such schools and as Rohlen (1983) observed, the

teachers in the low-status private schools and vocational public schools are “not well equipped to handle delinquency or lack of motivation” (Rohlen, 1983, p.42).

Public schools are more numerous than private schools and are generally more highly regarded (Rohlen, 1983). However, in recent years a number of private schools in the Tokyo area have succeeded in increasing the proportion of their graduates who have gained entry into Tokyo University (Japan’s most prestigious university), leading them to being perceived as the “top schools” (Green, 2000). According to Amano (1997), the proportion of private high schools has been steadily increasing, now accounting for 30% of students at that level.

The central focus of Japanese education is the entrance exam systems (Wray, 1999). Students sit exams for entrance to senior high schools as well as universities, and competition to enter the best institutions is fierce. This system of competitive entrance examinations to schools and universities has emerged since the 1960’s and is considered to be a major problem in Japanese schooling (Green, 2000). According to Harasawa (1974), this situation is a result of Japan being an “almost completely status-oriented society in which it is essential to be a graduate of a university, irrespective of its academic standard” (Harasawa, 1974, p.73).

The entrance exam system has been criticised for influencing curricula content and teaching approaches. Another matter of concern is that Japanese students are subject to a host of problems in personal development as a result of the stress of the excessively competitive examination system (Horio, 1988; Kudomi, 1994).

In 1990, approximately 40% of senior high school graduates attended some kind of institution of higher education (Beauchamp, 1994). According to Rohlen (1983), 80% of Japanese students aspire to enter university, making entrance to the top universities extremely competitive. Rohlen (1983) describes the university entrance examinations in Japan as being a “national obsession”, and the key to understanding the dynamic of the education environment in Japan.

The University Entrance Examination System

Shiken jigoku, or “examination hell” is “the paramount problem of Japanese education” (Anderson, 1975, p.187; Green, 2000). According to Rohlen (1983), each university writes its own examinations and offers them on its campus once a year.⁵ Hundreds of separate entrance examinations are conducted at campuses all over the country, usually during the month of February. The compulsory subjects for the examinations include mathematics, Japanese, and a foreign language (most commonly English) (Rohlen, 1983). Rohlen (1983) describes the examinations as predominantly featuring short answer and multiple choice questions.

Anderson states that “the university entrance examination distorts the entire curriculum of secondary schools” (Anderson, 1975, p.188). As teachers and schools are judged on the success of their graduates in entering prestigious universities, there is “a great impetus for ‘test teaching’... ” (Anderson, 1975, p.188). In his (1983) assessment of the examination system Rohlen points out that immense competitive pressures exist not only for students, but also parents and teachers. He notes that the measure of exam

⁵ Even so, an anonymous examiner states that Rohlen’s comments are misleading. The examiner states that in order to be admitted to public universities in Japan candidates are required to take two types of examinations: 1) a common examination for public universities which is prepared by the central examination centre and 2) an examination prepared by each private university.

competitiveness correlates with the ranking of jobs to be gained four years later. Japan's largest and most successful companies are known to recruit their employees from the highest ranked universities. This makes entrance to the best universities a particularly important consideration in a society where life-time employment is widespread (Rohlen, 1983).

With regard to the English examinations, the content and nature of the examinations have long been a source of criticism. According to Harasawa (1974), the fact that the university entrance examinations for English do not include an oral-aural component, is a "grave defect".⁶ He describes the exams as being a series of "printed tests in which English is treated as if it were as dead a language as Latin" (Harasawa, 1974, p.74). Despite widespread recognition that problems exist with the examination system, reform of the content of the entrance examinations has been described as moving with "glacial slowness" (Rohlen, 1983, p.96). This is an issue that will be discussed further in the literature review.

Japanese Education Reforms

A study of the history of education in Japan reveals how the nation's educational policies have adapted and changed according to external world events and internal forces (Hall, 1975). According to Beauchamp (1994), major attempts to reform the system of education in Japan occurred in the 1870's and also during the period of Allied Occupation following World War II. A third wave of reform occurred from 1978 to the early 1980's.

⁶ However, as noted by an examiner, in recent times, several private universities have begun to include an aural component in their English/foreign language examinations.

During the first period of reform, western education was introduced for the purpose of modernising the nation (Beauchamp, 1994). In the second period of reform during the Allied Occupation, changes were derived from the American school system. The 6-3-3 school ladder was introduced, and plans were made for a number of other reforms. These included coeducation, the introduction of comprehensive schools that were to include a mix of university preparatory, vocational, and general education tracks, universal admission to schools based on local residence, and an attempt to decentralise the education system (Rohlen, 1983; Beauchamp, 1994). According to Rohlen (1983), the Occupation's reforms were least effective at the high school level.

In the Post-Occupation Period (1952-1960), Japanese authorities re-assessed some of the Occupation Period reforms and either scrapped them or modified them to more closely fit traditional Japanese models (Beauchamp, 1994). Coeducation was implemented during the Occupation Period, and has continued, but the system of fully comprehensive high schools in the original post-war plans was never fully realised (Green, 2000). Under the pressure of increasing demand, the post-war senior high schools became both selective and specialised (Green, 2000). As a result, senior high schools in Japan are arranged into a hierarchy of academic, vocational, and technical schools. High school entrance tests, which base eligibility to enter a particular school on ability not local residence, are taken at the end of junior high school. However, public elementary and junior high schools remained both non-selective and neighbourhood (Green, 2000).

Beauchamp (1994) characterises the major changes of the third period of educational reforms (1978 - early 1980's) to have been a move towards improving the quality of education. In the early 1970's the Japanese government invited the Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to send a team of education experts to advise it on what future directions to take. According to Beauchamp (1994), the OECD report praised the role of education in the nation's economic development, but strongly criticised the conformist nature of the Japanese system. The OECD report also described the system of university entrance examinations as "an acutely perplexing problem in Japan" (cited in Beauchamp, 1994, p.211). Overall, the report was highly critical of the pivotal role that the system of entrance examinations has on the school system:

...the whole school system, particularly at the higher secondary school level, runs the danger of being turned into a cram system for the entrance examinations and distracted from its true educational objectives. Curricula are shaped to meet the examination requirements...

(OECD Report [Paris, 1971], cited in Beauchamp, 1994, p.208)

The Ad Hoc Council on Education (*Rinkyoshin*), was established by law in 1984. The Japanese prime minister at the time, Nakasone, attempted to introduce a number of educational reforms which would enhance flexibility and extend diversity and choice in schools (Schoppa, 1991). His primary concern was how the entrance examinations "were limiting the creativity and diversity of Japanese students" (Nakasone, cited in Schoppa, 1991, p.230). Despite the fact that university entrance examination system reform was an issue which all parties concerned could agree on, few of Nakasone's reforms were actually implemented (Schoppa, 1991).

As we enter the twenty-first century, the Japanese education system appears to be at a turning point, with widespread support for the idea that change is needed. The current

reform agenda questions the system's centralised control, its uniformity and its egalitarian 6-3-3 structure (Green, 2000). The Central Council for Education in Japan (CCE), has argued that education reform must be seen in the context of economic and social changes (Green, 2000). With an ageing population, low birth rate, social changes within families and communities, and economic change, new demands are being made on education (Green, 2000). One of the key reforms amongst the CCE proposals is the introduction of more flexibility into the teaching process. According to Green (2000), this shift in direction is necessary if Japanese schooling aims to promote "independent and creative thinking" and assist those students who do not respond well to traditional modes of teaching. The influence of teaching methods on student motivation is a major consideration:

More responsive and varied teaching methods are believed to be a way of maintaining student motivation and of reducing the tendency for students to 'stuff their heads' full of facts.

(Green, 2000, p.428)

However, according to an interview held with the National Institute for Educational Research, as cited in Green (2000), teachers and parents remain conservative about the introduction of innovative teaching methods. Considerable professional development support will be needed by Japanese teachers if innovation in teaching is to be realised (Green, 2000).

Comparisons Between Japanese and Western Teaching Approaches and Students' Classroom Behaviours

In order to have an appreciation of what goes on in a typical Japanese high school classroom, it is useful to make a comparison between schools in so-called western countries, such as the United States, and Japanese high schools. Schools in both of these countries are said to “differ greatly in their pedagogical goals and approaches” (Rohlen 1983, cited in Miller, 1995, p.32).

Japanese teachers tend to encourage their students to develop adaptive dispositions to cope with the conditions of formal schooling, whereas American teachers try to engage the students by making the learning context more appealing (Hess & Azuma, 1991). In Japan, “teachability” on the part of students is an “internalized receptive diligence” (Hess & Azuma, 1991, p.7). It does not depend on how interesting the curriculum is, or the teacher’s presentation. Additionally, teachers’ overt control is minimal and feedback is scarce (Hess & Azuma, 1991). As a consequence, the “interaction of student characteristics and teacher strategies creates very different classroom climates in the two countries” (Hess & Azuma, 1991, p.2).

Azuma (1983), describes the Japanese teaching process as the “*sticky-probing*” approach. This approach entails a topic being probed and examined from several perspectives, and the students are expected to concentrate on the topic, work hard without immediate feedback, and persist. In comparison, Hess and Azuma (1991) describe a typical American teaching approach as being “*quick and snappy*”. The pacing of lessons in western classrooms is considered an important strategy for not losing the students’ attention. Lessons in the United States are more likely to proceed at a brisk pace, with students encouraged to ask questions. Teachers are also likely to give clear feedback and acknowledgement following each child’s response (Hess & Azuma, 1991).

The two teaching styles rely on different concepts of motivation (Hess & Azuma, 1991). Western teachers do not tend to rely on the internalised diligence of their students. Instead, they use a stimulus environment that is designed to induce interest and create motivation to work on the task (Hess & Azuma, 1991). The teacher, therefore, takes the responsibility for engaging the interest of the class.

In a study conducted by Azuma (1984) with Japanese students, it was found that the children who could work carefully and diligently on a relatively uninteresting task were more able to profit from Japanese schooling than those who could not.

In Japanese high schools, classes tend to have a lecture format as opposed to a discussion format. This is because the central goal of instruction in Japanese classrooms is “information loading”, which is linked to the system of university entrance exams. This is opposed to developing “critical thinking skills or facility in self expression” (Rohlen, 1983, cited in Miller, 1995, p.32). Instruction by lecture in Japan is a “thoroughly entrenched pattern” (Rohlen, 1983, p.245). In Japanese schools, the most commonly used teaching approach has been described as follows:

...secondary - level teaching employs a pedagogy almost entirely dependent on teacher-centred lectures to large classes of students engaged in note-taking for the purpose of passing exams.

(Okano, 1993, cited in Rohlen and Letendre, 1996, p.6)

Group work and pair work are rarely used in Japanese classrooms, except perhaps by some of the younger members of staff who are likely to have spent some time training overseas. The average class size is forty students. Students’ desks are arranged in a set pattern of rows of single desks, with limited physical classroom space, making it more

challenging for teachers to organise communicative activities. Classrooms are rarely decorated with students' work, maps, charts or any other kind of visual stimuli. The general atmosphere of the classes is formal, with teachers standing at the front of the classroom on a raised podium before the blackboard. Students usually stand to ask or answer a question, but most of the class time is composed of teacher talk. As part of the formalities of a typical class, both students and teacher stand and bow at the commencement and conclusion of each class.

According to Koscielecki (1994), in addition to the influence of the examination system on pedagogical approaches, teaching in Japan is also partly "culture-driven". The Japanese education system has been influenced by the fact that Japan is part of a Confucian heritage culture (Biggs, 1996a) (Along with China, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong). Ancient Confucian teaching was heavily dependent on rote - learning and recitation (Koscielecki, 1994) and reading in chorus and answering in unison are techniques which are frequently used in Japanese classrooms (Hess & Azuma, 1991). Japanese students are also more likely to be reserved and remain silent in class as these are traits that are nurtured by Japanese caregivers and educators (Barnlund, 1975). If students are having difficulty in understanding a lesson they are unlikely to request clarification from teachers. This is due to the students' embarrassment about not being able to understand (Anderson, 1993), and out of a sense of courtesy to both the teacher and the fellow pupils (Kobayashi, 1989).

Another classroom behaviour which Western teachers in Japan often find disturbing is the reluctance of Japanese students to initiate discussion or volunteer answers. According to Anderson (1993), Japanese students will answer only if specifically called upon, but only then if there is "a clear-cut answer". Japanese students may not respond

well to being “put on the spot” to answer a question as they may not want to take the risk of answering incorrectly in a group situation which could lead to a “loss of face” (Kobayashi, 1989).

Role performance in Japanese classrooms is strictly fixed. Teachers are supposed to maintain a position of superiority over their students, and students are expected to listen to lectures respectfully, without expressing disagreement (Kobayashi, 1989).

Additionally, even in terms of inter-student relations, Japanese students may feel uncomfortable about being asked to express opinions. Group harmony is highly revered and students may remain reticent rather than risk bringing about a disruption in interpersonal harmony by animatedly expressing an opinion (Kobayashi, 1989).

For western teachers working in English language classes in Japan, an awareness of these differences in teaching approaches and classroom behaviours would prove useful if the teachers are to have an understanding of the class dynamics. It may also have implications for the introduction of communicative approaches to language instruction in Japanese classrooms. This is a topic that will be discussed further in the literature review.

The Study of English in Japan

English as a foreign language has been studied in Japan since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when English was first emphasised as a subject of instruction at Japanese junior and senior high schools (Amano, 1990). Since the end of the Second World War, to the period of the economic boom and rapid expansion of trade which Japan enjoyed during the 1960's and 70's and beyond, a further wave of interest in learning English has been fuelled for pragmatic reasons.

According to *Monbusho* guidelines, all schools in Japan are required to include at least one foreign language in the curriculum, and the majority of junior and senior high schools specify English as the required language to be taught. English was introduced into elementary schools from 2002. It is by far the most taught foreign language in Japan, with about 5.5 million senior high school students in Japan currently studying English (Koscielecki, 1994). English is considered to be one of the most important subjects of study and although it is not legally required, it is an indispensable subject needed in order to pass the entrance examinations to most senior high schools and universities (Harasawa, 1974).

Some critics of the present system have called for English to be made an elective subject, particularly at the senior high school level (Harasawa, 1974; Wray, 1999).

Supporters of such a proposal claim that this would make English teaching in Japanese schools more effective. According to Harasawa (1974, p.78):

...on the one hand, the average motivation and linguistic aptitude of students of English would rise and, on the other, they would work harder and more willingly, having chosen to study English rather than being forced to do so. It has been absurd trying to teach English to the whole population, as we have so far been doing. If this ceases, I shall be more optimistic about the prospects of English in this country.

According to Anderson (1975), English is offered in senior high schools from three to six hours a week for three years. He describes English as being taught as a content subject, like science or mathematics, rather than a skills subject. First year senior high school students might study “oral speech training”, but second and third year students are more likely to be “working on translations in preparation for the much-dreaded

university entrance examination” (Anderson, 1975, p.170). Students specialise in developing reading-translation skills and “forego the luxury of conversational English” (Anderson, 1975, p.170).

Much has been said about Japanese students’ poor English language proficiency (Harasawa, 1974; Orikasa, 1989; Benson, 1991), and in particular, their poor performance in speaking English despite having studied it for six to nine years (Harasawa, 1974; Hiraizumi, 1975; Wray, 1999). Recognition of the importance of developing students’ ability to communicate in English has come from business and government circles, but efforts to improve the way English is being taught in schools have largely failed (Anderson, 1975). (See the literature review for further discussion of the problems within EFL education in Japanese high schools.)

Education Reforms Relating to English Language Education

In recent times when the Japanese government was criticised for creating a trade imbalance through its perceived reluctance to open its domestic market to foreign companies, the Japanese government reacted by reforming educational policy to include a focus on “internationalisation” (Leheny, 2001).

Pivotal to these reforms has been the introduction of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Program), a government initiative that was first introduced in 1987. The Program involves the hiring of thousands of foreigners to either work in schools as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), or in local government as Co-ordinators for International Relations (CIRs). The JET Program can be considered as “the most extensive attempt at internationalization Japan has ever made” (Yoshida, 2000, p.99). In the year 2000, 5 467 Assistant Language Teachers, 574 Co-ordinators for

International Relations and 37 Sports Exchange Advisers from around the world, were employed (Yoshida, 2000).

Just how successful the JET Program has been in terms of attaining its goals of fostering internationalisation and improving foreign language education in Japanese schools is a matter which has received much attention in recent publications (see further discussion of this in the literature review).

Other recent educational reforms relating to English language education in Japan have involved the publication of *Monbusho's* new 'Course of Study Guidelines for English Education' in 1989. These guidelines emphasised the development of students' communicative ability in English as the primary goal of high school English education (Browne and Wada, 1998). The new 'Course of Study Guidelines for English Education' produced by *Monbusho* came into effect in senior high schools in Japan from April 1994. The courses included Reading, Writing, and three new Oral Communication Courses (see further discussion of these courses and the new 'Course of English Study Guidelines' in the literature review).

The Role of Private Preparatory Schools

Diverse private teaching activities exist in Japan for children and senior high school students. *Juku* or *Yobiko* are more familiarly known as “cram” schools that offer supplementary education after school and are organised as commercial enterprises. According to Harnisch (1994), a description of Japanese education would be incomplete without some discussion of supplemental schooling in Japan. *Juku* can be categorised as academic and non-academic, with the latter teaching subjects such as music, calligraphy,

or the arts. However, a larger proportion of *juku* are academic (Harnisch, 1994).

According to Harnisch (1994) the main functions of *juku* can be described as follows:

- 1) To help students to keep up with a demanding school curriculum.
- 2) To give remedial instruction to those students who fall behind.
- 3) To prepare students for entrance examinations.

Juku are considered to be an important support in assisting both the high and low achievers in a public system of formal education which values egalitarianism and uniformity (Kitamura, 1986). Harnisch's (1994) study revealed that the main reason parents gave for why their children were attending *juku* was because "the children would better understand the instruction given in public schools" (Harnisch, 1994, p.329). Other educational advantages of *juku* as identified by parents include the following:

- In *juku* knowledge and abilities are effectively matched to teaching. Learning is more controlled and successful.
- Children get better feedback and are praised more often.
- In *juku* children are taught using more effective methods, focusing on well-defined tasks and topics.
- *Juku* teachers show more responsibility in their teaching, which is displayed, above all, in the better consideration and care of the children.

(Harnisch, 1994, p.329)

It is also widely considered that many students attend these schools in order to maximise their chances of passing high school or university entrance examinations. The increased

competitiveness of entrance examinations drives the need for Japanese students to attend extra tutoring classes (Kondo, 1974; Blumenthal, 1992). The top *juku* are rumoured to be more crucial to success than regular school, and this is reflected in their high rate of attendance. Sixty percent of 14 and 15 year old junior high school students were enrolled in such schools in 1976 (Rohlen, 1983), and again, 60% of students attended them in 1993 for an average of three evenings a week (Central Council for Education, 1996). According to Green (2000), nearly 50% of primary school children in Tokyo are attending after school cram classes in order to prepare for private school entry exams. Yoo (1987) reported that about 60% of public school students and 90% of private school students attend *juku*.

Yobiko cram schools cater for senior high school students and graduates and their task is to prepare students for the university entrance examinations. According to Rohlen (1983), in 1976 one in ten high school students were attending *yobiko*.

Cram schools have been criticised as undermining the public school system in Japan. They have also been criticised for introducing inequality into education in Japan (Harnisch, 1994). However, *juku* attendance continues to rise despite official anxiety about its effects on public education (Green, 2000). Some students do not want to do homework or schoolwork because they think that attending a school in the evenings will be of greater assistance to their success in passing the university entrance examinations. According to Wray (1999), “the *juku* are deeply significant in reinforcing the negative dehumanizing, and distorting results of the entrance examinations on students’ study habits” (p.169). Japanese students already spend more days in school than children in most countries, so these extra hours spent at *juku* plainly contribute to students being over exerted (Green, 2000).

On a positive note, the free-market competition of the *juku* schools is said to provide a strong incentive for improving instructional effectiveness (Harnish, 1994). Another effect is “the development of original curricular materials and innovative approaches to teaching and learning” (Harnisch, 1994, p. 328). These latter points relating to materials development and innovative teaching approaches will be discussed further in the literature review in the context of how English language instruction in Japanese high schools needs to be reformed.

The Role of English Language Conversation Schools

In the case of English language conversation schools, these are privately run businesses in Japan which cater for students from kindergarten age to retirees. The teachers are usually native speakers and the classes focus on developing students’ ability in spoken English. English language conversation schools are widely available throughout Japan and have been well patronised during the last twenty years. The popularity of these schools is indicative of the fact that many Japanese are interested in learning how to speak English, whether it be for personal reasons such as travel, or for work related purposes.

Background to This Study

The aims of this study are derived from my first hand experience of teaching English in Japan (1991 - 1992, 1996 - 1998). In 1996, I was a participant of the JET Program and worked as an ALT in two public vocational high schools in Okinawa. Whilst working as an ALT, I had the opportunity to gain experience of what was being taught in the English courses at Japanese high schools and how typical classes were conducted. I also

witnessed just how disinterested many of the students were in their English classes.

Most of the students were unaccustomed to listening and speaking in English and many of the Japanese English teachers (JTEs) I worked with hardly spoke any English to the students during the classes.

My teaching timetable was centred on oral communication classes that were part of the new *Monbusho* Oral Communication Courses introduced into senior high schools in 1994. Despite the fact that these were oral communication classes, most of the classes were teacher-centred and students were given few opportunities to communicate in English. It should be noted that ALTs working as part of the JET Program are employed as the name suggests, as assistant language teachers. This means that the ALT's role is to assist the JTE in English classes, most commonly through being a partner in team teaching. I often felt that my presence as a native speaker of English was at best under utilised, and at worst, wasted. On many occasions, at the JTE's request, my only role was to read aloud passages of English prose from a textbook while the students repeated as a chorus after me. Quite often, the JTE I was team-teaching with would approach me five minutes before class to ask if I had a game or activity that could be used at the beginning of the lesson. For some JTEs, this was considered my most important contribution to the class.

Only a minority of the JTE's I worked with were willing to spend time before class collaborating on preparing communicative team-teaching lessons. (These tended to be the younger members of staff who had spent some time studying overseas.) Perhaps one of the main reasons for why this did not eventuate was because the JTEs had a busy workload and could not spare the time for preparing such lessons. I also suspect that in some cases it was because they did not feel confident enough in their spoken English

ability to teach communicatively. They also may not have received sufficient professional training in how to effectively conduct team teaching. For such reasons, many of the JTEs I observed continued to employ their usual teacher-centred approach in the classes, even if they were conducting an oral communication class and a native English speaker was present. Most of the teachers I worked with relied very heavily on teaching from the *Monbusho* textbooks in each lesson. Anecdotal evidence gathered from other ALTs at the time indicated that many of them had similar experiences. This leads one to the conclusion that the JET Program may only be successful in helping to improve Japanese students' communicative ability in so far as the Japanese English teachers are prepared to conduct team teaching lessons which aim to develop such skills. (See also the literature review for further discussion of this issue.)

Many of the high school students I met could not speak or understand English very well. Some were very interested in trying to communicate, but many others appeared disinterested in their English classes as a whole. (I was surprised to see the JTEs 'turn a blind eye' to students who were sleeping, listening to 'Walkmans,' reading comic books, talking to classmates, or applying make-up in class.) I wondered at the time if this was done out of a sense of politeness or whether it was indicative of a cultural difference in approach to classroom management. It should be noted that I was working at two vocational schools, and as previously mentioned, students at these schools have a reputation for having poor motivation towards their studies. The dysfunctional nature of many of the English classes I visited stimulated my interest in investigating the students' perceptions of their English classes.

This study is driven by a desire to find out what the students themselves think about the present system of English language education in Japan. What do they want to study in

their English courses? Which skills do they consider to be the most important to study? How do they prefer to study English? If they are not happy with the way things are at present, what kind of changes would they like to see made? The study aims to provide data which may inform teachers and curriculum planners of how to provide a positive learning experience for their students in terms of both level of achievement and level of enjoyment.

Purpose of the Study

Over the last thirty years, various critics of the system of English language instruction in Japanese high schools have called for a number of reforms to be made, but change is slow. The purpose of this study is to gather and analyse information about students' views of EFL education in Japanese high schools. It aims to identify Japanese students' attitudes and needs with regard to their EFL studies. This has been done in order to gain a better understanding of whether or not students are satisfied with their English language studies at school.

Significance of the Study

A number of studies surveyed the attitudes of Japanese university students in regard to their English language studies (Berwick and Ross, 1989; Benson, 1991; Widdows & Voller, 1989; Kobayashi, Redekop & Porter, 1992; Shimizu, 1995). However, few studies have investigated Japanese high school students' attitudes and needs in regard to their English language studies. This is in spite of the fact that criticisms of EFL education in Japanese high schools are significant. One related study by Orikasa (1989), was conducted at a private school in Japan and involved a needs assessment which

surveyed the attitudes of 48 Year 12 students, their English teachers and school administrators. Orikasa's study found that there was a need for the school's EFL Program to be reformed.

Building on from Orikasa's research, the present study involved a larger sample of participants, and surveyed the opinions of 365 senior high school students from five different schools in Japan. The study also differed in its inclusion of 12 ELICOS students studying in Australia who as Japanese high school graduates, contributed a significant amount of data to the study through completing questionnaires and participating in interviews.

This study provides authentic data about Japanese students' attitudes and needs in regard to their English language studies at high school. Such an investigation which may identify students' attitudes towards studying English, and what and how they like studying, can provide valuable information which may illuminate the means by which to optimise the students' English language learning. As previous studies have found that Japanese students are often poorly motivated towards their English language studies (Benson, 1991; Koike, 1981 and Imamura, 1981), data from this study may contribute towards a better understanding of some of the underlying reasons for the students' reported poor motivation. As the link between motivation and successful L2 acquisition has widespread recognition (Ellis, 1994), this is an important understanding to have if the situation is to be improved. Based on this data, it may be possible to make recommendations on how EFL education in Japanese high schools could be reformed so that it comes closer to satisfying students' needs.

As Benson (1991) points out, little is known about what combination of curriculum, teaching methods and texts would “best achieve higher levels of motivation and achievement” (Benson, 1991, p.34). However, by investigating students’ needs and their perceptions of their English language studies at high school, a useful contribution to this area of research may be achieved. It is hoped that the findings from studies such as the present one which has had a learner-centred focus, might contribute useful information to assist further reform of the system of EFL teaching in Japanese schools. Finally, the purpose of any recommendations to change the present system would be to seek some improvement in high school students’ attitudes towards their English language studies and as a consequence, an improvement in their English language learning.

Organisation of the Thesis

The above information has provided an introduction to the background of the study and the rationale for carrying out the study. It also provides an outline of the study’s core objectives. The following chapter is a review of the literature relating to the study of English in the Japanese context, particularly Japanese schools. It also provides a discussion of the relevant research literature from Japan and overseas and outlines the key research questions of this study.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology employed for the purposes of data collection and describes the participant groups, the research instruments and the processes through which the data was collected and analysed. The results of the study are then presented in the subsequent chapters, beginning with the results of the high school questionnaire in Chapter 4 and an exposition of the findings from the extended answer section of the questionnaire in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6 the ELICOS questionnaire results and the

findings from the extended answer section are presented. Chapter 7 provides a description of the interview data and finally, in Chapter 8, the key findings from the study are discussed. Based on the results, recommendations on how EFL education in Japanese high schools could be improved are outlined. Methodological issues from the study are also considered.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature discussed in this chapter falls into two distinct categories:

- i) Literature concerning the nature of EFL education in Japanese high schools.
- ii) Research literature relating to studies that have investigated students' needs and attitudes towards studying foreign languages.

Most of the research that is reported here has been conducted in Japan over the past four decades. Additionally, some overseas studies that have investigated students' needs and attitudes towards foreign language study are also presented.

This thesis is based on the hypothesis that the present generation of Japanese students are dissatisfied with the English language studies they do at high school, particularly with regard to the content of their school courses and the traditional teaching methods used by their teachers. The study is premised on the belief that an investigation of students' needs and attitudes towards their English language studies will provide information that is vital for the reform of EFL education in Japanese high schools. The study's research questions reveal the student-centred focus of the study, and these are presented at the conclusion of this chapter. The nature of the study is also explained.

PART I

English Language Education in Japanese High Schools

Problems in EFL Education in Japanese High Schools

Based on the relevant literature pertaining to EFL education in Japan, it is possible to identify three main problem areas in English language education in high schools. They are as follows:

- 1) The poor communicative ability of Japanese students despite a total of six years of English language instruction during junior and senior high school.
- 2) The influence of the university entrance examinations on EFL course content and classroom practices at the senior high school level.
- 3) The reportedly low levels of motivation amongst high school students towards their English language studies.

Students' poor communicative ability

English language teaching in Japan has a reputation for producing less than competent speakers of the language (LoCastro, 1996). According to Hildebrandt and Giles (1980, p. 78), "the failure of the majority of the Japanese to approach an acceptable level of English speaking ability is the subject of almost constant discussion...". In recent decades, calls have been made for English language education in schools to be improved, and in particular, for teachers and schools to place a higher priority on developing students' communicative skills. English language instruction in Japanese high schools has largely focused on teaching discrete grammar points and training students using the "*yaku doku*" or reading-translation approach to develop their skills of translation. Low priority has been given to developing students' communicative skills.

Many critics of the system have called for reform of course content and teaching methodologies (Harasawa, 1974; Anderson, 1975; Hirazumi, 1975; Orikasa, 1989; Knight, 1995; Law, 1995; Wray, 1999).

According to Buck (1988), there are probably many reasons why, despite receiving hundreds of hours of classroom instruction, most Japanese high school graduates have poor communicative competency in English. However, one of the most important reasons is “the wash back effect of entrance examinations on the classroom” (Buck, 1988, p. 18).

Commentators on English language education in Japan such as Law (1995) and Wray (1999) have largely welcomed the new oral communication courses that were introduced into junior high schools in 1992 and senior high schools in 1994, but have expressed concern that a number of unresolved issues remain. According to Law (1995) the 1989 ‘Course of Study Guidelines’ published by *Monbusho* emphasises the importance of developing students’ communicative competence in English, and yet they do not require schools to give more emphasis to developing students’ aural-oral skills. The ‘Course of Study Guidelines for English’ will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, along with a discussion of the main impediments to the successful introduction of communicative reforms into Japanese high schools.

Influence of the university entrance examinations

The English language university entrance examinations taken by high school students in Japan at the end of Year 12 have been widely criticised (Anderson, 1975; Matsuyama, 1978; Koike, 1981; Matsuoka, 1981; Matsuyama, 1981; Morrow, 1987; Buck, 1988; Motegi & Shimizu, 1990; Law, 1995; LoCastro, 1996; Gorsuch, 2000). According to a

number of researchers, the system of university entrance exams dramatically affects English teaching in Japan and has a wide-ranging influence. This is particularly the case with regard to curricular content and classroom practice. Morrow (1987) blames the university entrance examinations for having an overwhelming influence on the school system, and criticises the exams for having a strong emphasis on grammar and reading. As noted by Buck (1988), as long as the entrance examinations consist mainly of discrete-point grammar items and translation, students and teachers are going to concentrate their efforts on learning to answer grammar questions and doing translations. This is in spite of the fact that evidence suggests that such activities may not lead to successful language acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Savignon, 1983; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Brown and Yamashita (1995, p. 28) also question the validity of the exams' content and construct, describing them as being "out of synch with current language teaching theory and practice".

The wash back effect of these exams is very apparent in the pedagogy of English language teaching in Japan. For example, Japanese high school teachers tend to tailor their teaching to exam preparation (Rohlen, 1983). According to Buck (1988, p.16):

It is almost impossible to overstate the influence of these examinations on both the educational system as a whole, and the day-to-day content of classroom teaching.

Gorsuch (2000) states that Japanese English teachers feel the influence of the exams at both the institutional and the classroom level. In support of this claim she cites Kodaira (1996):

...colleagues and principals likely support English instruction focused on exam preparation by providing rewards, or demerits, for teachers who produce students who succeed or do not succeed, in passing exams.

(Kodaira, 1996, as cited in Gorsuch, 2000, p.687.)

It is not surprising that teachers have the tendency to teach for the university entrance exams when student pass rates are a measure of teacher success. Thus the influence of the exams on teaching methodology is clear. As Anderson suggests (1975, p. 173):

...the stranglehold of the university entrance examination must be broken. Only then will the teaching of functional English be possible.

Further, it is evident that improvement in students' English language communicative competencies is likely to be minimal until such time as the majority of universities revise their entrance examinations and include an aural-oral skills component. Unless such changes are implemented, reforms introduced into high schools by *Monbusho* are likely to be virtually ignored (LoCastro, 1996) or remain "merely cosmetic" (Law, 1995).

According to Wray (1999, p.141) high school teachers have told him that they cannot teach English conversation to their students because of the pressure they feel to prepare students for the university entrance examinations. If they were to teach English conversation:

... their students' ability to pass the entrance examinations would be handicapped and their prestige and that of their schools would suffer in comparison with other teachers and schools.

Furthermore, as noted by Gorsuch (1998), some high school teachers legitimise the fact the fact that they do not use English in their classrooms because most of the entrance examinations do not test listening or speaking.

In some instances, students' expectations may influence the teachers' classroom practices. According to Gorsuch (2000), students might resist a teacher trying to give them the opportunity to practise speaking and listening skills, or at least, not take such classes seriously because they know these skills will not be tested in the entrance exams. According to Hildebrandt and Giles (1983) the students' expectation is that their teachers' role is to help them pass university entrance exams.

In addition, the nature of the university entrance examinations not only has an effect on English language instruction in high schools, it also has a flow on effect to the universities. Studies such as Benson's (1991) have revealed that English teachers in Japanese universities are "frequently taken aback by the low levels of university achievement, despite the comparative difficulty of the university entrance examinations" (p.34). The reason for this situation is because students have just memorised lots of "formalised and abstruse English" for the purposes of passing the entrance examinations, but they don't actually have a good understanding of how the language is used (Benson, 1991).

Despite repeated calls for integrated tests of students' language skills to be included in the university entrance examinations (e.g., Morrow, 1987), as at 2002, very few universities have changed their entrance examinations to include an aural-oral skills

component. In a study of 21 English language university entrance examinations conducted by Brown and Yamashita (1995), it was found that examinees were not required to produce much English language at all, even written English. Spoken English was not tested by any of the universities in the study. According to Benson (1991, p. 46), at the very least, “there seems to be no practical reason why listening tests could not be incorporated into the entrance examinations.” Some positive signs are emerging as several major universities have begun to include an English listening comprehension section in their entrance examinations (Buck, 1988). For example, six of the 21 examinations included in Brown and Yamashita’s study (1995) had included some listening comprehension items. However, the majority of universities are yet to follow suit.

From the point of view of the universities, little information has been forthcoming in regard to the reasons why the entrance examinations do not incorporate an aural-oral component. According to Buck (1988), a number of practical constraints on the production of the exams influences the nature of the tests produced. For example, entrance examinations are usually made by each individual university, and universities generally have two or three different examinations every year. This leaves very little time for exam development. Because past exam papers are published for the benefit of future candidates, new exams must be developed each year. Pressed for time, “most teachers see little alternative but to try either to produce a different version of the tests made in previous years, or imitate the tests of more prestigious institutions” (Buck, 1988, p. 17).

There are other possible reasons for why the universities have been very slow to change the nature of their exams to include an aural-oral component. For instance:

- 1) Interview tests would present logistical problems for the universities due to the number of students applying to sit for such tests.
- 2) Many faculty members have attained erudition in the English language, literature, or culture (Harasawa, 1974), but may lack competency in the design and implementation of examinations which have an aural-oral focus.
- 3) It is difficult to break the cycle, i.e. teachers prepare their students for the university entrance examinations holding certain expectations about the content of the examinations.

As noted by Gorsuch (2000, p.689), "...in the Japanese context, university exams are commercial products that are actively marketed by universities to high school students....". It is likely that as a result of this need for continued "marketability", universities exhibit a reluctance to change the nature of their entrance examinations. If they were to change the exams, they may fear that teachers will not recommend their university's examinations to their students, or students may not choose to take them because they feel they are ill-prepared to cope with exams which test communicative ability. According to Gorsuch (2000, p. 688):

Universities which support themselves financially through fees students pay to take their exams recognize that high school teachers play a role in advising students where to apply.

Gorsuch (2000, p. 688) cites evidence obtained in personal communications with two public and private high school teachers and two university faculty, which confirms that "the exams should not deviate strongly in form or difficulty from what the students expect; otherwise, students will not apply to take the exams."

Unless change is enforced across the board by *Monbusho*, and all universities are required to include an aural-oral skills component in their English language entrance examinations, a certain amount of inertia for change is likely to remain. However, Gorsuch (2000) expresses some optimism about the possibility of change in the future. She notes that universities are coming under increasing pressure to change their entrance exams. As the number of university-age students declines in Japan, she states that there is “increased hope” that more universities will offer tests of students’ communicative skills in their entrance exams.

It could be suggested that further research is needed to investigate whether or not the majority of Japanese high school students have an interest in developing their aural-oral skills in English. Perhaps if evidence from the potential “client base” is found to support a change towards greater communicative competency, the universities might be more inclined to implement changes to their entrance examinations.

Poor Student Motivation

The third identified problem area in English language education in Japan concerns student motivation. Studies have found that Japanese university and high school students are often poorly motivated towards their English language studies (Koike, 1981; Imamura, 1981; Day & Iida, 1988; Berwick & Ross, 1989; Benson, 1991). However, little is known about the causal factors for this. According to Orikasa (1989) and Benson (1991), students in Japan have also reported a low sense of achievement in the subject. It would seem that teaching practices, teaching materials and course content are partly to blame for the students’ negative attitudes. This issue will be taken up for further discussion later in this chapter.

The Past Thirty Years

The system of EFL education in Japan has been criticised for its inefficiencies for a number of years, by both Japanese and Western commentators. The following extracts reveal how English as a foreign language education has been very slow to evolve in Japan over the past thirty years, in spite of widespread criticism and numerous calls for change.

When considering the debates over recent years which have called both for reform of the university entrance examinations and for a greater emphasis to be placed on developing students' communicative skills, it should be noted that evidence from the literature reveals that the same reforms were being called for in 1972. The following quotation is evidence that thirty years ago, the Central Council for Education in Japan reported that foreign language courses should aim to develop students' communicative skills:

Foreign language training should aim at giving students a knowledge of foreign languages and the ability to use these languages for communicating with people of other societies.

Source: Basic Guidelines for the Reform of Education:
Report of the Central Council for Education, 1972.
(Cited in Beauchamp, 1994, p. 226)

Anderson (1975) called for "official sanction" from *Monbusho* to implement the latest methods of language learning. In his commentary on English language education in Japan, he stressed the importance of Japanese people having communicative competence

in English and noted that this need might bring about changes in language education in Japan:

The recognition in high places in business and government circles of the crucial necessity for Japanese to communicate with the rest of the world through the international language of English may eventually bring about a revolution in language learning.

(Anderson, 1975, p.173)

In 2002, Anderson's so-called "revolution" in language teaching in Japan is still yet to occur. Anderson (1975) stressed that in order to change the way English was being taught, both administrative and faculty co-operation were needed. In particular, he stressed the importance of teachers' professional development and training:

Most importantly, the roughly 65,000 junior and senior high school English teachers must be retrained to give them the skills, techniques, and attitudes necessary to teach the language effectively, both orally and aurally.

(Anderson, 1975, p. 173)

The issue of teacher training in Japan and its possible deficiencies will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

Furthermore, the following quotation from Miyauchi, an American-trained high school teacher at Kobe High School during the 1970's, reveals just how little has changed in the content of the university entrance examinations over the past thirty years:

...the argument for the practical utility of speaking English is so strong that soon the entrance examinations will require audio comprehension as well, and then we can really specialize in the aural-oral approach.

(Takeshi Miyauchi, as cited in Anderson, 1975, p. 170)

Unfortunately, Miyauchi's prediction is still to be realised. As stated previously, in 2002, the majority of university entrance examinations for English did not include an aural-oral component and only a small number of universities have introduced a listening skills test to their entrance examinations. In 1984, discussions on educational reform in Japan held by the Education Council, Japan Committee for Economic Development also called for aural-oral skills to be tested in the university entrance exams:

For foreign languages, it is desirable to adopt formats such as those in the English Proficiency Examination or TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) in which the four skills of "reading", "writing", "hearing", and "speaking" can be comprehensively examined.

Education Council, Japan Committee for Economic Development
July, 1984 (Cited in Beauchamp, 1994, p.287.)

This 1984 report stated that serious consideration must be given to the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. It was stated in the report that attention to the three areas other than reading "is lacking in general" (Education Council Japan Committee for Economic Development Report, 1984 as cited in Beauchamp, 1994, p. 289).

If one examines the *Monbusho* 'Guidelines Commentary for Foreign Languages' from 1978, it becomes evident that *Monbusho* has been advocating the importance of developing students' communicative abilities in English for a number of years. The following quotation from 1978 highlights this:

The general goals for teaching a foreign language include fostering the students' ability to understand a foreign language and express themselves in the language. Also, to cultivate a better understanding of the life and viewpoints of foreign people.

Monbusho 'High School Instructional Guidelines Commentary: Foreign Languages; English'. (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1978.)

A similar report on educational reform from 1986 also called for greater emphasis to be placed on developing students' communicative skills in English. This report actually called for a review of course content and the methods of language instruction employed in schools and universities:

In the teaching of foreign languages, especially English, emphasis needs to be placed on the mastery of an international language (*lingua franca*) as a tool for international communication. From this point of view, a basic review should be made of the content and methods of language instruction throughout lower and upper secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

Source: Third Report on Educational Reform. National Council on Educational Reform, Tokyo, 1986. (Cited in Beauchamp, 1994, p. 327)

The Third Report on Educational Reform from 1986 referred to an earlier one that described English language education in Japan as being “very inefficient”. The 1986 report also called for the English course content to be simplified, and be modified so as to develop students’ skill in “active communication with foreigners” (Third Report on Educational Reform, 1986, as cited in Beauchamp, 1994, p. 327).

The above extracts provide evidence that the reform of English language education in Japan has been an issue of contention for a number of years. Looking at these excerpts from the literature with the clarity of hindsight, it is possible to appreciate just how difficult it has been to introduce successful reforms into the system of English language teaching in Japanese schools. It also suggests that in spite of changes to *Monbusho*’s stated policy over the years, foreign language teaching practice in Japanese high schools may actually have changed very little. If this is the case, why has the system been so resistant to accommodating a change towards developing students’ communicative skills, and changing the nature of the university entrance examinations? And what fundamental changes are needed before reforms to EFL education in Japanese high schools will be successful in meeting the stated policy aims of *Monbusho*? In order to address these questions, a closer examination of the most recent reforms that have been introduced by *Monbusho* is necessary.

Recent Reforms Relating to EFL Education in Japanese High Schools

Introduction of the JET Program (1987)

The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Program) is financed and run jointly by the Japanese Ministries of Education, Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs. It is the largest program of its kind anywhere in the world. Although both academic school

teachers and vocational school teachers have reported that they find their team-teaching experiences to be useful for both themselves and the students (Browne & Wada, 1998), a great deal of debate surrounds the overall effectiveness of the Program. For example, Wray (1999) claims that the effectiveness of the Program is limited by the fact that Japanese teachers and students give priority to passing the university entrance examinations. Browne and Wada (1998) note that it is debatable whether or not the quality of communicative language teaching in Japan has improved as a result of the Program.

According to Tajino and Walker (1998), team teaching in the context of Japanese high schools is unique because the two teachers in the English classroom are not equal in status. Participants on the JET Program are most usually young university graduates, and applicants are not required to be certified teachers. ALTs are not responsible for organising the course plan or syllabus. Further, the protocol for how team teaching should occur is yet to be determined. As Shimaoka and Yashiro (1990, p. 23) state:

Team teaching in English classrooms, being a relatively new experience, has no established method nor principles which teachers need to follow.

Due to problems such as a shortage of time for joint lesson preparation and poor communication between the ALTs and JTEs, the lessons are not always very satisfactory (Matsuda, 1997). In addition, neither JTEs nor ALTs are given enough systematic preparation in team teaching (Farnselow, 1994). As a result, the presence of the native speaker in the English classroom on many occasions may be under utilised, or at least not used to the best advantage.

Based on a comparison of the Native English Teacher Scheme (NET Scheme) in Hong Kong, and the JET Program in Japan, Lai (1999) is critical of the JET Program. Lai describes the JET Program as being a strategy that promotes international exchange, but claims that its language goals are “superficial”. This is indicated by the “loose” recruitment requirements for the ALTs, who are not required to have teaching experience or professional training (Lai, 1999). In comparison, the NET Scheme has strict recruitment procedures in terms of applicants’ academic and professional qualifications (Lai, 1999).

Finally, the question of whether or not the JET Program is in fact operating as an efficient program in terms of language outcomes, remains unanswered. As at June 2002, no comprehensive government initiated evaluations of this program have been carried out.

The New ‘Course of Study Guidelines for English’ (1989)

Recent critics have attempted to explore why reforms introduced by *Monbusho* have been largely ineffective. As a first step towards reaching an understanding of this, an in depth analysis of the 1989 ‘Course of Study Guidelines for English’ is helpful, as this has been an important reference document for teachers during the last decade.

In 1989 *Monbusho* published the new school ‘Course Guidelines for Foreign Languages’. It was introduced into junior high schools in 1992 and senior high schools in 1994. The new ‘Course of Study Guidelines’ for the study of English in schools emphasised the development of students’ communicative ability in English as a primary goal of English language education in high schools. To cope with the aims of the new courses of study, Japanese teachers are expected to move in the direction of adoption of

the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach (LoCastro, 1996). In fact, according to LoCastro, sources inside *Monbusho* see the new curriculum as “a means to force teachers to change their classroom practices” so that they may better help students to develop their communicative skills in English (LoCastro, 1996, p. 41).

With the introduction of the new courses, a conversation course known as English IIA was replaced by three new oral communication courses at the high school level:

Oral Communication A - Which has a focus on informal conversation.

Oral Communication B – Which focuses on listening comprehension.

Oral Communication C – Which focuses on formal speaking.

These three courses are elective courses but at least one of them should be taken by all students for one of their three years in senior high school (Law, 1995).

Goold, Madeley and Carter (1993a), translated the three sections of the 1989 ‘Guidelines’ which refer specifically to the new oral communication courses. Their summary of the guidelines gives a “first impression” of what the courses aim to do as a whole and how they are distinct from each other in terms of content and student - teacher interaction in the classroom. Based on Goold et al.’s (1993a) (1993b) (1994) translations, a summary of the main aims of each of the three oral courses can be made as follows:

Oral Communication A

This course aims to develop the listening and speaking skills of “partners” in everyday situations. The focus is on speaking. The ‘Guidelines’ state that there should be “a balance between listening and speaking activities in the classroom” (Goold, Madeley & Carter 1993a, p. 3). The main aim of this course as stated in the ‘Guidelines’ is:

...learning to use the skills of listening to and speaking English in personal, everyday situations at home, in school, and in society, and to express oneself simply and promptly.

(Goold et al. 1993a, p.4)

Oral Communication B

This course aims to develop aural comprehension of a speaker's intentions, feelings and thoughts. The focus is on listening, with importance given to understanding the gist of what is being listened to. Further emphasis is placed on the importance of seeking clarification when listening content is unclear. "Listeners are also expected to understand a speaker's facial expressions and body language and to respond appropriately" (Goold, Madeley & Carter 1993a, p. 3). The 'Guidelines' suggest that the listening materials for the course may include actual speech, reading aloud, lectures, recordings and broadcasts. The general aim of this course is to:

...develop aural comprehension of a speaker's intentions, etc., and to nurture a positive attitude towards communication.

(Goold et al. 1994, p.4)

Oral Communication C

This course aims to develop students' "formal thinking and speaking abilities" (Goold, Madeley & Carter, 1993a, p.3). The four kinds of activities listed are recitation, speeches, discussion, and debate. The general aim of this course is to:

...arrange and announce one's ideas, to develop ability in discussion and in general to nurture a positive attitude towards communication.

(Goold et al. 1993b, p. 3)

Criticisms of the 1989 *Monbusho* 'Oral Communication Course Guidelines'.

According to Knight (1995), one of the main problems is that the syllabus (i.e. the selection and organisation of the course content) is unclear, and therefore cannot be used as a reference for teachers. Japanese English teachers completing in-service training have stated that they were unsure of what syllabus and methodology would be appropriate to meet the *Monbusho* 'Oral Course Objectives' (Knight, 1995). Because the 'Guidelines' fail to explain the means of achieving the stated goal of wider communicative competence amongst students, Knight (1995) concludes that the 'Guidelines' have had little effect on curriculum planning in schools.

Goold, Madeley and Carter (1994) are also critical that the 'Guidelines' make unrealistic presumptions about the students' fluency. They claim that the 'Guidelines' do not address the problem of how to promote fluency. They also state that the 'Guidelines' "might have been more on target if they had aimed at what interests students in senior high school" (Goold et al. 1994, p.6).

According to Knight (1995), if the 'Guidelines' do not specify the methodology to be used in the new oral courses, "reading aloud and repetition skills will remain common features of high school classes..." (p. 21). Gorsuch (2000, p.687) describes this omission as:

...a loophole through which teachers can continue teaching as they always have, yet believe they are operating within *The Course of Study*.

In addition, Knight (1995) states that many of the teachers he had spoken to were not working on a new syllabus design, but instead were focused on teaching the new oral communication textbooks from cover to cover. He adds that the textbooks “offer no information as to how the lessons are structured or what methodology would be best employed” (Knight, 1995, p. 20). As a result, Knight (1995, p.20) found that the teachers were still using “grammar-translation methods” and “repetition drills” and the lessons were at all times “teacher controlled”, with very little “learner to learner interaction”.

Due to the influence of the textbooks on classroom practice, there is a definite need for the textbooks’ writers to follow the new ‘Course of Study Guidelines’ more closely. If the textbooks were to provide some suggestions for teachers in terms of teaching approaches and classroom activities that would best meet the communicative goals of the ‘Guidelines’, that may also be useful. If such changes are introduced to the textbooks, it is possible that classroom teaching practice might also come closer to following the ‘Guidelines’ (Browne & Wada, 1998).

Specific criticisms have also been directed at each of the new oral courses within the ‘Guidelines’. With regard to the ‘Guidelines for Oral Communication A’, Goold, Madeley and Carter (1993a) note that it seems to focus on a “situational” approach, but offers no practical advice to teachers on how to teach “situational” English. Also, according to Goold et al. (1993a, p.5):

The danger is, perhaps, that OCA classes will come to resemble standard English classes in Japanese high schools, where repeating and reading aloud are lesson accomplishments rather than preparatory stages towards the fulfillment of the guidelines aims.

In addition, the principle upon which the new oral courses have been divided has not been made clear (Goold, Madeley & Carter 1994). The same authors criticise the 'Guidelines' for the Oral Communication B course on the basis that this section of the 'Guidelines' seems to have as much to do with speaking as listening. They also note that the terms "speaker" and "partner" are not distinguished in any meaningful way, but rather the two terms are used interchangeably. In practice, Goold et al. (1994) state that it will not make much difference whether students study Communicative English under the banner of Oral Communication A or B, as both courses appear to target similar skills.

For the Oral Communication C course, Goold, Madeley and Carter (1994) conclude that students would need to be well prepared in order to cope with it. In practice it would mean providing the students with the opportunity to practise speaking "within meaningful classroom settings" from their first year in junior high school, so that by their final year in senior high school they would be able to hold debates and discussions. Goold et al. (1994) are also critical of the fact that the 'Guidelines' don't give any suggested topics for these debates and discussions.

Another criticism of the Oral Communication C Course that is raised by Goold, Madeley and Carter (1993b) relates to the fact that they do not consider recitation and speech making to necessarily be communicative activities, but rather ones that require "singular effort and a feat of memorization" (Goold et al. 1993b, p. 5). They express concern that debates might be beyond the communicative competencies of most students. They also claim that with the exception of discussion, the Oral Communication C class activities are likely to involve memorisation and translation. As a result, Goold et al. (1993b, p. 7)

conclude that the 'Guidelines' won't result in "anything more than a cosmetic change in the senior high school English classroom."

According to Browne and Wada's (1998) survey of Japanese English teachers, it appeared that most schools and teachers were avoiding the Oral Communication C course. Only 9% of teachers from academic schools and none of the vocational teachers in the survey reported teaching the course. Browne and Wada (1998) speculate that teachers may be avoiding this course because they lack confidence in their ability to teach students how to give speeches and participate in debates due to lack of formal training in these areas.

Goold, Madeley and Carter (1994), also point to the need for end-of-term oral tests as opposed to paper tests to be conducted for these oral communication courses. If this does not occur, the communicative skills in these oral courses will go untested. This may have, in turn, a demotivation effect on students. Finally, Goold et al. (1994) conclude that an oral communication component must be included in the university entrance examinations:

...unless universities and colleges include an oral testing component in their English entrance exams, the usefulness of the oral courses in high schools will be severely limited.

(Goold et al. 1994, p.7).

As noted by Goold, Madeley and Carter (1994), if the university exams continue to be grammar and translation based tests, the students will not be likely to continue studying the oral communication courses longer than for the mandatory one year which is

required by *Monbusho*. While *Monbusho* officials encourage communicatively oriented English classes, they do not explicitly require the university entrance examinations to incorporate tests of students' communicative abilities (Wada, 1987; 1990, as cited in Koscielecki, 1994). This failure to do so has meant that schools and teachers continue to focus on grammar and translation.

Therefore, as Brown and Yamashita (1995) and Gorsuch (2000) indicate, there is a contradiction between what is tested in the university entrance exams and the *Monbusho* 'Oral Communication Guidelines' (1989). The 'Course of Study Guidelines' call for all four skills to be tested equally, whereas the university exams have an emphasis on grammar, reading and translation. According to Hino (1988) and Gorsuch (2000), translation skills are not mentioned in the 'Course of Study Guidelines'. Even so, previous research has shown the lack of influence which educational policy statements tend to have on instructional practice (Reynolds & Saunders, 1987; Doyle, 1992; Cuban, 1992; Fang, 1996; Freeman, 1989, 1998). Therefore, as noted by Carless (1999), changing examinations is often recommended as a strategy to bring about curriculum modification. In the context of Japanese high schools, this approach may hold the key to facilitating the successful introduction of change to both curricula and teaching practices. Finally, if implementation of the 'Course of Study Guidelines' is deemed to be an important goal, the Education Ministry will need to provide sufficient professional development and training for teachers to "provide them with the tools they need" to successfully implement these changes in their classrooms (Browne & Wada, 1998).

Ideologies of English Language Teaching in Japan

It has been said that the *Monbusho* 'Course of Study Guidelines' stand in marked contrast to the dominant foreign language pedagogy used by teachers in Japan (Law, 1995; Gorsuch, 2000). According to Hyland (1999) traditional methods and materials tend to predominate at both secondary and tertiary levels. Many commentators on Japanese education acknowledge that *yakudoku* (translation-reading) is the most common methodology used in the teaching of English in Japan (Bryant, 1956; Hino, 1988; Henrichsen, 1989; Bamford, 1993; Law, 1995). To understand the ideologies behind this it is necessary to examine the indigenous educational traditions (Hino, 1988; Law, 1995). Further, these authors claim that such an understanding is essential for the successful introduction of communicative methods in high school English classes. If the methodological antecedents are ignored, the implementation of innovations to the way English is taught will be hindered (Henrichsen, 1988).

Law (1995) identifies three ideologies of teaching English in a non-communicative way which have their origins in different historical moments. Firstly, he claims that from the Meiji era, English was conceived as a "classical language". Then, during the pre-war nationalism period, English was considered as "an inverted image of Japanese". During the reconstruction of the post war years English was regarded as "a set of arbitrary rules". He argues that "these motives are now archaic, but still largely continue to determine methods of study" (Law 1995, p. 213). Law describes the teaching of English in Japanese schools as "a complex set of formalistic rules divorced from their operational value within a communicative context" (1995, p. 217). This is reflected in the testing procedures for English. According to Law (1995, p. 217):

Juken eigo [examination English] exhibits a strong preference for lists of language items over discursive texts, for peripheral over core forms, and for linguistic knowledge over linguistic performance.

According to Koscielecki (1994), the *yakudoku* approach prevails in Japanese high school classrooms because this is what is usually required on the English entrance examinations.

Yakudoku

The Grammar-Translation Method in the West, which grew out of the teaching of classical languages such as Latin and Greek, presents a close resemblance to the *Yakudoku* Method (Hino, 1988). In fact Hino (1988, p.46) claims “*yakudoku* is “the” method of teaching English in Japan.” It has derived from methods of decoding ancient Chinese texts and was developed in Japan many centuries ago (Law, 1995). In this approach, as part of a process of reading comprehension, the target sentence in English is firstly translated into Japanese word-by-word, and then the translation is reordered to match Japanese syntax (Hino, 1988). Japanese teachers introduce students to the *yakudoku* technique when teaching them how to read English and it is the method used by the majority of Japanese teachers of English from junior high to university level (Hino, 1988).

The prevalence of the yakudoku method. Two nation-wide surveys conducted by the Japan Association of College English Teachers showed that from 70 to 80 percent of JTEs in high schools and universities employed the *yakudoku* method (Koike, Matsuyama, Igarashi & Suzuki, 1983; 1985). Another study by Hino (1987a) confirmed this finding that 70 percent of the university students in his study had been taught to read

English solely by using this method. A host of other studies indicate that the more traditional translation-oriented methods still prevail in most Japanese classrooms (Law, 1995; Shimizu, 1995; Miller, 1995).

Hino (1988, p. 49) claims that the reason why *yakudoku* is so prevalent, is because it is “a long established tradition which exists at a deeper level of the sociolinguistic structure of Japan”. Many Japanese believe that *yakudoku* is the ‘normal’ way to read a foreign language (Hino, 1988). Many analysts say that it is easy for teachers to use the *Yakudoku* Method (Tazaki, 1978), (Ozeki, Takanashi & Takahashi, 1983; Ito, 1984, as cited in Hino, 1988). The method requires little professional training and minimal preparation is needed for each class (Hino, 1988). It also does not require a communicative ability in English on the teacher’s part (Browne & Wada, 1998). Furthermore, because the teachers themselves were likely to have been taught English via means of this method, they may not have been exposed to alternative approaches. According to Hino (1988, p. 51): “Anyone who has studied English through *yakudoku* is able to teach it in the same way without much effort.”

In addition, the system of teacher training in Japan has been described as being inadequate and blamed for enhancing this tendency (Ozeki et al. 1983, as cited in Hino, 1988) (Hino, 1987a). According to Hildebrandt and Giles (1980, p. 75):

It is not difficult to see why grammar-translation based teaching (and testing) persists, in spite of its readily admitted failure to produce speakers of the language. It can be taught as a regular school subject, fulfils parents’ expectations, and is not threatening to either students’ or teachers’ social identity.

Despite the fact that criticisms of *yakudoku* are frequently found in Japanese TEFL journals, this method still dominates (Hino, 1988).

Disadvantages of the yakudoku method. According to Hino (1988), *yakudoku* is a serious handicap for Japanese students of English. Many Japanese students are unfamiliar with the idea of reading directly in English without firstly translating into Japanese. The speed at which students can read and comprehend an English text is reduced when this method is employed because students most commonly obtain the meaning of a text via the Japanese translation (Hino, 1988). The method can also have detrimental effects on the other language skills such as listening, speaking and writing as students need to translate every word, making the process ineffective (Hino, 1988). According to LoCastro (1996), it is often argued that the *yakudoku* method of teaching English has a permanent negative effect on many Japanese learners.

Influences on Japanese Teachers' Teaching Styles

Classroom practices reflect the teachers' attitudes and beliefs about language and language learning that are embedded in the sociocultural context (LoCastro, 1996). In Browne and Wada's (1998) study, Japanese high school teachers reported that the contents of the school textbooks had the greatest influence on their teaching styles. Both academic and vocational school teachers said that they felt pressure to teach the contents of the course textbook. The academic school teachers listed preparing students for the entrance exams as the second greatest pressure they faced, whereas their vocational school counterparts listed "to make parents happy" as the second greatest pressure affecting their teaching styles.

Gorsuch's (2000) study investigated Japanese EFL teachers' attitudes towards communicative language teaching classroom activities by conducting a survey with 876 Japanese high school English teachers. According to Gorsuch (2000, p. 675), EFL teachers in Japan have "subsumed" the recent *Monbusho* policy changes which call for more communicative classes into their "pre-existing educational culture". This "culture" relies heavily on preparing students for the form-focused university entrance examinations.

Also included in Gorsuch's (2000) study was an investigation of the influences affecting Japanese teachers' methods. The findings from this study suggest that the university entrance examinations have a very strong influence on Japanese high school EFL education. Gorsuch states that teachers feel this influence at both the institutional and the classroom levels. She concludes that university exam preparation presents a compelling focus for instruction that may supersede the *Monbusho* 'Course of Study Guidelines'. Additionally, Gorsuch (2000, p.700) states:

The essential step of transforming teachers' beliefs about the purpose of EFL education in Japan (developing students' positive attitudes toward communicating in English) has likely not been taken.

In an earlier study that investigated classroom practices at an academic high school in Japan, Gorsuch (1998) found that the high school teachers said that they used passive-skill, form-focused, translation-based, sentence-memorising activities in their English classes because these activities were the most efficient for preparing students for exams. Little or no evidence was found of teachers paying attention to developing students' skills of listening or speaking, in fact, little attention was given to communication, be it

oral or written (Gorsuch, 1998). This omission highlights the conflict between what the Japanese educational authorities think should be happening in classrooms and the reality of high school EFL education in Japan (Gorsuch, 2000).

Teacher Training for English Teachers in Japan.

It has long been argued that Japanese teachers receive insufficient formal training (Rohlen, 1983; Amano, 1990; LoCastro, 1996). Japanese teachers of English are trained at general junior colleges and universities, as well as specialised teacher training universities (Yonesaka, 1999). According to Yonesaka, pre-service teacher training in Japan is less strongly emphasised than is in-service teacher training.

Browne and Wada's (1998) study investigated the training and qualifications of Japanese high school English teachers. According to their survey, only between 3% and 8% of their respondents reported majoring in TESL or TEFL at university. Most of the teachers in the study reported that they had majored in English literature. According to Browne and Wada (1998), prospective English teachers studying English literature are not required to take any additional courses in second language acquisition theory, ESL methodology or testing before qualifying as teachers. All that potential candidates need do is complete their degree, do a written test, and undertake a two week teaching practice at a school.⁷

⁷ However, an anonymous examiner has suggested that in order to become a qualified teacher in Japan the process is more involved than this. For example, all trainees are also required to complete a few Education subjects and a method subject. The examiner also states that the teacher selection process is very extensive and competition is very high in big cities such as Tokyo and Osaka.

Not surprisingly, Browne and Wada (1998) found that 92% of the teachers who majored in English literature reported that they felt inadequately prepared in college for their duties as English teachers. In contrast, the survey found that the respondents who majored in TESL/TEFL and education at the undergraduate level felt more prepared for the demands of their new profession.

The study also found that the vocational school teachers were more likely to attend in-service seminars than their academic school counterparts. Many teachers from vocational schools have stated that they were attending in-service seminars to help them find new ways of dealing with poorly motivated students (Browne & Wada, 1998). Browne and Wada (1998) suggest that the academic school teachers were more likely to be using the grammar-translation method of teaching English as this suited the discrete-point, receptive nature of the entrance examinations (Brown & Yamashita, 1995). Consequently, they may feel less in need of in-service training than the vocational school teachers, “who are more likely to experiment with communicative language teaching techniques and methodologies” because they are not restricted by the demands of preparing students for university entrance exams (Browne & Wada, 1998, p.103).

Building on this, Knight (1995) strongly advocates the importance of teachers being given the opportunity to attend in-service training courses, particularly so they can learn other teaching approaches. If not, he contends that it is likely they will continue to adopt a structural syllabus, even in the oral communication courses.

Communicative Language Teaching in Japan and Other Confucian Heritage Countries

Ellis (1996) refers to the communicative approach in language teaching as being “a predominantly Western language teaching approach.” He argues that in order for the communicative approach to be successfully introduced in Asian EFL contexts, it firstly needs to be “culturally attuned and culturally accepted” (Ellis, 1996, p. 213). If not, culturally embedded teaching practices may prevent it from being successfully implemented.

According to Li (1998) the literature on curriculum innovation suggests that teachers must understand an innovation before it is going to be implemented with any success. In particular, Li calls for teachers’ perceptions of innovations related to communicative language teaching (CLT) to be further explored.

Particularly in Asian EFL countries, the adoption of CLT approaches has generally been difficult. According to Carless (1999), a body of literature exists that indicates the problematic nature of implementing communicative approaches in Confucian heritage cultures. In such countries, teachers need assistance to adopt CLT, because it would require a change to their approach to education (Li, 1998). In addition, they also are likely to have large class sizes and the teachers’ oral skills may not be sufficient to cope with the demands of CLT. According to LoCastro (1996), many Japanese teachers still do not have a high level of communicative competence. Carless (1999) notes that teachers who have limited English language proficiency are likely to prefer a teacher-centred, textbook based approach to teaching.

Li (1998) conducted a case study of 18 South Korean high school teachers' perceptions about the implementation of CLT into their school English language Program. Li found that all of the participants in the study considered that their own deficiency in spoken English constrained them in applying CLT in their classrooms. The teachers also reported a deficiency in strategic and sociolinguistic competence. Other problems that prevented the successful implementation of CLT included the large class sizes, the grammar-based examinations and the lack of support for teacher training in CLT (Li, 1998).

Seventeen out of the 18 participants in Li's (1998) study identified that their students were not motivated to work on their communicative competence because their goal was to prepare for university entrance, therefore they wanted to learn grammar. With respect to this, Sauvignon (1991) points out that many curricula innovations have been undone by a failure to make corresponding changes in evaluation. This would appear to be the case in Japan and South Korea in regard to the university entrance examinations. It is not clear from Li's (1998) report what methods the teachers employed to measure their students' motivation towards developing communicative skills. To what extent their conclusions are based on observation or on their own beliefs is unclear. According to Li, much of what the Korean teachers said about their difficulties in using CLT is common to many parts of the world.

In a study of the cultural dimensions of a major curriculum reform in schools in Hong Kong, Carless (1999) found that issues such as lack of resources, insufficient long-term teacher training, entrenched teacher attitudes and lack of ownership of change played a part in the failure of curriculum innovations to achieve long-lasting change.

In Japan, according to Miller (1995, p.45), the fundamental reason why recent shifts in *Monbusho* policy towards more communicative language teaching have not led to a major shift in instructional practices is because:

...such practices run counter to Japan's educational traditions based on fact learning rather than skill development and its classroom culture that generally discourages student talk.

According to Miller (1995), what is considered ideal student behaviour in Japan might not fit the needs and expectations of Western teachers attempting to teach communicative English classes. In a Japanese classroom, typically there is very little interaction between teacher and student, or indeed, between students. This lack of interaction may raise questions concerning the successful implementation of the communicative language teaching approach which is being advocated by *Monbusho* (LoCastro, 1996).

However, despite such differences in students' classroom behaviour and interactional patterns, it does not necessarily mean that Japanese students are not willing to adapt to the demands of CLT. Miller (1995) conducted an exploratory investigation of Japanese students' reactions to communicative English lessons taught by a native speaker teacher and summarises his findings as follows (p.31):

- (a) that the students perceived that Western and Japanese teaching approaches differ in fundamental ways,
- (b) that the students wanted to become more active class participants but felt inhibited about doing so, and

(c) that the students reported making progress in overcoming their inhibitions after a month of communicative lessons.

Miller (1995) suggests that if students were to study the sociopragmatic rules of Japanese and Western cultures, they would become aware of them and be able to adapt when called upon in a communicative English class. As noted by Widdowson (1984, p.24), students are not going to “adopt a pattern of behaviour in the English class which is at variance with the roles they are required to play in their other lessons”. However, if given the necessary guidance, Japanese students may be willing to participate more actively in their English language classes.

In Miller’s (1995) study that was conducted with Japanese university students, 15 of the 17 students participating in the study declared a preference for a communicative approach. When Miller surveyed the students’ attitudes towards being asked to participate more actively in class, all of the participants reported a positive response.

In order to successfully promote oral communication in English classes in Japanese schools, some attempt might be needed on the behalf of the teachers to accommodate Japanese styles of communication. According to Miller (1995, p.46) what is needed is a “Japan-Friendly Communicative Approach to language learning.” This would entail accommodating Japanese styles of communication in early lessons and the assimilation of Western styles in later ones (Miller, 1995).

Studies have revealed changes towards a communicative, task-based curriculum in Hong Kong schools seem to “have had a generally positive effect on pupil motivation, with teachers generally reporting more enjoyment and greater involvement from pupils”

(Carless, 1999, p. 242). Considering that Japanese English teachers have to date been very slow to embrace changes towards more communicative language teaching, further investigation of the effect of teaching practices on Japanese students' motivation to study English is needed. The fact that previous studies in Japan such as Miller's (1995) indicate that CLT can also have a positive effect on Japanese students confirms this need for further research.

Summary

In 2002, almost eight years on since *Monbusho*'s new 'Course of Study Guidelines' were first implemented in high schools, scepticism remains with regard to the contributions of the new courses in developing students' communicative skills in English. This failure can largely be attributed to the fact that the university entrance examinations, which continue to influence classroom practice, remain unchanged in the majority of cases (Goold, Madeley & Carter, 1994; Knight, 1995; Gorsuch, 2000).

Another problem that has been identified from the literature is that Japanese English teachers need better pre-service and in-service training to enable them to cope with the demands of becoming more communicative in their teaching. This is a necessary requirement in order for the communicative aims of the new courses to be met.

According to Gorsuch (2000), the changes that the Japanese education authorities aim to introduce call for "a pedagogical revolution" on the part of Japanese English teachers. Further concerns also have been raised in respect of the incompatibility of traditional teaching approaches with the new oral communication courses. Therefore, an understanding of the pedagogic culture and educational traditions of foreign language teaching in Japan is important.

It would appear that teachers play a very important role in determining whether or not curriculum innovation is going to succeed. How teachers view the feasibility of an innovation such as communicative language teaching may be a crucial factor in its ultimate success or failure. Teachers in EFL countries such as Japan may be more willing to engage themselves in the process of change if they can be convinced of the benefits that such changes may have on student outcomes in terms of successful language acquisition and improved motivation. If, as Gorsuch (2000) concludes, the influence of students' expectations on teachers' instruction really is potentially powerful, further research is needed to investigate students' needs and their expectations of the learning process.

It has been claimed that many Japanese English teachers do not teach the new oral courses in ways that give students the opportunity to improve their communicative competence (Knight, 1995; Gorsuch, 2000). Consequently, it remains questionable just how much effect the *Monbusho* 'Guidelines' for the new oral communication courses have had on classroom practice (Browne & Wada, 1998). Knight (1995) draws the conclusion that the new oral communication lessons "were no different from what had gone before."

Due to the fact that Japanese teachers rely heavily on the *Monbusho*-approved textbooks, it would also appear necessary that these texts should be revised so that they reflect the communicative language focus which is stated in the *Monbusho* 'Course Guidelines'. Both the 'Guidelines' and the textbooks should also give further guidance to teachers in regard to suggested teaching approaches and suitable classroom activities and topics for discussion.

According to Browne and Wada (1998), the Japanese system of secondary English education is now at a major crossroads. They conclude that research in terms of teacher training, textbook development and implementation of the JET program during the next few years may determine whether the next 'Course of Study Guidelines' issued by *Monbusho* finds Japanese students developing their communicative ability in English or continuing with grammar-translation.

According to Ellis (1990, p. 126-127), findings in second language acquisition research suggest that the following conditions, among others, are conducive to classroom language learning:

1. a clear separation between the use of the native language and the target language should exist so that students feel the need to communicate in the target language;
2. students are involved and interested in what is being talked about;
3. both teacher and students make efforts to be understood;
4. students are encouraged to produce utterances which tax their linguistic resources.

EFL education in Japanese high schools might become more effective if the Ministry of Education's mandate to incorporate communicative approaches can promote the establishment of the above conditions (Miller, 1995). Unfortunately, these practices "run counter to Japan's educational traditions of fact learning rather than skill development and its classroom culture that generally discourages student talk" (Miller, 1995, p. 45). Eight years have passed since the introduction of the new courses. Empirical evidence is needed to ascertain whether or not the new oral communication courses are succeeding in their stated aims of developing students' communicative abilities and if the present generation of students are satisfied with their English courses.

In order to successfully overcome the three problem areas in English language education in Japan that have been identified in this literature review, it appears necessary to undertake the following steps:

- 1) Universities must be encouraged to change the content and nature of their entrance examinations.**
- 2) The ‘Guidelines for the Course of Study for English’ must include more information for teachers in regard to teaching approaches and classroom practice.**
- 3) A greater commitment is needed from the Education Ministry in terms of teacher training and professional development so that teachers are better equipped to cope with the new demands of the communicative oral courses.**
- 4) The course textbooks must reflect the communicative goals of the ‘Course of Study Guidelines’.**
- 5) In order to improve students’ motivation and attitudes towards studying English, further research is needed to inform EFL syllabus designers and teachers so that students’ needs and interests are being addressed by both course content and classroom practices.**

Part II

Research Literature Relating to Students' Needs and Their Attitudes Towards Foreign Language Studies.

Why Should Students' Foreign Language Study Needs Be Investigated?

Needs analysis has traditionally tended to be associated with English for Specific Purposes classes, but this does not mean that it is not possible to analyse needs data in the context of general language education (Seedhouse, 1995). The main reason for identifying students' needs in the foreign language classroom is to help sustain students' motivation to learn. This is considered possible because motivation and needs are closely related. Human needs serve as drives which move one to perform a particular action. By identifying students' needs, syllabus designers and teachers can then be in a position to choose or design activities, or adopt teaching approaches that are perceived by students to meet their personal needs. In this sense, the approach of needs analysis (Yalden, 1987; Riddell, 1991) serves as a way of increasing and maintaining motivation among students who are studying foreign languages.

Needs analysis may be conducted at either the system level or the classroom level and much has been written extolling the virtues of such an approach. According to Hanges (1982) as cited in Tarone and Yule, (1991), learners should be involved as much as possible in the development of their own instruction. Tajino and Walker (1998) note that it is imperative for teachers to have an understanding of students' needs and expectations if their lessons are to be successful. Tarone and Yule (1991) point out that the importance of the learner's perspective in the language learning process has been made

clear in recent years. In their introduction, Tarone and Yule (1991) state that in order to successfully teach a foreign language:

...teachers must constantly adjust their methods and materials on the basis of their identification of the *local needs of their students*.

Miller (1995, p.33) also states that “examining learning from the learner’s perspective has gained prominence among second language acquisition researchers...”. Similarly, Lessard-Clouston (1997) claims that it is very important for teachers to know their students’ interests, motivations and preferred learning styles.

A learning-centred approach to lesson, materials and syllabus design advocates the involvement of students in contributing to this design (Nunan, 1996). One important outcome of involving learners in ongoing curriculum development is that not only is it more likely that the course will be perceived as being more relevant, “but learners will be sensitised to their own preferences, strengths and weaknesses” (Nunan, 1988a, p.53). According to Spratt (1998, p. 141) one reason for adopting a learner-centred approach is that various studies have shown “considerable discrepancies of opinion between learners and their teachers or syllabus experts”. Studies such as those by Brindley, 1984; Nunan, 1988a,b; Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Kern, 1995; and Peacock, 1997, have shown a divergence of opinion with regard to what learners need and prefer, and the nature of their language learning.

Spratt’s (1998) study conducted in Hong Kong involved a comparison of learners’ preferred classroom activities with teachers’ perceptions of what those preferences were. Spratt found that teachers’ perceptions of learners’ preferences for activities can not be

fully relied upon when used as input to lesson planning, materials writing or syllabus design. In conclusion, Spratt (1998, p.152) states that the results of the study show “the great value of obtaining learners’ views on the activities that form part of the learning process”.

In the context of recent reforms and new courses which have been introduced into Japanese high schools, LoCastro (1996) questions the extent to which the teachers and students have been involved in the recent curriculum changes in Japan. It would appear that “there is no evidence of any needs analysis having been conducted or of any consultation with classroom teachers having been carried out” (LoCastro, 1996, p.43).

A review of research literature on previous studies from both overseas and within Japan that have investigated students’ needs in regard to their foreign language studies is presented here. Studies reveal that the majority of students are interested in developing their speaking and listening skills in the target language and studying the target language culture. However, such practices may be contrary to many Japanese high school students’ experience of studying English at school.

Previous Studies of Students’ Needs In Japan and Overseas

Over the years, investigations have been conducted in various countries to identify school students’ needs for learning a foreign language (Dornyei, 1994a; Seedhouse, 1995). Some of the reasons that the teenagers in these studies gave for why they wanted to study a foreign language included the following:

- getting a better job;
- travelling to other countries;
- for friendship;
- interests in foreign language culture and people.

As noted by Ho (1998, p.179), these needs are not necessarily universal or exhaustive. However, “this list may serve as a starting point to lead to more specific needs in the individual context.”

One early needs analysis study was conducted by Archer and O’Rourke (1972). It involved 402 college students’ and surveyed the students’ interests in foreign language programs at Prairie State College Illinois, USA. The researchers found that students had a very strong interest in learning to speak and comprehend a foreign language (72%) or use the language in a practical way (65%). Students were also found to be interested in the study of a foreign country and culture (61%).

Another study in 1972 involved a survey of 141 students about their attitudes toward French language courses at the University of Illinois, USA (Pelc & Saunder, 1972). It found that the participants believed that students should have a greater say in determining the content and methods of the foreign language course they were studying.

In Peru, research carried out by Pozzi-Escot (1987) involved surveying secondary students’ preferences in regard to the four skills areas studied in their English classes. Although a new syllabus for the teaching of English gave emphasis to teaching reading skills, only 2.1% of the students indicated that they preferred to be taught reading skills. In comparison, 73.7% of the students in the study indicated that they preferred to study all four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. As a result of this, Pozzi-Escot poses two fundamental questions with regard to planning a foreign language curriculum at the national level, namely: On what basis shall we decide the aims of teaching English as a foreign language? And, To what extent do students’ needs need to be taken into consideration in order to achieve desired learning outcomes?

In Japan, Orikasa (1989) conducted a needs assessment with 48 final year high school students studying at a private school, the English teaching staff at the school and the administrators at the school. He found that 55% of the students professed liking English. However, 60% of the students said that they did not think their English had improved since entering high school. The majority of the students perceived listening and speaking skills as being the most important to learn, while only 10% of the students thought that translation and writing were important. When rating their skills of speaking and listening respectively, 37% and 31% of students described their level as being poor. Only 25% of students felt that their overall proficiency in English was good. With regard to the skill that the teachers in the study perceived students to need most, reading was rated as the most needed skill by 91% of the teachers (as compared with only 21% of the students).

The data from Orikasa's (1989) study suggested that students may not have been receiving adequate instruction in listening and speaking skills, or that the method of instruction in the skill areas may not have been contributing to the students' perceived proficiency. Orikasa (1989) concluded that the English program at the school needed to be redesigned, as based on the results of the study it was found to be unsatisfactory. Orikasa (1989) also noted that the consensus from the study's participants was that the program needed to be changed in terms of its methodology and goals/objectives.

In 1995 Seedhouse conducted a needs analysis study with a group of 29 Spanish high school students and found the results to be "strikingly homogeneous". Seedhouse confirms that in spite of the students being young (aged from 14 –18 years of age), they were definitely aware of having specific needs, and were able to identify them. The students in the study identified the following prime motivations for their English language studies: "So I can speak to foreign people", "Because English is an important

world language”, and “So I can get a better job when I leave school” (Seedhouse, 1995, p. 60). The students also indicated that their favoured methods of studying English were through using video, computer, and conversation. They also preferred being involved in group work.

In Taiwan, where low motivation towards English language studies has been a concern in junior high schools, Ho’s (1998) study found that students were interested in knowing more about English-speaking countries. Therefore, Ho concludes that studying culture may be a useful way to try to increase Taiwanese students’ motivation to learn English.

According to Cheng (2000), although ESL/EFL literature has frequently reported that Asian students of English are “reticent and passive learners”, studies have found that students may have a preference for being more actively involved in the learning process. Further, a study by Widdows and Voller (1991) found that Japanese students may favour student-centred learning methods over the traditional teacher-focused approaches they are familiar with. These results are supported by research conducted by Hyland (1993) of Japanese learners’ preferred learning styles. Hyland found that the Japanese learners in his study expressed preferences for auditory, tactile and kinesthetic learning, which adds support to the conclusion made by Widdows and Voller (1991, p.134) that “Japanese students do not like classes in which they sit passively, reading or translating”.

Littlewood and Liu (1998) conducted two large-scale surveys of teachers and students in Hong Kong and found that the students welcomed opportunities for active participation at secondary as well as tertiary levels. The students had a strong desire for active

participation in the classroom, ranking “group discussion” first in the order of preference of twelve English lesson activities.

Spratt’s (1999) study involving students from Hong Kong also found that students had a positive attitude towards active classroom participation. They indicated that they liked activities such as taking part in discussions, language games, and working in small groups.

Chambers (1999) emphasises the need for teachers to access their students’ views on the learning experience so that they may better provide for their varying needs. In

Chamber’s (1999) study which was conducted with a group of German students studying English at high school, the students made the following suggestions on how they thought the teaching of this subject could be improved: More oral work; more variety; optional learning of English; an earlier start to English learning; more resources; less focus on the textbook; travel to England; and to have contact with speakers of English. On this basis, Chambers (1999) stresses the importance of having more in-service training for teachers so that they are better equipped to meet their students’ needs. It can also be said that teachers may find resources such as computers and suitable software to be useful, as Chamber’s study found that using computers in the high school language classroom contributes much to the enhancement of students’ motivation for language learning. Teachers also need adequate time to prepare their lessons properly (Chambers, 1999).

Why Should Students' Attitudes Towards Their Foreign Language Studies Be Investigated?

The importance of the role of attitude and motivation in the successful acquisition of foreign languages is well known. Much has been written about these concepts, but for the purposes of this literature review, only an overview of the main studies in this field is given.

However, before examining why it is important to study students' attitudes towards their foreign language studies it is useful to firstly provide definitions of the terms "motivation" and "attitude". Research into motivation and foreign language learning reflects some difficulty with the distinction between the two terms (Chambers, 1999), but at the same time it is not useful to treat them as the same thing.

Definitions of Terms

Motivation and motivational orientations

The difficulty of defining "motivation" is that it is a multifaceted term. For the purposes of this literature review, an explanation of the difference between motivation and motivational orientation is useful. Motivation has been defined by Gardner (1985) as:

...the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language.

(Gardner (1985) cited in Chambers, p.27)

The following equation can be used to represent the components of motivation:

Motivation = Effort + Desire to Achieve a Goal + Attitudes

(Gardner, 1985)

Gardner and Lambert (1972) proposed that motivation could be classified as being either instrumental or integrative. Instrumental motivation means that the student has a practical orientation towards learning the language, such as for the purposes of passing exams, or gaining employment. Integrative motivation would indicate that a student wishes to learn more about the target language's cultural community, and would like to be accepted as a member of the target language community. While both integrative motivation and instrumental motivation facilitate learning (Gardner, 1991), integrative motivation has been found to sustain long-term success when learning a second language (Taylor, Meynard, & Rheault, 1977; Ellis, 1997; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991).

However, in an EFL setting where opportunities to use English to interact with members of the target group are limited, instrumental motivation may prove beneficial (Lukmani, 1972; Cooper & Fishman, 1977). According to Dornyei (1990), in a foreign language learning setting (FLL), instrumental motivation, intellectual, and sociocultural motives, and/or other motivational factors may acquire a special importance. Dornyei's (1990) study involving learners of English in Hungary found that affective factors that have traditionally been part of integrative motivation were also found to contribute to motivation in foreign language learning as well. Brown (2000) concluded that both integrative and instrumental motivation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Some researchers have expressed reservations about the capacity of these two broad orientations of motivation to adequately account for learner motivation involved in foreign language studies (Cooper & Fishman, 1977; Benson, 1991; Green, 1999). They have added other categories such as "personal" (Benson, 1991) or "developmental" that refers to personal development or personal satisfaction (Cooper & Fishman, 1977). Green (1999, p. 265) argues that motivational drives should be viewed as "dynamic and developmental and in a constant flux rather than static binary opposites." In regard to

integrative motivation, Porter-Ladousse (1981) has argued that this motivational drive should be redefined as a desire for “social interaction”. It is in this sense that the term has been applied in this thesis.

Finally, Gardner (1991) makes a distinction between motivational orientations and motivation in the following way:

Orientations = the reasons, or needs and goals for studying a language.

Motivation = the directed, reinforcing effort to learn the language.

Attitude

Schiefele (1963) distinguishes between an attitude and a motive in the following way:

Attitude is individualised and not liable to much change. Motive, by contrast, is more immediate in offering the reason for the behaviour of the moment.

(Schiefele (1963), cited in Chambers, 1999, p.26)

Attitude is difficult to define, but it is linked to an individual’s set of values and may be influenced by many factors (Chambers, 1999). Attitudes can be revealed in statements of beliefs or opinions. Gardner (1985) defines attitude as:

...an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the referent.

(Gardner (1985), cited in Chambers, 1999, p. 27)

Gardner and Lambert (1972) identify three categories of attitudes that are relevant to second language learning:

1. Attitudes towards the target community.
2. Attitudes towards learning the language.
3. Attitudes towards language and language learning in general.

Based on their study, Gardner and Lambert (1972) concluded that the attitude of the learner towards the target language culture is the most important variable influencing foreign language acquisition. However, Green (1993) and Chambers (1999) question to what degree the conclusions which Gardner and Lambert (1972) have made can be generalised outside of the Canadian setting in which they conducted their study.

Chambers (1999) defines attitude as “the set of values which a pupil brings to the foreign language learning experience” (Chambers, 1999, p. 27). Attitudes can be shaped by the experience of learning the language, travel, the influence of parents and friends and the target language community (Chambers, 1999).

In this thesis, the term attitude is taken to mean students’ disposition to react either favourably or unfavourably to various aspects of their English language studies. This could include the language itself, the speakers of the language, their language learning experience, the language teacher, and the language course.

In general terms, attitudes are related to motivation by serving as a support to a learner’s overall motivation (Gardner, 1985). Gardner (1985) claims that favourable attitudes towards learning a language are connected with motivation, and therefore have an

important role to play in second language acquisition. A study by Gardner and Lysynchuk (1990) involving high school students also found a link between language attitudes and motivation to second language achievement.

Positive attitudes can support the effort and desire a person might put into learning a second language, and therefore influence the learner's achievement in second language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) found that there are two independent factors associated with achievement in second language learning: one is language aptitude and the other is an attitudinal/motivational factor. It can be concluded that considering the link between attitude and motivation, the importance of understanding students' attitudes towards their foreign language studies can not be overstated.

Previous Studies Conducted Overseas and in Japan Relating to Students' Attitudes

This review of the research literature is particularly concerned with studies that have investigated the attitudinal/motivational factors which may influence students' foreign language learning. The following studies were conducted in Japan during the past four decades and help to build up a picture of the situation in regard to students' needs and attitudes towards their English language studies. This literature review is a synthesis of evidence gleaned from studies that in the main have had a student-centred focus. It includes studies that have involved adult learners, university students and high school students.

Chihara and Oller's (1978) study of adult EFL learners in Osaka found that the reasons why these students were studying English was for personal and integrative reasons. Instrumental reasons were not highly valued by the participants in this study.

Tenma (1982) collected over 600 questionnaires from junior and senior high school students and found that the students disliked English because it was too difficult. Although some students were found to have an interest in the language, they found little significance in learning it at school other than for the high school and university entrance examinations.

Day and Iida's (1988) study conducted with 124 Japanese high school students found that the students in their study had only slightly positive attitudes and motivation toward English. Their subjects reported somewhat higher motivation than favourable attitudes. Day and Iida (1988) conclude that the results of their study provide empirical evidence of the need for foreign language teachers in Japan and elsewhere to "seek ways to motivate our students and improve their attitudes toward the target language" (Day & Iida, 1988, p. 115).

In a longitudinal study of 90 Japanese university freshmen, Berwick and Ross (1989) examined the correlation between learner attitude and motivation with proficiency in English. They found that student motivation to learn English peaked in the last year of high school and then dropped upon entering university. Berwick and Ross (1989) attribute this drop to the university entrance examination system and to the universities themselves. The students were found to be instrumentally motivated, though generally, their overall level of motivation to study English was low. However, after 150 hours of class time the students' motivation level was found to have improved. Some suggestions for why this change occurred included the use of a variety of instructional techniques and a newly introduced program of study exchange with an American sister university.

One longitudinal study conducted by Miura, Matsura, Imai, Mizuno and Ikenobe (1990), collected data at approximately ten year intervals between 1966 and 1988 from Japanese high school students. The study covered a wide range of issues and incorporated the responses of 3 617 students from 77 high schools throughout Japan. The study found that students' attitudes towards their English language studies had become less positive in the twenty years between 1966 and 1988, but overall, students still exhibited positive attitudes toward the subject. A very high percentage of students said that they would like to become fluent English speakers (81.7% in 1966, 75.4% in 1976 and 75% in 1988 respectively).

The General Survey of English Language Teaching in Japan (Koike, Matsuyama, Igarashi & Suzuki, 1990) is comprised of four reports that were published over eleven years. The reports were submitted to the Japanese Ministry of Education for the purpose of reform of EFL education in Japan. According to Koike et al. (1990), 64.4% of senior high school teachers claimed that their students were reluctant to study English because of the pressure created by the university entrance examinations. The survey found that only 38.5% of high school students indicated that they liked to study English. Further, 67.9% of university students in the study said that their English lessons were boring, 67.8% of university graduates indicated that they would have liked more listening training in their courses, and 75.1% said that they would have liked more speaking practice. Finally, 80% of both university graduates and university students said that they were not able to communicate in English.

In terms of motivational orientations, Benson's (1991) survey of 300 Japanese university students found that integrative and personal reasons for learning English were preferred over instrumental ones. Benson (1991) also found that some of the reasons suggested by

students for studying English could not be classified as either instrumental or integrative. Consequently, he added a third group useful for the analysis of the EFL situation in Japan, which he labelled “personal”. This category included responses such as: “pleasure at being able to read English”, and “enjoyment of entertainment in English” (Benson, 1991, p.36). As a result of the “very mixed attitudes” which the university students in Benson’s (1991) study were found to have, Benson concludes that “the goal of making the learning of English a motivating experience is particularly relevant for the classroom teacher” (Benson, 1991, p. 47).

Koscielecki’s (1994) study found that senior high school students disliked studying English more than junior high school students. Only 38.5% of the senior high school students who participated in his survey said that they liked studying English, compared to 56.5% of the junior high school students. It is possible that the cause for this shift in attitude can be attributed to the focus that is given to university entrance examination preparation in senior high schools.

According to Hildebrandt and Giles (1980), empirical research is needed in Japan that examines students’ motivation and attitudes towards English language and culture. Such research is needed to inform “foreign language education planning” (Hildebrandt & Giles, 1980, p. 81). According to Gardner’s (1979) dynamic model, social attitudes support motivation. This in turn influences achievement, and achievement influences attitudes. Based on these assumptions, Hildebrandt and Giles (1980, p.81) conclude that:

...improved English education could create slightly more positive linguistic outcomes, which could change both specific and general attitudes gradually over a period of time.

The Influence of Teachers, Teaching Practice and Teaching Materials on Student Attitudes

Teachers and teaching approaches

Clearly, students' attitudes towards the learning situation must not be ignored. According to Gardner (1985, p.168) "motivation to learn a second language is influenced by group related and context related attitudes, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation respectively." Spolsky (1989) reinforces this idea, and more specifically states that motivation to learn a foreign language is influenced "by the language learning situation as a whole, including the teacher and the course itself" (Spolsky, 1989, p. 154).

According to Chambers (1999), work on motivation and foreign language learning would be incomplete without some reference to teachers and teaching styles. Chambers' (1999) study surveyed British high school students' attitudes towards foreign language study. The study confirmed "that the teacher has a key role to play in the motivational and attitudinal perspectives of pupils" (Chambers, 1999, p. 138). The results of Chambers' study indicate that the teacher and the teaching methods used were the most important contributing factors to students' attitudes, leading to the conclusion that the teacher's responsibility lies with the nature of student response to the learning experience:

The multifarious factors which contribute to a pupil's motivation to learn can be crudely allocated to two very broad categories: perceived usefulness; perceived enjoyment.

(Chambers, 1999, p. 120)

Chambers also cites several other studies which confirm the importance of the teacher's influence on students' attitudes: Campaign for Learning, 1998; Clark and Trafford, 1995; Galloway et al., 1998; OFSTED, 1993; Phillips and Filmer-Sankey, 1993.

To what extent teachers and teaching methods have affected Japanese high school students' attitudes towards the study of English is a topic that requires further investigation. According to Benson (1991, p.34):

It remains unclear what precise combination of regulatory control, curriculum, methods, faculty, and texts would best achieve higher levels of motivation and achievement.

Consequently, it may be claimed that further studies that seek to promote a greater understanding of the influence of these factors on Japanese students' attitudes, particularly in regard of their English language studies, are needed.

Additionally, a better understanding of Japanese students' needs and interests and how classroom practice may influence students' attitudes towards studying English may help to bring about an important shift in teachers' beliefs in regard to "best practice" teaching. Unless teachers are given guidance and training, and are helped to change their ideas about best practice, then they likely to remain reluctant to change their teaching approach. A number of researchers (Reynolds & Saunders, 1987; Freeman, 1989, 1998; Doyle, 1992; Cuban, 1992; Fang, 1996) have noted the influence of teachers' beliefs on pedagogy. According to Gorsuch (2000, p.678):

Regardless of successive educational reforms and curriculum changes, teachers' attitudes and beliefs remain the single strongest guiding influence on instruction.

According to Cuban (1992), educational policy makers must understand that for teachers' instruction to change, teachers' beliefs must be transformed.

Studies such as Shimizu (1995) which investigated Japanese students' attitudes towards teachers and teaching practice, confirm that teaching practice in Japan may need to change. In a study involving 1 088 Japanese university students, Shimizu surveyed the students' attitudes towards their native English speaker teachers and their Japanese English teachers. The results of Shimizu's research show that students had negative impressions of the English classes taught by Japanese teachers. According to Shimizu (1995, p.6): "...over half the students felt that English classes taught by Japanese were gloomy, boring, dead, strict, serious, and at times, tedious." The respondents also described the classes with Japanese teachers as being formal and many noted that students talked too much in class and they couldn't hear the teacher. This point clearly indicates the students' level of disinterest in the classes.

In contrast, Shimizu (1995, p. 6) reports that "...over half the students felt that their English classes taught by foreigners were interesting, humorous, and energetic." The respondents reported feeling relaxed in the foreign teachers' classes and described the classes as "cheerful and fun".

Shimizu (1995) offers two possible reasons for why students may have responded the way they did in her survey. They are: "what" was taught by the different teachers, and "how" they taught, or in other words, their teaching methods. For instance, the Japanese English teachers were more likely to have been teaching grammar, reading and writing classes, which the students in the same study had indicated they were the least interested in studying. Conversely, the foreign teachers usually taught English conversation, and

that subject was listed as being the area in which many of the students were interested in. Unfortunately the extent to which the subject area that was being taught influenced the results of the survey is not apparent from the reported results.

The other explanation offered by Shimizu (1995) for why there was a difference in student attitudes towards the two types of teachers, relates to the students' negative attitudes towards the Japanese teachers' traditional teaching methods. Another study by Widdows and Vollers (1991) which was also conducted with Japanese university students found that the students perceived the traditional teaching methods as being relatively ineffective. In yet another survey involving university students in Japan, Kosciielecki (1994), found that 67.9% of students claimed that their English classes were boring. In the same study, 55% of students indicated that they were dissatisfied with translation-centred learning.

Hino (1988) blames specific learning strategies acquired during junior high school and senior high school as an explanation for Japanese university students' reportedly "mixed motivation" towards their English language studies. What is not apparent from these studies is what high school students think about their English classes and their teachers. Additionally, the explanations proffered often come from the researchers rather than the respondents. Further, many of the studies have been conducted with university students. Therefore, further studies are needed in Japan to investigate whether or not high school students have favourable attitudes towards "what" they are being taught and "how" they are being taught in their English classes.

Why current models of EFL teaching practice in Japan may not satisfy the needs of present day students

In regard to recent reforms in EFL education in Japanese high schools, Law (1995) states that the 1989 'Guidelines for the New Oral Communication Courses' are the beginning of a process of change. However, he concludes that "the real work of methodological reform remains in the hands of the schools and teachers themselves" (Law, 1995, p.220). As Law points out, the non-communicative purposes of teaching English which exist in Japan do not meet the needs of the present generation of students and do not provide "an effective motivation" for them.

All three of the non-communicative purposes have by now lost much or all of their power to motivate.

(Law, 1995, p.219)

These non-communicative purposes leave behind them the legacy of a set of teaching priorities and procedures which "create considerable resistance to the introduction of new purposes and methods" (Law, 1995, p.219). If, as Law suggests, the non-communicative teaching purposes that prevail in many Japanese English classes can no longer motivate the present generation of Japanese students to study English, then clearly something must be done to correct this anomaly.

Compared to teaching approaches used in Japanese classrooms, Western teaching approaches aim to stimulate students' interest and get them to think, question, and discuss their views (Rohlen, 1983). Discussions are used as a key technique to capture students' interest in the subject matter, as well as developing their abilities in critical judgement and analysis. In the case of Japanese students studying for entrance

examinations, it is widely believed that such students do not need teachers to provide stimulating classes in order to capture their interest (Rohlen, 1983). It is considered that their greatest motivation is derived from the impending exams (Harasawa, 1974). In the case of vocational schools, however, many students do not sit for university entrance, but still must endure the same kind of instruction as the students in the academic schools. This is why students in vocational schools are said to experience boredom and frustration with their school courses (Rohlen, 1983).

Understanding how to improve Japanese students' motivation to study English may become imperative for English language educators in Japan in the not too distant future. According to Green (2000), two recent phenomena have become apparent which make student motivation a cause for concern. The first is that with the decreasing numbers of high school aged students in Japan, pressure for entry into the middle and lower ranking universities has eased. The second is that with the effects of the economic recession in Japan and the changing nature of work and technology, the traditional linkages between education and career prospects are beginning to break down. As Green (2000) notes, these changes are having "complex effects" on student motivation. Some of the middle and lower achieving students may increasingly become demotivated as on the one hand, competition for examination success decreases, but also because the future rewards from university graduation may no longer be guaranteed. The effects of these changes could mean that innovation in teaching could become increasingly crucial to maintaining student motivation, especially in the lower ranking general public high schools.

According to Ellis (1996, p.215), in an EFL setting "motivation becomes more a product of the teacher's initiative on the one hand, and the students' will to succeed – or fear of failure – on the other." Just how important the teacher's role is in affecting the students'

attitudes towards their English language studies in Japan, is slowly starting to be realised. For instance, Knight (1995) notes that the Japanese English teachers in his in-service training course said that they had recognised the need to make their oral communication classes more communicative because their students' motivation was low. The teachers had started to use role-plays, pair work and information-gap activities. This indicates that the teachers in his course recognised that the teaching approach they used could have an effect on student motivation. Browne and Wada (1998) similarly note that teachers from vocational schools attending training seminars stated that they were attending in the hope of finding new ways to deal with their students' lack of motivation to study English.

Teaching materials.

Norris-Holt (2001), an Australian teacher working as an English teacher in a Japanese high school, notes that the use of an interesting text can help to increase Japanese students' motivation levels. This would appear to be an especially important consideration in Japan, where, as Anderson (1975) describes, education is "textbook centred." For many years, Japanese teachers have used textbooks as the "major instructional medium" (Anderson, 1975, p. 311). Rohlen (1983) also noted that instruction in Japanese classrooms is profoundly influenced by the school textbooks.

According to Wray (1999, p.142) the Japanese textbooks which are authorised by *Monbusho* tend to be "too standardized, orthodox, dull, and difficult...". Norris-Holt (2001), supports this, noting that many Japanese textbooks often fail to capture the interest of the students because they have a heavy emphasis on vocabulary and grammar. Browne and Wada (1998) state that, unfortunately, the *Monbusho* approved textbooks may not reflect the communicative goals of the 'Course of Study Guidelines'. Knight

(1995) too points out that a wide gap exists between the structure and repetition-oriented activities common in the *Monbusho* textbooks and the communicative goals stated in the 'Course of Study Guidelines'. To state the problem in terms of Canale and Swain's (1980) Communicative Competence Model:

...observed classroom teaching practice by Japanese English teachers emphasises the use of *Monbusho*-approved textbooks to develop students' grammatical competence almost to the exclusion of any attempt to develop their sociolinguistic, discourse, or strategic competence.

(Browne & Evans, 1994, cited in Browne & Wada, 1998, p.105)

Ironically, many foreign EFL texts designed specifically for the Japanese market often contain topics which can create a great deal of classroom interaction, and help to motivate students to develop their language skills (Norris-Holt, 2001). Unfortunately, the majority of Japanese English teachers working in public high schools would not be likely to be using such texts as they are obliged to use textbooks which are officially prescribed by *Monbusho*. According to the General Survey of English Language Teaching in Japan (Koike, Matsuyama, Igarashi, & Suzuki, 1990), 66.2% of senior high school teachers expressed a wish to have the right to choose their own textbooks. In the same survey, 53.2% of students said that materials used for teaching were boring.

Knight (1995) also raises the issue of the effect of teaching materials on students' interest levels. He notes that during an in-service training he provided for Japanese teachers of English:

The teachers used many kinds of realia for activities (timetables, local maps, weather forecasts. etc.) and noticed an improvement in the learners' interest and involvement when using them.

(Knight, 1995, p.21)

This point stresses the importance of the teaching materials used in English classes, and the effect they may have on students' attitudes towards studying English. According to Chambers' (1999) study in England, the students identified "teacher-made materials" as being one of the important factors contributing to a positive view of their foreign language learning experience. Chambers (1999, p.159) suggests that such materials are possibly given importance because "pupils may see them as an attempt to get away from the textbook and introduce more variety."

Further studies are needed to ascertain what materials Japanese high school students like using in their English classes. It would also be of interest to investigate their approval rating of the official textbooks they currently use in their English courses as they too could be having an effect on the students' motivation level.

Summary

Japanese students seem to be poorly motivated with regards to their English language studies, and they may be dissatisfied with what and how they are being taught.

Therefore, it may prove useful to employ a needs analysis in order to attempt to improve students' attitudes towards their English language studies. In a country such as Japan, where student needs analysis is not commonly carried out for the purposes of informing syllabus design, the bottom-up approach may provide a useful insight into high school

students' needs. In this way course reform may occur. In adopting such a strategy, curriculum planners and teachers may become better informed of the present generation of students' needs and preferences in regard to their EFL studies. If the universities were to follow suit and reform their entrance examinations to reflect the content of the high school syllabus, then a formula for successful reform of EFL education in Japanese high schools may be in place. It should be noted that the use of student needs analysis for curriculum change has only begun to occur recently in Anglo-American contexts, and it is therefore not surprising that it has not been widely used in Japan to date (LoCastro, 1996).

In addition, as debate continues about the various reasons why syllabus reform in Japan has failed to achieve its stated aims of improving students' communicative abilities, investigating Japanese high school students' needs and their attitudes towards their English classes could provide a timely reminder for syllabus designers, curriculum planners, and teachers that such reforms are worth making. If research indicates that students are especially interested in improving their communicative abilities in English, or that they are largely dissatisfied with their present English studies, teachers may feel obliged to make changes to their classroom practices. As noted in the relevant literature, obtaining students' views on activities that form part of the learning process is likely to enhance the process of curriculum reform.

The Research Questions

This literature review has revealed that there has been a lot of debate about the reasons for why recent EFL reforms introduced into Japanese high schools have largely failed. Some of the problem may be derived from the top-down approach employed by the Education Ministry in Japan. This review has also outlined the importance of conducting student needs analysis in order to inform syllabus design, curriculum development and classroom practice. This is an approach that has rarely been used in Japan. As students' needs and their attitudes towards their foreign language studies are irrevocably linked to motivation, it would seem imperative that further research in this field should be carried out in Japan.

It would also appear that most previous studies conducted in Japan in this research area have relied on a single method approach to data collection. Drawing on the research described above, this study uses multiple approaches to collect data relating to Japanese students' English language needs and their attitudes towards their high school EFL studies in Japan. It also seeks students' opinions about how EFL education in Japanese high schools could be improved. The methodology that has been employed in this study is described in the following chapter. The specific research questions that the current study investigates are as follows:

- 1) What are the main motivational orientations for Japanese high school students with regard to their English language studies?
- 2) What are the attitudes of Japanese students towards their English language studies at high school?

- 3) What do Japanese high school students want to study in their English classes ?
- 4) How do Japanese high school students prefer to study English ?
- 5) What do students think can be done to improve EFL education in Japanese high schools?

The Nature of the Study

To date, only a few studies have documented Japanese high school students' needs and attitudes towards their English language studies. After reviewing the relevant literature, there appears to be a dearth of studies involving both current and past high school students. For this reason this study had participants who were high school students and Japanese students studying English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) in Australia who had graduated from Japanese high schools.

The ELICOS participants had been studying English in Australia for a period of between three weeks and eleven months, thereby giving them some basis of comparison for the teaching approaches they had been exposed to at school in Japan and those they had experienced in their ELICOS classes in Australia. The importance of the ELICOS students' contributions to the study is confirmed in the ensuing data analysis that is reported in Chapters 6 and 7. According to Le Compte's (1984) definition, key informants are 'individuals who possess special knowledge, status or communication skills and who are willing to share that knowledge with the researcher'. The ELICOS students have therefore acted as the 'key informants' in this study.

It is also apparent from the literature that comparisons have not been made of the opinions held by Japanese senior high school students studying at either academic or vocational schools in Japan. This study has undertaken such a comparison.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the research methods that were employed in the present study and begins with a discussion of the selection of participants. Next the research design, materials and the data collection procedures are described. It also gives a brief overview of how the data from the study was analysed. Finally, it discusses the validity and the limitations of the study.

The Participants

Two distinct groups of Japanese students studying English were invited to participate in this study; namely Japanese senior high school students⁸ studying English in Japan (n = 500) and Japanese ELICOS students (n = 12), studying English language courses in Australia. As the main purpose of the study was to survey Japanese students' opinions with regard to their English language studies undertaken at high school, it was appropriate that the largest group of participants in the study was comprised of senior high school students studying in Japan. It is also important to note that the high school student sample was not a homogeneous group. It was comprised of students from two different school types: i.e. a) academic school students and b) vocational school students. The high school students participated in the study by completing a questionnaire.

⁸ Senior High School in Japan consists of the academic years 10-12. Years 7-9 are studied at Junior High School.

The ELICOS student sample was relatively small in comparison to the high school student sample, but these students were interviewed in addition to completing the questionnaire.

The High School Participants

The 500 Japanese senior high school students who were invited to participate in this study came from six different schools. Five of these were public schools in the Tokyo metropolitan area, and one was a private school in Shizuoka Prefecture. Contact was made with the public schools in Tokyo by way of a Japanese university professor who arranged for the questionnaires to be administered by Japanese teachers of English at each of the respective schools. Another contact, a Japanese English teacher, administered the questionnaires at the private school in Shizuoka Prefecture.

Three of the public schools in Tokyo were academic high schools (*ippan*) and two were vocational schools (*jitsugyo*). The private school in Shizuoka Prefecture was also a vocational school. The one school that failed to return any questionnaires was a public vocational school in Tokyo. This meant that 365 high school students returned questionnaires - a return rate of 73%. The final configuration of participating schools in the study was three academic schools and two vocational schools.

The high school participants were all Year 10 and Year 11 students, and responses were received from 214 participants from the three academic high schools, and 151 participants from the two vocational high schools. This mixed sample of academic and vocational school students from both the public and private systems was intentional. It was done in order to gather information that could be considered a realistic reflection of views held by the overall senior high school student population in Japan. It was also

considered important to investigate whether or not there were any discernible differences between the responses made by the academic school students as opposed to the vocational school students. Regrettably, the sample of high school students in the study had to be limited to just two regions in Japan due to time and cost factors and the difficulty in securing reliable contacts.

Year 12 students were not asked to participate in the study due to the fact that the questionnaires were distributed just before the end of the academic year at a time when students were preparing for their final year examinations.

The ELICOS Participants

The second group of participants in this study were 12 young Japanese adults studying at the Centre for English Language Teaching based at the University of Western Australia. There were three conditions that had to be satisfied by potential participants before they were approached to join the study, namely that they: a) were young Japanese adults (under 30), who had completed high school in Japan; b) were attending at least an intermediate level general English class at the Centre in order to be able to cope with the communicative demands of the interview procedure; and c) had been studying English in Australia for a period of not less than three weeks before the interview took place to enable them to cope with the comparative nature of one of the interview questions.

Over a period of eight weeks, Japanese students at the Centre were approached, and if they satisfied the above conditions, and agreed to be interviewed, mutually convenient times were scheduled.

Research Design

A multi-method approach to data collection was used in this study. Data was collected via the means of a written questionnaire and interviews. The quantitative component of the study included the use of a 50-item questionnaire that was specifically designed to investigate students' attitudes towards their English language studies offered at senior high school. The questionnaire also incorporated a qualitative component with the use of an optional extended answer section. In order to develop an appropriate survey instrument for this study, the questionnaires were firstly trialled in a pilot study. In addition to the questionnaires, interviews were conducted with the Japanese ELICOS students, so that the students' attitudes, opinions and suggestions with regard to English language education in Japanese high schools could be further explored.

Materials Used in the Study

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of 50 Likert Scale items and an extended answer section. The questionnaire was translated into Japanese by a native speaker (see Appendices 1 – 4 for examples of the English and Japanese versions of the 'High School Questionnaire' and the 'ELICOS Questionnaire' respectively). The High School Questionnaire and the ELICOS Questionnaire were identical in every respect except for the fact that the ELICOS Questionnaire was written in the past tense, as these students had already completed their secondary schooling.

The first section of the questionnaires was comprised of 50 statements to which participants were asked to rate their responses according to a four point Likert Scale in the following way:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

In turn, these 50 statements were divided into four parts, each of which had a particular focus related to four of the study's core research questions, namely:

Part 1

- 10 statements related to student motivational orientations and needs,

Part 2

- 11 statements about student attitudes towards studying English,

Part 3

- 15 statements that examined what students preferred to study in their English classes,
and

Part 4

- 14 statements that investigated how the students preferred to study in their English classes.

In Parts 3 and 4 participants were asked to indicate if they had never actually tried a particular activity at school. Students were asked to mark an "X" in the brackets next to any statement that described an activity that they had never tried. Even in such cases,

participants were requested to make a response on the Likert Scale by imagining if they would like/would have liked to do such an activity.

The second part of the questionnaire involved an optional extended answer section. This provided students with the opportunity to give more detailed explanations relating to their attitudes and study preferences and how they thought EFL education in schools could be improved. Students were asked for their comments about what and how they like/liked to study in their English classes, as well as a request for information regarding how students feel/felt about studying English in Japanese high schools. Students who elected to answer this section wrote their responses in Japanese.

The Interview Schedule

An interview schedule was designed to investigate more precisely the ELICOS students' experiences of studying English when they were high school students in Japan (see Appendix 5 for a background summary of each ELICOS participant in the study and Appendix 6 for a copy of the Interview Schedule). Conducting the interviews also provided the opportunity to validate and expand the information collected from the questionnaires. The interviews provided the opportunity to explore the students' opinions about studying English in greater depth than the questionnaire. Also, related to the study's fifth research question, the interviews investigated if and how participants thought the system of English teaching in Japanese high schools could be improved.

Procedures

The High School Study

A pilot study of the questionnaire was conducted with two classes of Year 11 students (n = 66) at a senior high school in Nagoya, Japan. The school was a private academic high school and an Australian teacher working at the school administered the pilot study on the author's behalf. A few minor changes were then made to the questionnaire based on feedback received.

Eighty questionnaires were sent to each of three public academic schools and two public vocational schools in the Tokyo metropolitan area. Due to larger class sizes, ninety questionnaires were sent to the private vocational school in Shizuoka prefecture. The questionnaires were accompanied with a brief covering letter (written in Japanese) explaining the purpose and procedures of the study. Informed consent forms were also provided for the students to sign and return with the questionnaires. The teachers responsible for administering the questionnaires were given strict instructions to safeguard the confidentiality of the students' responses, and self-addressed envelopes were provided for the completed questionnaires to be placed in. International postage coupons for return postage were also provided. A time limit was set for the return of the questionnaires, and as they were received, the results were collated in preparation for descriptive statistical analyses.

The ELICOS Study

This part of the research was conducted over a period of eight weeks. As a first step 12 ELICOS students were approached and invited to participate in the study. These participants were then asked to complete the questionnaire before being interviewed. A

copy of the interview schedule was given to the participants a few days before the interviews so that they could check vocabulary and prepare their answers if necessary. Participants attended the interviews in pairs and the interviews were conducted in English. Before commencing each interview session, the author spent some time chatting informally to the interviewees about their study experiences in Australia and about the author's experiences of working and living in Japan. This was done to establish a rapport with the participants in the hope that it might enhance the validity of the study. Throughout the interviews the participants spoke very frankly about their high school experiences. On this basis it seems that the students felt at ease about expressing their views candidly.

Each of the sessions lasted for about one hour, and they were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim as soon as possible afterwards. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted in a systematic and consistent order, but opportunities to probe beyond the prepared questions in the schedule were also exploited. As themes emerged from the participants' responses, these were checked in subsequent interviews.

Data Analysis

The Questionnaires

Items 1-50

The data from these items was analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and involved the use of descriptive statistical methods to obtain the frequencies of the response categories for each item number. The responses to each item were coded according to the direction of the participants' reactions, using a four point Likert Scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 4 indicating strong agreement.

No neutral option was offered. This omission was intentional so that participants who might have otherwise had the propensity towards being noncommittal were forced to indicate either agreement or disagreement in each case.

The data collected from items 1-50 of the questionnaires was analysed in terms of overall group results for both the high school sample of participants and the ELICOS sample of participants. For the high school sample, the results for each item are reported as valid percentages and for the ELICOS sample the results are reported as frequencies, due to the small sample size. Median response categories for each item are highlighted. For the high school questionnaire data, comparisons were made between the results obtained from the academic schools and the vocational schools by comparing the median and modal response categories for each item. This was done in order to see if there were any important differences between the academic school participants' responses and the vocational school participants' responses for any of the 50 items. However, the results obtained from the two distinct sample groups (i.e. High School versus ELICOS), were not compared due to the significant difference in the sample sizes, ($n = 365$ versus $n = 12$).

The results of the descriptive statistical analyses, and the possible conclusions that can be drawn from the quantitative data obtained from the high school questionnaires and the ELICOS questionnaires are discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 6 respectively.

Data from the optional extended answer section

The data from this section of the questionnaires was firstly translated from Japanese into English and transcribed before a descriptive analysis of the results was made. The students' responses were categorised according to the broad issues with which they were

concerned, thus common themes were identified. The data obtained from this section of the high school questionnaires is discussed in detail in Chapter 5 and for the ELICOS students in Chapter 6.

The Interviews

Information derived from the ELICOS interviews was analysed descriptively. The interview data and the main issues that emerged from them are detailed in Chapter 7.

Validity and Limitations of the Study

According to Nunan (1992), it is important to acknowledge the limitations of questionnaires in providing reliable data. By adopting a multiple approach to data collection, this study made some attempt to diminish such limitations. Data was collected for this study via three different means: a) written questionnaires; b) written extended answers; and c) interviews.

It also should be noted that the research materials that were used to collect data in this study were, for the most part, original in their design as opposed to being based on a well-known and tried instrument such as Horwitz's *Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory* (BALLI). With regard to the questionnaire, the items in Parts 1 and 2 were devised by drawing on the author's professional experience as an English language teacher in Japan. It must be acknowledged, however, that some items in Parts 3 and 4 of the questionnaire were closely aligned to the type of statements used in a study conducted by Spratt (1999) which investigated the learning preferences of university students in Hong Kong.

All of the questions in the interview schedule were devised by the author and were formulated from the author's experience of working in Japan. The interview schedule was therefore entirely original in its design.

Due to the fact that, for the most part, the materials used in this study were original, the issue of validity of the results and how well the results of this study may be generalised need to be carefully considered. However, in order to investigate the stated research questions, it was considered that there were real advantages in using specially devised materials for the purposes of carrying out the study. It was considered that these advantages far outweighed the risk of using newly devised materials that could be deemed invalid or unreliable.

Just how widely the results of this study may be generalised is an issue that requires careful consideration. Attempts were made to maximise the internal validity of the results of the questionnaires by piloting the questionnaires with Japanese students and having them translated into Japanese by a native speaker. An attempt was also made to include a sample of Japanese high school students which was as large as it could feasibly be for this study, with 365 high school students returning completed questionnaires out of a total possible sample of 500. A larger sample size of high school participants may have increased the reliability of the data, however accessibility of students and cost of postage had to be taken into account and this limited the sample size of participants from Japan in this study. Ideally, participants would have come from various regions of Japan, but for the purposes of this study, only samples from two regions could be included.

A conscious effort was made to have a diversified sample of high school participants by including students from both academic and vocational schools, and students from public

and private schools in the study. It was intended that this sample of participants might be considered representative of the senior high school population in Japan. However, the matter of external validity of the results requires further investigation.

The sample size of the group of Japanese ELICOS students who completed the questionnaires and participated in a schedule of interviews with the author over a period of two months, was limited to the modest size of 12. This was due to a number of factors, not the least of which was the availability of willing students. However, the data that was collected from this group of participants, despite being a small sample, provided valuable insights into how EFL education in Japanese high schools is perceived by Japanese students.

Summary

This chapter has included a detailed description of the participants, the research design, and an outline of the materials and procedures employed in the collection and analysis of data for this study. Issues such as validity and limitations of the study have also been discussed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRES: ITEMS 1 – 50

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the high school questionnaire data for the first section of the questionnaire (items 1-50) and discusses the key findings from this component of the study. This quantitative data illustrates the students' perceptions of their EFL studies at high school.

The frequency percentages of the participants' responses within the four response categories on the Likert Scale are reported for each of the 50 items. The data is presented in this way to provide an understanding of how the students responded to each item. Additionally, the data gathered from the academic schools has been compared with the data from the vocational schools to ascertain whether or not there were any major differences in the results between the two different categories of schools.

The Questionnaire Data

Data gathered from the high school questionnaire is firstly reported as percentage frequencies. Median categories for the responses to each item have been highlighted to identify the central tendency of the students' responses. In one case where the distribution was equally weighted between two response categories resulting in a split median, both categories have been highlighted. This statistical information is presented in four separate tables. These tables present a summary of the data collected from Parts

1, 2, 3 and 4 of the questionnaire. The items in each of these four parts of the questionnaire sought to gather data that might answer four of the study's five key research questions. Further, so that comparisons can be made between the data obtained from the two different school types, median and mode response categories are reported in table form for each of the four parts of the questionnaire.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the numerical values for the categories of the Likert Scale responses used in this study corresponded with the following evaluations:

1 = strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= agree, 4= strongly agree.

Part 1: Items 1 – 10: What Are the Main Motivational Orientations for Japanese High School Students?

Tables 4.1a and 4.1b below give an overview of the results for the high school questionnaire items from 1-10.

Table 4.1a: High School Frequencies for Motivation

Items 1-10	SD	D	A	SA
1. The only reason I am studying English is because it is a compulsory subject	14.6	26.4	<u>42.3</u>	16.8
2. After I finish high school I will not use English.	34.8	<u>31.8</u>	21.1	12.3
3. I just want to learn those things which will help me pass my university entrance examination.	29.0	<u>38.1</u>	21.9	11.0
4. In addition to the university entrance examinations, there are other reasons why I want to study English.	23.6	<u>27.1</u>	29.6	19.7
5. I want to study English because I hope to travel overseas and visit English speaking countries one day.	20.3	21.2	<u>36.3</u>	22.3
6. I want to study English because I would like to have friends from English speaking countries.	26.2	<u>34.7</u>	27.0	12.1
7. I want to study English because I am interested in knowing about different cultures.	26.4	<u>35.2</u>	27.7	10.7

8. I want to study English because I think it will improve my job prospects.	10.2	18.7	<u>43.0</u>	28.1
9. I would feel more motivated to study English if I had contact with overseas students my age.	12.7	21.8	<u>33.1</u>	32.5
10. I would feel more motivated to study English if my classes were more interesting.	5.2	11.0	<u>33.8</u>	<u>50.0</u>

Table 4.1b: High School Frequencies for Motivation: Comparisons for School Types

Items 1-10		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Academic Schools											
	Median	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3
	Mode	3	1	1	3	3	3	2	3	4	4
Vocational Schools											
	Median	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	4
	Mode	3	2	2	1	3	2	2	3	3	4

Based on the data reported in these tables, a number of trends are evident with regard to the students' motivational orientations. The response to item 1 shows that the vocational school students tended to agree with the statement that the only reason they were studying English was because it is compulsory. The academic school students on the other hand, tended to disagree with this statement. However, it should be noted that the modal score category for the academic students was also 3.00, the same as that for the vocational school students. It could be said that this result lends support to the claim that perhaps English should not be a required subject for study by all students in Japanese high schools. The result may also be indicative of a particularly low interest in studying English amongst vocational school students.

Students from both school types tended to think that they would probably use English after they finished high school, with the majority of students either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with item 2.

The results for item 3 indicate that the majority of students from both school types revealed that they were interested in learning how to speak English and they didn't only want to learn those things which would help them pass their university entrance examinations. With a modal score category of 1.00 for the academic school students, this would indicate that these students felt strongly about the fact that they wanted to learn more from their English language studies than just what they had to learn in order to pass their exams. Further, students from both school types did tend to believe that studying English would improve their job prospects (item 8).

For the academic school students, their responses to items 4, 5, 6, and 9 indicate that they may also have had personal and/or integrative motivational orientations for their English language studies. In contrast, the vocational students were interested in learning English for travel, but may not have been interested in having friends from English speaking countries. The majority of students from both school types tended to either agree or strongly agree, however, that they would feel more motivated to study English if they had contact with overseas students their age.

The modal response category of 4.00 to item 10 from both school types suggests that students are dissatisfied with their present English classes. This result shows that students tended to strongly agree that they would feel more motivated to study English if their English classes were more interesting.

Based on these results from Part 1 it may be said that Japanese high school students are likely to have a mixture of motivational orientations for why they want to study English. Some reasons could be instrumental, for example to improve job prospects, but students are also interested in studying English for personal reasons such as for travel or for integrative reasons, such as desiring social interaction with overseas students their same age. These results are not dissimilar to those found in the study conducted amongst Japanese university students by Benson (1991).

As these results show that Japanese high school students are not only instrumentally motivated to study for their examinations, this may have some implications for Japanese teachers, particularly in respect of the content of curricula and classroom practices. Furthermore, as the participants in this study have clearly indicated that what happens in the classroom has an effect on their motivation to study English, it can be suggested that Japanese teachers may need to consider using more responsive and varied teaching methods (Green, 2000) in order to satisfy the present generation of students who may not be responding well to traditional teaching approaches.

Part 2: Items 11 – 21: What are the Attitudes of Japanese Students Towards Their English Language Studies?

Tables 4.2a and 4.2b below give an overview of the results for items 11-21.

Table 4.2a: High School Frequencies for Attitudes

Items 11-21	SD	D	A	SA
11. I do not think it is important for Japanese people to study English.	36.2	<u>39.5</u>	17.8	6.6
12. I think students would try harder to improve their speaking and listening ability if these skills were tested in the university entrance exams.	9.3	23.0	<u>41.6</u>	26.0
13. I think that Oral Communication should be tested in the university entrance examinations.	33.5	<u>37.4</u>	22.3	6.9
14. I think that the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language is how to speak and understand it.	5.2	15.2	<u>50.7</u>	28.9
15. I think the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language is how to read and write it.	16.2	<u>45.1</u>	29.4	9.3
16. I am very happy with the English course I study at school.	33.0	<u>43.1</u>	19.5	4.4
17. English is my favourite subject.	39.4	<u>29.5</u>	20.9	10.2
18. I think there should be more speaking and listening activities in my English classes.	16.8	27.8	<u>36.4</u>	19
19. I think that most of my English teachers try to make our classes interesting.	17.6	<u>36.4</u>	35.3	10.7
20. Most of my English teachers speak to us in English during our classes.	49.2	<u>38.7</u>	9.9	2.2
21. I think the textbooks we use in our English classes are boring.	9.3	36.5	<u>28.6</u>	25.5

Table 4.2b: High School Frequencies for Attitudes: Comparisons for School Types

Items 11-21		11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Academic Schools												
	Median	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	3
	Mode	1	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	3
Vocational Schools												
	Median	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	2
	Mode	2	3	1	3	2	2	1	3	3	2	2

The results for item 11 reveal that the students from both school types considered that it was important for Japanese people to study English, with the academic school students in particular tending to support this very strongly. Students from both school types tended to agree with the statement for item 12 that they would work harder to improve their speaking and listening abilities if these skills were tested in the university entrance examinations. Even so, 70.9% of students said that they did not agree with Oral Communication being tested in the university entrance examinations. It might be that students responded in this way to this item because they did not feel confident in their ability to cope with the demands of such an exam. This is supported by many of the students' responses in the extended answer section (reported in Chapter 5) where they indicated that they did not feel they received adequate instruction in English conversation from their present English courses. Furthermore, in the interviews conducted with the ELICOS students (see Chapter 7) some participants confirmed that they had chosen to disagree with this statement because they had based their response on the difficulty they thought they would have had to cope with the demands of such a test.

Despite rejecting the idea of testing oral communication skills in the university entrance exams, 79.6% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed with item 14, that being able to speak and understand was the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language. In comparison, for item 15, only 38.7% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that learning how to read and write a foreign language was the most important thing to learn. This difference in results between items 14 and 15 clearly indicates that the students consider that learning how to speak and understand a foreign language is more important than learning to read and write it. Related to this, the results for item 18 show that most students from both types of schools tended to agree that there should be more speaking and listening activities in the English classes at school.

The results for items 16 and 17 reveal that Japanese high school students may have poor attitudes towards their English language studies. For item 16, only 23.9% of participants indicated that they were very happy with their English courses they were studying at school. For item 17, the majority of students indicated that English was not their favourite subject at school. The results for the vocational school students show that these students tended to strongly disagree with this item. This result is not surprising especially when considered with how they responded to item 1 in Part 1.

The majority of students from both types of school indicated that they did not think that most of their English teachers tried to make their classes interesting. Also, the academic school students indicated that they tended to agree that the school textbooks were boring, but the vocational school students tended to disagree with this statement.

Finally, in regard to item 20, 87.9% of participants said that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed that most of their English teachers spoke to the class in English during their lessons. With median score categories of 1.00 and 2.00 respectively, it would appear that the academic school students thought that their teachers were even less likely to be using English than their vocational school counterparts.

From the results it is apparent that most of the students consider English an important subject to study. However, it would also seem that few consider English to be their favourite subject at school. From these results, it would seem that the majority of students in this study are likely to have negative attitudes towards their English language studies, with many of the students indicating that they are not happy with their English courses.

However, the results from this section of the questionnaire also reveal that Japanese high school students have favourable attitudes towards learning speaking and listening skills and they consider these skills to be the most important to learn when studying a foreign language. These results are similar to those found in previous studies with Japanese students (Orikasa, 1989; Shimizu, 1995).

The results show that the majority of students indicated that they did not think that most of their teachers tried to make their English classes interesting, and this result too, has implications for Japanese teachers and their classroom practices. If the majority of students are dissatisfied with their teachers' efforts to create interesting classes that help the students feel more motivated to study English, then the teachers may need to be prepared to take some of the responsibility for Japanese students' reportedly low levels of motivation with respect to studying English.

Finally, with regard to the poor record of teachers using English in the classroom, these results confirm what Gorsuch (1998) concludes (as reported in the literature review) that many JTEs are not using English in their classrooms. This is possibly because they do not consider it necessary to do so because oral skills are not tested in the university entrance examinations. Although it must be acknowledged that teachers' attitudes and beliefs have not been examined in this study, it also seems that the JTEs do not have the same view (at least as reflected in their classroom practices) as the students about the importance of learning speaking and listening skills when studying a foreign language. As the majority of students identified speaking and listening as being the most important skills to learn when studying a foreign language, the fact that their learning environment may not be conducive to developing these skills could indicate yet another source of

dissatisfaction for the students. A similar discrepancy was reported by Orikasa (1989) who concluded that the school in his study needed to reform its EFL Program so that it came closer to meeting the high school students' needs.

Part 3: Items 22 –36: What do Japanese Students Want to Study in Their English Classes?

Tables 4.3a and 4.3b below give an overview of the results for items 22-36.

Table 4.3a: High School Frequencies for What Students Like to Study

Items 22-36	SD	D	A	SA
22. I like studying grammatical rules.	43.7	<u>37.1</u>	16.5	2.7
23. I like doing translations.	30.8	<u>36.3</u>	25.5	7.4
24. I like speaking in English.	27.7	<u>34.1</u>	25.5	12.6
25. I like reading in English.	26.1	<u>35.7</u>	27.7	10.4
26. I like writing in English.	26.4	<u>39.0</u>	25.8	8.8
27. I like learning new English words and expressions.	28.8	<u>39.3</u>	25.3	6.6
28. I like doing listening activities.	26.4	<u>36.3</u>	26.6	10.7
29. I like studying English conversation.	30.2	<u>33.5</u>	23.1	13.2
30. I like to practise writing exam answers.	43.7	<u>43.4</u>	11.5	1.4
31. I like talking to classmates in English.	<u>50.4</u>	32.5	12.9	4.1
32. I like the teacher asking us what we would like to study in our English classes.	27.5	<u>30.2</u>	29.1	13.2
33. I like learning about the culture and customs of English speaking countries.	21.9	<u>29.6</u>	31.2	17.3
34. I like learning English for travel purposes.	19.4	30.5	<u>36.6</u>	13.6
35. I like classes which focus on speaking and listening.	28.3	<u>39.0</u>	25.3	7.4
36. I like classes which focus on grammar and translation.	40.1	<u>40.9</u>	14.8	4.1

Table 4.3b: High School Frequencies for What Students Like to Study: Comparisons for School Types

Items 22-36	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
Academic Schools															
Median	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
Mode	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	2
Vocational Schools															
Median	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1.5	1	2	2	2	2	2
Mode	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	1

These items in the questionnaire sought to identify what students want to study in their English classes. However, it must be conceded that in formulating the statements according to a similar model – a questionnaire on student learning preferences which was conducted in Hong Kong by Spratt (1999), this in fact has led to a result which more likely has identified what students like to study in their English classes as opposed to what they want to study in their English classes. Although possibly related, “wants” and “likes” cannot necessarily be equated, so in this instance, a weakness in the design of the questionnaire must be acknowledged.

Additionally, as described in Chapter 3, Parts 3 and 4 of the questionnaire included an extra category of responses for students to indicate if they had never actually tried the stated activities during their time at senior high school. Even if they had not tried a particular activity at school, participants were asked to indicate if they thought that they would like or not like the activity. The pilot study revealed that many students tended to under-report non-participation in the stated activities. Despite revising the instructions for Parts 3 and 4 of the questionnaire, it seems that the reliability of these additional responses is low (in the main it would appear that many students have tended to under

report non-participation). Therefore, the data collected in this regard will not be reported here.

The overriding trend of this part of the questionnaire's results indicates that many of the Japanese high school students who participated in this study held negative attitudes towards their English studies. In fact, of the 15 identified activities listed in the survey, only two activities recorded a positive response result, and that was only from the academic school students. These two items were 33 and 34 respectively. With median response categories of 3.00 for both items (from the academic school students) this would indicate that these students at least would like to study about the culture and customs of English speaking countries, and also learn English for travel purposes, but their vocational school counterparts did not feel the same way.

To what extent the negative results that have been recorded in this part of the questionnaire reflect that Japanese high school students are not happy with what they study at school as opposed to how they study these things is difficult to discern. It would be useful to be able to ascertain to what extent the students' negative responses have been influenced by present teaching practices. Further studies that include a qualitative survey component (such as a short answer section) which allows students to say "why" they don't like these things would be needed in order to investigate whether or not there is a link between teaching practices and these negative attitudes. As already discussed, it may be that these results indicate that many Japanese high school students are not happy with what they study at school. This conclusion can be based on these results which clearly reveal that many students do not appear to like what they study in their English classes. The fact that the vocational students indicated that they did not like doing any of the listed items is of particular concern and confirms what many vocational teachers

already know – that student motivation to study English may be particularly problematic in the vocational schools.

Considering the results that have already been reported from Part 1, such as the students' perception that learning how to speak and understand a foreign language is important and the fact that they said they agreed that they would like more speaking and listening activities in their English classes, it is somewhat surprising that students do not indicate a more favourable result for items 24, 28, 29 and 35 (as these are activities concerned with speaking and listening). However, if these results are examined closely, it can be seen that the results for these items although negative, are not as negative as those recorded for items 22, 30, 31, or 36 (activities related to reading and writing) which had most of the lowest score categories recorded. Looking at the results this way it can be said that the participants in this study especially dislike studying grammar, and they do not like to practise writing exam answers. They also do not like classes that focus on grammar and translation, and somewhat surprisingly, they also do not like talking to classmates in English.

The results from this part of the questionnaire may be indicative of a general negative attitude towards the study of English amongst Japanese high school students. As very few items produced positive results, it may be concluded that the students do not like the things that they do in their classes and that they are generally dissatisfied with the present way they learn English at school. Further research is needed to ascertain to what extent teaching practice or other factors are to blame for these attitudes. The results for the vocational school students indicate that they have particularly negative attitudes towards most aspects of their English language studies.

Part 4: Items 37 – 50: How Do Japanese High School Students Like to Study English?

This part of the questionnaire produced more positive responses than Part 3. Tables 4.4a and 4.4b below give an overview of the results for items 37-50.

Table 4.4 a: High School Frequencies for How Students Like to Study English

Items 37-50	SD	D	A	SA
37. I like to practise speaking in English by doing activities in pairs or small groups.	28.8	<u>31.0</u>	29.4	10.7
38. I like to have a native English speaker teach our Oral Communication classes	16.2	24.1	<u>36.7</u>	23
39. I like to study English by listening to English songs.	8.5	15.9	<u>37.8</u>	37.8
40. I like to study English by watching movies or TV programmes.	9.0	15.1	<u>37.0</u>	38.9
41. I like to study English by using computers.	22.3	<u>35.0</u>	33.1	9.6
42. I like using the Internet to write in English to students in foreign countries.	29.7	<u>34.9</u>	25.3	10.2
43. I like studying English from textbooks.	39.0	<u>41.8</u>	17.6	1.6
44. I like doing role-plays in class as a way of practising to speak in English.	30.3	<u>33.6</u>	28.1	8.0
45. I like playing games and having contests or quizzes in my English classes.	17.1	19.8	<u>38.8</u>	24.2
46. I like listening to my teachers telling us about overseas travel experiences.	10.5	18.5	<u>38.0</u>	33.1
47. I like listening to my teachers speaking in English.	24.7	<u>44.8</u>	23.9	6.6
48. I like to study English by rote-learning.	45.9	<u>36.8</u>	12.1	5.2
49. I like working in small groups in my English classes.	22.7	<u>34.0</u>	30.7	12.6
50. I like working in pairs in my English classes.	31.2	<u>39.5</u>	21.9	7.4

Table 4.4b: High School Student Preferences Frequencies : Comparisons for School Types

Item	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
Academic Schools														
Median	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2
Mode	1	3	4	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	1	3	2
Vocational Schools														
Median	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	1	2	2
Mode	2	3	3	4	3	2	1	1	3	3	2	1	2	2

The positive results included the response to item 38 which revealed that students tended to agree that they liked having a native speaker teach their Oral Communication classes. This result supports the notion that the students are interested in learning how to speak and understand English. Additionally, they liked listening to English songs and watching English movies or TV programmes, with 75.6% and 75.9% of participants recording positive responses to items 39 and 40 respectively. These results are similar to those found in the study conducted by Seedhouse (1995) with Spanish students that found that the students appeared to want to be "entertained" in their English classes.

The students in the present study also indicated positive attitudes towards playing games or having contests or quizzes in their classes (item 45), with 63% of students revealing that they liked these activities. Many also liked to hear their teachers talking about their overseas travel experiences with 71.1% of the participants recording positive responses to item 46 in the survey.

When the data from the two school types is compared it can be seen that the results are very similar, with just one or two notable exceptions. For example, the modal category of response for the vocational school students for item 40 was 4.00, compared to 3.00

for the academic school students. This indicates that the use of TV or movies in vocational school English classes is particularly popular amongst students. Conversely, for item 42, although the median category for both school types was 2.00 for both school types, the results for the academic school students showed a modal response category of 3.00, indicating that using e-mail to write to students in foreign countries may appeal to some of these students. In addition, for item 48, although both school type students indicated that they did not like studying English by rote-learning, the vocational school students had an even stronger aversion to this approach as indicated by their median and modal category responses of 1.00.

The high school students in this study indicated that they do not like listening to their teachers speaking in English. It could be surmised that this is either because they are unaccustomed to doing so, and therefore have difficulty in understanding them, or as revealed by the ELICOS interview data (which is reported in Chapter 7), many Japanese students may consider that their Japanese English teachers have poor pronunciation and therefore do not want to hear them speak in English.

The majority of students from both school types indicated that they did not like working in pairs or small groups to study English. A modal response category of 3.00 for the academic students may, however, indicate that more students from this type of school might be willing to join such activities. The negative results for items 37, 44, 49 and 50 might seem contrary to findings from other studies conducted with Japanese students such as those by Hyland (1993) and Miller (1995) which revealed that Japanese students like to be actively involved in their language classes as opposed to being passive recipients of information. However, it could be suggested that the participants in this study may have had few opportunities to experience a more student-centred approach to

learning, and therefore, their responses may have tended to be negative because they have no experience against which to evaluate such activities.

The results for this part of the questionnaire reveal that there are definitely activities that can be carried out in English language classes that would be favourably received by Japanese high school students. Some of the more popular activities may involve an aspect of "entertainment" and students also indicated that they would like to play games and get involved in fun activities.

When comparing the results from the two school types, a large difference between students' views on how they like to study English was not apparent. A difference between the results obtained from this study compared to others that may have been conducted with students either in Japan or overseas, is that the participants in this study did not indicate that they were in favour of being involved in group or pair work activities. Lack of experience could be one possible explanation for this anomaly.

Conclusion

The results of the high school questionnaires in many respects confirm the findings of previous studies that have made similar investigations. For example, the students in this study were found to have mixed motivational orientations with regards to their English language studies, and many revealed negative attitudes towards this subject. The students did not appear to like many of the activities they currently do in their English classes. To what extent teaching practices and course content are to blame for the students' dissatisfaction is a matter that requires further investigation. It is apparent,

however, that high school students in Japan, like their overseas counterparts, would appear to enjoy participating in games and fun activities and studying English through such means as television, movies and songs.

CHAPTER 5

EXTENDED ANSWERS FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Introduction

The extended answer section of the high school questionnaires was completed by approximately one third of the high school participants. This section gave students the opportunity to express their opinions about their English language studies at school. Their comments provide a more detailed understanding of how students feel about studying English at school and what they like or do not like to study in their English classes. Their needs and their attitudes towards studying English are evident from their descriptions. Many of them wrote explicit accounts of what they thought about their classes, their teachers, the textbooks, and the content of the courses. Some participants made suggestions relating to what they would like to study and how the study of English could be made more interesting for them. Participants wrote their responses in Japanese and these were later translated by a native Japanese speaker.

The data collected from this section of the questionnaire facilitates an understanding of the underlying reasons for why students may have responded in a particular way to items 1 – 50 of the questionnaire. It also provides additional information that otherwise would not have been evident. The data provided through the students' extended answers also facilitates the formulation of possible solutions to the study's fifth and final research aim; i.e. to identify what students think can be done to improve EFL education in Japanese high schools. Direct quotations are used to report much of the data from this

portion of the study. The data is presented in this chapter according to the main themes that emerged from the participants' comments, namely their views on:

- a) English classes.
- b) Japanese English teachers and teaching approaches.
- c) Native speaker English teachers.
- d) Learning English conversation.
- e) Textbooks.
- f) What and how students want to study English.
- g) English course content and university entrance English exam content.

Students' Views on Their English Classes

The majority of students who wrote responses to this section of the questionnaire were highly critical of how their English classes are conducted. At least 70 students (of 116) specifically said that they were not happy with the way they were being taught English. Many of them described their English classes as being “boring” and “useless” and many students stated that they would like more interesting classes. For example, students made comments about their classes as follows: “Boring. No feeling of participation in English classes. Not useful.” Or “English classes are boring and not easy to understand. Do something to make our classes more interesting.” “I am not interested in my English class. It is a dull class” and “English classes are very useless”. “I want English classes to be more interesting and enjoyable. I get sleepy in English classes.” “I want English classes more pleasant and enjoyable.” “Teaching method is not interesting. I would like more enjoyable and interesting English classes.” The comments indicate that the

students are not satisfied with the way their classes are being conducted, the atmosphere of the classes, and the teaching methods used.

Another theme that emerged from the students' comments about classes, was that they felt they were expected to memorise a lot of vocabulary and grammatical points. This was being done as part of their preparation for the university entrance exams. Despite the fact that the students in this study were Year 10 and 11 students, and would not be sitting for their entrance exams for another one or two years, it is apparent from their comments that their classes were nevertheless influenced by the examinations. Many of the students said that they found the practice of memorisation to be a waste of time. They also indicated that they were not happy with classes that focused on preparation for the exams. They made comments such as the following: "Classes should be fun. If not, English is only used for memorising for university entrance examinations or to enter high school." Or "It is useless to memorise many vocabularies and idioms for English tests, because it is quick to forget." And "Just memorising English is useless." "I don't like English classes just to pass the entrance exams."

One student drew on the experience of her parents who had also found the study of English at school to have been "useless". She wrote:

I am not interested in English classes at school. It is just useless. We study only reading and writing and these are only for the exams. My parents said the English they learnt at school was meaningless and useless and they don't remember it at all.

One student said that she would like to study more “useful” English, such as travel English and “not just study grammar for the exams”. One student criticised the fact that they were not able to participate actively in the lessons:

I want students to participate more in classes. I am sometimes bored in English classes because we just do translations. There is little emphasis on speaking. Teachers teach us grammar and long sentences, but we can't have the ability to speak English if we study English in this way.

Such comments clearly indicate that students are expected to memorise and remain passive recipients of knowledge about English, and this is emphasised over performance. From their comments, it is evident that a number of Japanese high school students are not satisfied with what they are being taught and how they are taught or indeed how they are expected to learn English. Their teachers may feel pressured to prepare them for the university entrance examinations, but many students think that what they are learning is meaningless or “useless”.

The students' comments may be an indication that many of them are not only instrumentally motivated to study English for the purposes of passing their entrance examinations. A number of students' comments indicate that they may also have personal and integrative reasons for studying English. Such findings support the data collected from items 1-10 of the questionnaire. Other studies that have been conducted with Japanese adults and university students such as the research by Chihara and Oller (1978) and Benson (1991) also support these conclusions. These findings, however, are contrary to the widely held belief that Japanese high school students are only interested in studying English for the purpose of passing their examinations (Harasawa, 1974;

Rohlen, 1983). As many of the participants in this study have indicated that they are not motivated solely by their examinations, this finding suggests that teachers might need to provide more interesting English lessons which develop students' oral communication skills as well as their knowledge about English.

It should be noted that many of the students who wrote comments in the extended answer section pointed out that they liked English, but the problem was that they didn't like their English classes. If the classes could become more engaging and appealing to students, their attitudes towards the study of English may improve, which in turn could lead to them becoming more successful language learners (for a discussion of this see Gardner and Lambert (1972) in the literature review). This could be achieved by altering the teaching approaches used, the type of class activities students are involved in, and the materials used in classes.

The following comments reveal the students' dissatisfaction with their classes, despite actually having a liking for the subject: "I like English but am not interested in attending English classes because classes are boring." "I like English, but I don't like the classes. English study at school is only for the exam" and "I like English, but English classes are boring because they teach us grammar and it's just memorising."

One student even remarked that his classes resembled self study, as they only involved doing translations. He felt that it wasn't necessary to attend his English class. "I can do it by myself if I don't attend the class." Of the 116 students who wrote written responses to this section only one student wrote "I like current English classes".

Students' Views on Their Japanese English Teachers and Teaching Approaches

The students' comments about their teachers and the teaching approaches used in their classes clearly disclose their dissatisfaction. In particular, the participants' written responses indicate that many Japanese high school students may not be happy with the traditional mode of teacher-centred, lecture-style teaching which is used in high school English classes. They described their classes as being "one-way teaching style", with many students feeling disinterested, or not listening to what the teachers have to say. For example, "English teachers do not care if students don't listen to lessons", "One-way teaching, so many students don't listen to the English teacher's talk. English class looks like self study" and "English teacher is not good at teaching in English classes. Like a radio, only one-way teaching."

Many of the respondents noted that they would like their teachers to make more effort to make the classes interesting and enjoyable. For example: "I want teachers to make the classes more fun because classes are boring. Teachers should get the students involved in the classes." Some students said that they would like more opportunity to speak English in class. And one student noted that the way they were being taught English had an influence on their success as learners: "I hope that English teachers would make classes interesting. If so, I would improve English quickly." These comments that reveal Japanese students' preferences for being more actively involved in their English classes are similar to the findings of previous studies into Japanese students' preferred learning styles (see Widdows & Vollers (1991); Hyland (1993) and Miller (1995) for a discussion of this in the literature review).

A number of participants were especially critical of their English teachers' pronunciation. For example they made comments like: "Japanese English teachers' pronunciation is not good." And "I want teachers to have more emphasis on speaking and improving their pronunciation."

But the students were not just critical of their teachers' production skills, they were also critical of how the teachers taught English grammar. For example: "I hope that English teachers would explain well in grammar." "I would like teachers to teach so that students can understand about grammar points more easily." And "I want grammar to be taught more clearly, with more examples."

Some students criticised the teachers for relying too heavily on textbooks. For example: "Japanese English teachers' classes are not good because it is just following the textbook." Or "The teachers just follow the textbook."

One student claimed that it was the teacher's personality that determined whether or not the students were interested in English. And finally, the following student's comments are particularly revealing with respect to the role that teachers have in determining whether or not students are interested in their English language studies, and how students may be dissatisfied with what and how they are being taught:

Teacher didn't teach us how to speak well. Method of teaching isn't good. It's up to the teachers whether English classes are interesting or not. I've only ever had one good English teacher. Other teachers only taught grammar and I think English is more interesting than that. I am not satisfied with how we are taught English.

Students' Comments About Native English Speaker Teachers

All of the students who mentioned native speaker English teachers wrote positive comments about them. For example: "I hope to learn from a native English teacher, I would feel more interested." "More English classes with a native English teacher." "I like studying with a native English teacher. I feel like I can learn more quickly." "More native speaker teachers should be employed." And "I want to be taught by a foreign teacher. It would help my motivation."

With regard to Oral Communication classes conducted by a native speaker teacher, one student wrote: "Oral Communication classes especially with native English teacher is nice, and the class is fun." Most students wanted to study English with a native speaker teacher, and many others wanted the opportunity to speak English with native speakers. For example: "I want to have the chance to speak with foreigners." And "I wish to have an opportunity to speak to a native English speaker."

Some students saw the main advantage of having a native speaker English teacher was in the fact that they could help them improve their listening and speaking skills. For example: "I want to learn correct pronunciation from a native speaker." And "I would like to listen to native speakers, not just the tape."

One student, however, expressed some concern about not being able to follow the native speaker English teacher's classes, and feeling reserved. The student suggested that students should have exposure to classes given by native speaker teachers from elementary school. The student's comments are quoted below:

We have native teacher's classes but I can't follow their way. I am sometimes reserved, I withdraw from them. I want to have a chance to get used to ALTs little by little from elementary school.

Students' Views on Studying English Conversation

A common point raised by the majority of respondents in the extended answer section of the questionnaire was that they wanted to study English conversation. Out of the 116 students who wrote responses to this section, 75 said that they were interested in learning English conversation. Not only is this data important in its own right, but it is also particularly helpful in providing a fuller understanding of the data collected from the questionnaire. For example, as explained by some of the ELICOS students in their interviews (which are reported in the following chapter), the participants often marked their responses to the questionnaire items according to how they evaluated those classes. It is therefore possible that many of the high school participants have done the same when choosing a Likert Scale response to the questionnaire items. For example, item 29 stated "I like studying English conversation." The median score category for this item was 2.00, which indicates that the majority of students disagreed with this statement. Similarly, item 24: "I like speaking in English" and item 35: "I like classes which focus on speaking and listening" also received an overall negative response from participants. These results would appear somewhat incongruous with the data collected from the extended answer section, where so many students wrote that they wanted to study English conversation. However, despite wanting to study English conversation, many students may have indicated that they disagreed with the above questionnaire items because they do not like the way they are currently being taught these skills. This

discrepancy in findings between questionnaire items 1-50 and the extended answer responses indicates that caution must be applied when interpreting the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire (see Chapter 8 for further discussion of methodological issues).

A number of students mentioned that they considered it was necessary to go to an English language conversation school if they wanted to improve their speaking and listening skills. It was clear from their comments that their interest in learning English conversation was not being satisfied at school. For example, three participants said: “I want to learn more English conversation at school. I go to an English conversation school and enjoy it.” “I want to learn more speaking and listening, things which would be useful for travelling. Then there wouldn’t be a need to go to an English conversation school as well to learn these things.” And “I do not think I can speak English during English classes. But I don’t want to go to a private English (conversation) school, because I don’t have time.”

One participant noted that studying English conversation would increase her interest in studying English: “If English classes are focused on English conversation, I will be interested in studying English.” Another student made the evaluation that “communication skills are more important than grammar.” And finally, one student summed up what seemed to be the common sentiment for many of the students: “I’d like to learn English conversation and would like to have more chances to speak in our English classes and speak to foreigners and learn daily conversation at school.”

Based on the number of comments made in support of more English conversation to be studied at school, it would appear that the new oral communication courses which have been offered in senior high schools since 1994 are not satisfying the students' needs. As discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis, the problem may be that many schools are not offering students the opportunity to study these oral courses after Year 10. Also, as mentioned in the literature review, some students may find that even if these courses are available to them, teachers may be overlooking the communicative aims of such classes in favour of preparing students for the university entrance examinations.

The Students' Thoughts About the School Textbooks

Textbooks that are used in Japanese schools are written and published under the auspices of the Education Ministry. Approximately one fifth of the students who wrote comments in the extended answer section made mention of the school textbooks used in English classes. In many cases, the students described the textbooks as "boring". For example: "Textbooks are boring and useless." "Classes which use textbooks and translations are very boring and useless." "Reading a textbook and grammar are really boring." And "Content of textbook is not interesting." "English textbooks are not interesting." Some students also described the content of the textbooks as being "outdated". One student said: "Textbooks' content is not useful for the students. I want content to be more fun and interesting."

Some students were also critical of their teachers for overusing textbooks in class. For example: "English courses are just following a textbook". "I don't want to just use a textbook."

No positive comments were written about the textbooks. A number of students suggested that it would be better if teachers sometimes used foreign novels or authentic texts from English speaking countries. For example: "I'd like to use books and texts from English countries." "The textbooks themselves are boring. We should sometimes use foreign novels and magazines." "I don't like English classes because textbooks aren't interesting. I would prefer reading foreign newspapers or topics such as world situations."

What and How Students Prefer to Study in their English Classes

A number of students wrote suggestions on how the study of English could be made more interesting and enjoyable for them. They pointed out what they like to study and how they prefer to study English. Some identified activities they would like to do in class, and what would make them feel more motivated to study English. Some said that they wanted the opportunity to communicate with overseas students via e-mail, or to do drama, sing songs and play games in class. For example: "I want to have more contact with overseas students through e-mail or letters." "I want to do drama, sing songs and play games." "I want to do role-plays." And "I want to have games and make the classes fun."

At least 17 students mentioned that they would like to be able to communicate with overseas students their age. For example: "I would like overseas students to visit our school." Or "If I could speak to a native, I would feel more motivated to speak English." "I want to communicate with overseas students." And "I want to communicate with same age foreign students" were common answers.

Listening to English songs and watching movies were identified as popular activities, with almost a quarter of the students identifying these as activities they wanted to do in English classes. For example: “I want to watch English videos.” “I want to listen to English songs” and “I want to study English by using movies, songs, novels, poems and learn about culture.” These comments confirm the findings of Part 4 of the questionnaire.

Many students expressed an interest in learning about foreign cultures in their English classes. A selection of some of the students’ comments relating to culture is reported as follows: “I want to learn about foreign cultures.” “I want to learn about the differences between overseas cultures and Japanese culture.” And “If English teacher uses overseas drama in a class, I can understand a difference in culture and I can have fun.” “I’d like to study English cultures.” And “I’d like to learn about the ALT’s home town and culture and customs.”

Some students made suggestions regarding the type of texts they would like to translate in class. For example: “I would like to translate foreign stories like ‘*Harry Potter*’.” And “I would like to translate English songs.”

Students’ Views on the Content of English Courses and English Exams for University Entrance

Most of the comments which students made with regard to the content of their English courses related to their preference for more emphasis to be placed on speaking and

listening skills and less emphasis to be placed on grammar. For example: "I want priority to be given to English conversation before grammar and vocabulary." "I want to change the course content. Speaking is more important." "I want more time for oral communication and less grammar." "I want more listening practice and to study 'real English'. Now the course puts too much emphasis on grammar." And "More emphasis is needed on oral communication." These comments reflect the findings from item 14 in Part 2 of the questionnaire which indicated that students considered the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language was how to speak and understand it. One student commented that studying speaking would have the effect of helping to make the study of grammar more interesting for students:

I think studying grammar is important, but after we realise speaking with, and having contact with English speaking people is interesting, then we will find studying grammar to be more interesting. Just studying grammar is boring.

Some students said that they would be interested in courses that taught English for travel purposes. For example: "I want to learn English for travel purposes." "I want to study travel English and useful English, not just studying grammar for the entrance exam." And "English studied at school helps us to read and write, but it is not adequate if we go overseas. Main purpose is for the university exams, it is not practical."

With regard to the university entrance examinations, some students stated that they would like to see the English exams include a speaking and listening component. For example: "English tests should include speaking, listening and writing in my opinion." "I wish that there were English interviews in the university entrance examinations." And "Should change content of the university exams. Not only include grammar."

Other students commented on the influence that the examinations have on their English courses, and how they were dissatisfied with classes that placed too much emphasis on preparing for the entrance examinations. For example: “The English class is only for the examination. That is bad.” And “I want more listening. English classes focus on reading and writing for entrance exams.” And “It is useless to study English with only reading and writing and not speaking and listening.”

Finally, one student’s comments were particularly good at summing up what many of her peers had said:

We should change the curriculum at school. I think it is more interesting to learn English culture and study songs, novels, and poems, and we will be more motivated to study English. English at high school is only for the exam.

A Case Study: Additional Comments By Students

A few other comments were made by the students in the extended answer section that do not readily fall into one of the above categories, but are still worthy of report. For example, a couple of students said that they thought the study of English should not be compulsory. Another student said that English study should commence from a younger age. One other student’s comments in particular, stood out and deserve special attention. This participant said:

I don’t care for English because I don’t need English. I don’t like any studies, not just English, but mathematics and science too.

This participant was a male student studying at an academic public school in Tokyo. It is interesting to note the sentiments expressed in this student's statements, and in light of these comments, examine this individual's responses to various items in the questionnaire. This has been done so that a better understanding of this student's needs may be achieved. In the questionnaire, the student indicated that he agreed with item 1: "The only reason I am studying English is because it is a compulsory subject". Yet he strongly disagreed with item 3: "I am not interested in learning how to speak English. I just want to learn those things which help me to pass my university entrance examination" and he strongly agreed with item 10: "I would feel more motivated to study English if the English classes were more interesting". He strongly disagreed with items 16 and 19: "I am very happy with the English course I study at school" and "I think most of my English teachers try to make our classes interesting." He also strongly agreed with item 21: "The textbooks which are used in English classes are boring". In Parts 3 and 4 of the questionnaire, this student circled '1.00' on the Likert Scale for every item except for item 32 indicating that he strongly disagreed with each statement except for: "I like the teacher asking us what we would like to study in our English classes". He strongly agreed with this statement.

In examining how this student responded to the questionnaire, it is evident that he really did not like much about studying English. He did not find his lessons or the textbooks interesting, and he was not just interested in learning those things which are in the exam. He did, however, like his teacher asking him what he wanted to study.

This participant was not the only student who responded by circling only negative responses to the items in Parts 3 and 4 of the questionnaire. Quite a number of students from both academic and vocational schools circled only '1.00' or '2.00' for almost every item in Parts 3 and 4 of the questionnaire. It could be surmised that these students wanted to indicate that they clearly "do not like" many aspects of their English language studies at school. Perhaps in the case of this particular student who wrote the comments about being disinterested in all subjects, not just English, he may exemplify what has been described as a 'demotivated' student, a recent phenomenon in Japan, (as described in the introductory chapter). Such students are said to be disinterested in school and have lost faith in the importance of hard study in order to enter university. They seem to be rebelling against the wider belief that tertiary education is the only path to success in Japan. It could be argued that for these students who have no great interest in studying English, the subject should not be compulsory.

Additionally, with the student's obvious disinterest in many school subjects it could be said that all Japanese teachers, not just English teachers, have a responsibility to make classes interesting and engaging for such students who may have low intrinsic motivation. The student's positive response to item 32 could indicate that students with poor motivation with regard to the study of English would feel more satisfied if teachers conducted needs analyses and adapted their term programs accordingly, to teach what students are interested in studying.

Conclusion

It is evident from the high school students' written responses to the extended answer section of the questionnaire, that English education in Japanese high schools may be facing a crisis. The extent of criticism which the students levelled at the courses, their classes, teachers, and textbooks, clearly indicates that many students are extremely dissatisfied with the current situation. As previously mentioned, the content of the university entrance examinations has been criticised for creating many of the problems, as teachers continue to focus on grammar and translation and "teach for the exam". It could be said that until such time as the English exams include an aural-oral component, students will continue to feel frustrated at the low priority given to developing their oral communication skills in the English courses they study at school.

It would also seem that teachers must do more to address the problem of poor student motivation and students' dissatisfaction with their English classes. It could be suggested that the lecture-style, teacher-centred classes that are common in Japanese senior high schools may need to change. As students become both more demanding, and less influenced by external pressures to gain entrance to tertiary institutions, teachers may have to work harder at engaging the interest of their students in the learning process. Teachers may need to aim at satisfying their students' needs and learning priorities. They may also need to aim at making the study of English a more motivating experience for their students, and having the students become more actively involved in classes. Although some could suggest there is a cultural bias in the suggestion for using communicative, student-centred classes, other studies suggest a similar approach is suitable for Japanese students (e.g., Day & Iida, 1988; Orikasa, 1989; Benson, 1991; Widdows & Voller, 1991; Kobayashi, Redekop & Porter, 1992; Hyland, 1993; Law,

1995; Miller, 1995; and Shimizu, 1995). Naturally, changes in pedagogical approaches will not evolve unless the Education Ministry in Japan is able to provide adequate professional development and support for teachers.

Finally, on a positive note, the participants who wrote extended answers to this section of the questionnaire have provided a number of suggestions about what they would like to study and how they prefer to study English. It is clear that many of the students want to become more actively involved in the learning process, and to learn “useful” English which will enable them to communicate with overseas peers. They also expressed a strong desire for classes to be interesting and enjoyable.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS OF THE ELICOS QUESTIONNAIRES AND EXTENDED ANSWERS

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the ELICOS questionnaire data and discusses the key findings and conclusions that can be drawn from these results. The results of the ELICOS questionnaire have not been compared statistically with the high school study because of the large difference in sample sizes. It is important to note that the results reported in this chapter reflect the opinions of a sample of Japanese students who have not only experienced studying English at Japanese high schools, but who have also elected to continue studying English after they graduated from high school. They have all experienced studying English in an overseas context. The maturity and experience of these participants have made them valuable informants to this study.

The discussion of the data gathered from items 1 - 50 of the questionnaire has been divided into four parts, corresponding with Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the questionnaire. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the aim of these four parts of the questionnaire was to collect data which might help to answer four of the study's core research questions. In Parts 3 and 4, where students have indicated non-participation in the various activities mentioned in the survey, this has been reported, albeit with the caveat that it is likely that non-participation has tended to be under-reported by the participants.

Supporting qualitative data from the extended answer section of the questionnaire is also reported in this chapter. This component of the study has provided data that helps to validate and extend the information gathered from items 1 – 50 of the questionnaires. It has also provided data that facilitates the formulation of possible solutions to the study's fifth and final research aim; i.e. to identify what students think can be done to improve EFL education in Japanese high schools.

Please note that in reporting the extended answer section responses from the questionnaire pseudonyms have been used for the purpose of preserving the anonymity of the participants.

Questionnaire Items 1 - 50

Data gathered from the ELICOS questionnaire is reported as frequencies. Median categories for the responses to each item have been highlighted to identify the central tendency of the students' responses. In the few cases where the distribution was equally weighted between two response categories resulting in a split median, both categories have been highlighted. This statistical information is presented in four separate tables. These tables present a summary of the data collected from Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the questionnaire respectively. The tables with the corresponding data for Parts 3 and 4 also record the students' non-participation in the relevant activities at school as a frequency.

Part 1: Items 1 – 10: What Are the Main Motivational Orientations for Japanese High School Students?

Items 1-10 in the questionnaire sought to investigate the students' motivational orientations and some of the factors that might have affected their motivation to study English when they were high school students. Table 6.1 below gives an overview of the results for the ELICOS questionnaire items 1 – 10.

Table 6.1

ELICOS Frequencies for Motivation

Items 1-10	S	D	A	S A
1. The only reason I studied English was because it was a compulsory subject	4	<u>5</u>	2	1
2. I thought that after I finished high school I would not use English.	<u>6</u>	<u>4</u>	2	0
3. I was not interested in learning how to speak English. I just wanted to learn those things which would help me pass my university entrance examination.	<u>8</u>	1	1	2
4. In addition to the university entrance examinations, there were other reasons why I wanted to study English.	3	1	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>
5. I wanted to study English because I hoped I would travel overseas and visit English speaking countries one day.	1	2	2	<u>7</u>
6. I wanted to study English because I wanted to have friends from English speaking countries.	2	3	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>
7. I wanted to study English because I was interested in knowing about different cultures.	2	2	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>
8. I wanted to study English because I thought it would improve my job prospects.	1	3	<u>5</u>	3
9. I would have felt more motivated to study English if I had had contact with overseas students my age.	0	2	2	<u>8</u>
10. I would have felt more motivated to study English if my classes had been more interesting.	0	0	3	<u>9</u>

Based on the data reported in this table, a number of trends are evident with regard to the students' motivational orientations. In response to item 1, the majority of the ELICOS participants indicated that they still would have studied English even if it had not been a compulsory subject at school, indicating that they are likely to have been intrinsically motivated to study the subject. For item 2, most students had believed they would use English after they finished high school. The results for item 3 indicate that these students were not only interested in learning those things which were tested in the university entrance examinations, they also wanted to learn how to speak English. This result reveals that the students were not just instrumentally motivated by their exams. It also raises the question of whether or not they were satisfied with classes that may have tended to focus on exam preparation, which as the literature review revealed, is commonly the case in many Japanese senior high schools.

The results for item 4 confirm this. Most of the participants indicated that the examinations were not the "only reason" why they wanted to study English. This conclusion is supported by the scores for items 5, 6, and 7 which indicate that when these participants were high school students, many of them were interested in learning about foreign cultures, wanted to have friends from English speaking countries, and had hoped to travel overseas one day. It is possible that these results reveal that this sample of students may have additionally had integrative and personal motivational orientations. In response to item 8, an instrumental orientation was identified as the majority of students indicated that they believed a knowledge of English would improve their future job prospects. Similar to the high school questionnaire findings, the results for the ELICOS questionnaire reveal that the ELICOS participants had mixed motivational orientations towards their English language studies at school.

The majority of participants strongly agreed with item 9, indicating that they believed that fostering friendships with overseas high school students would help to improve students' motivation for studying English. All of the 12 students indicated for item 10 that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "I would have felt more motivated to study English if my classes had been more interesting." This result is a clear indication that this sample of students had been dissatisfied with their English classes at school. It also reflects the high school questionnaire results for this item and confirms that there is a need for further study to investigate how teachers, teaching approaches, materials used in class, and course content can affect Japanese high school students' motivation for studying English. Such an investigation may be useful to help overcome the problem of low student motivation in Japan.

Part 2: Items 11 – 21: What Are the Attitudes of Japanese Students Towards Their English Language Studies?

Part 2 of the questionnaire sought to identify students' attitudes towards various aspects of their English language studies. Table 6.2 below gives an overview of the results for the ELICOS questionnaire items 11 – 21.

Table 6.2

ELICOS Frequencies for Attitudes

Items 11-21	S	D	A	SA
11. I do not think it is important for Japanese people to study English.	10	2	0	0
12. I think students would have tried harder to improve their speaking and listening ability if these skills were tested in the university entrance exams.	2	1	3	6

13. I think that oral communication should be tested in the university entrance examinations.	1	0	<u>9</u>	<u>2</u>
14. I think that the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language is how to speak and understand it.	1	2	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
15. I think the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language is how to read and write it.	2	<u>6</u>	3	1
16. I was very happy with the English course I studied at school.	<u>7</u>	5	0	0
17. English was my favourite subject.	2	1	<u>6</u>	3
18. I think there should have been more speaking and listening activities in my English classes at school.	1	0	1	<u>10</u>
19. I think that most of my English teachers tried to make our classes interesting.	<u>8</u>	2	2	0
20. Most of my English teachers spoke to us in English during our classes.	<u>11</u>	1	0	0
21. I think the textbooks we used in our English classes were boring.	2	2	<u>4</u>	4

As can be seen from the results reported in Table 6.2, a number of conclusions can be drawn in regard to the students' attitudes towards their English language studies. In response to item 11, the majority of students revealed that they believed it is important for Japanese people to study English. For item 12, most participants agreed that students would have tried harder to improve their speaking and listening ability if these skills had been tested in the university entrance examinations. For item 13, 11 out of the 12 participants agreed with the proposal that oral communication should be tested in these examinations. This result is reinforced by the participants' response to item 14 in which the majority of participants agreed that speaking and listening were the most important things to learn when studying a foreign language. Following on from this, most participants disagreed with item 15 which stated that learning how to read and write a foreign language was the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language.

All of the participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed with item 16. This reveals that all of them were not happy with the English course they studied at school.

Ironically, for item 17 most participants indicated that English had been their favourite subject. This result is not surprising considering that this sample of students had all elected to continue studying English after they had finished high school. Ten of the 12 participants strongly agreed with item 18, indicating that they felt there should have been more speaking and listening activities in their English classes at school. The high importance that these students placed on developing communicative skills in English is reflected in their responses to items 13, 14, 15 and 18.

Similar to the results for item 10, the participants' response to item 19 reinforces the idea that they did not find their English classes at school to be interesting. Furthermore, they did not think that their English teachers tried to make their classes stimulating. For item 20, all of the participants indicated that their English teachers at school did not speak English during their classes. This indicates that students were given few opportunities to have spoken English modelled for them by their teachers. It also would have had repercussions for the development of their aural comprehension skills.

The majority of participants agreed with item 21. This meant that most of them thought the textbooks that they used in their English classes were boring. Based on the results of this part of the questionnaire, it would appear that when the ELICOS students were high school students in Japan, they had a positive attitude towards studying English, possibly due to their intrinsic interest in the subject. Although they wanted to study English, they were dissatisfied with their English courses, their teachers, and the textbooks that were used. This result is a cause for concern. As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter

2, research has shown that “the teachers” and “the textbooks” are the most influential contributors to fostering positive attitudes amongst students towards their foreign language experience (Chambers, 1999). Further studies are needed in Japan to ascertain if student dissatisfaction with courses, teachers and textbooks is widespread.

From the results of this study, it is evident that the ELICOS participants believed that it was important to develop oral communication skills in English. However, during the interview process it was revealed that for many of these students, their high school classes focused on developing their knowledge of grammar and translation skills. Some students were denied access to Oral Communication courses in their final two years of schooling because greater priority was given to preparing them to pass the university entrance examinations. It would seem that if the majority of Japanese high school students are interested in developing their oral communication skills in English, the teachers may need to use more spoken English in classes, and the school courses and exams may need to provide for the development and assessment of these skills. Failure to address these needs is likely to result in continued dissatisfaction and low motivation amongst students to study English.

Part 3: Items 22 – 36: What Do Japanese Students Want to Study in Their English Classes?

This section of the questionnaire investigated students’ preferences for what they liked to study in their English classes at school. Table 6.3 provides an overview of the results from items 22 – 36 of the ELICOS questionnaire. Non-participation in each of the activities is also reported in the far right column. This is reported as the number of students out of 12 who had not tried a particular activity.

Table 6.3

ELICOS Frequencies for What Students Like to Study

Items 22-36	S	D	A	S A	Non-P
22. I liked studying grammatical rules.	4	<u>3</u>	4	1	0/12
23. I liked doing translations.	3	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	3	0/12
24. I liked speaking in English.	1	<u>7</u>	2	2	0/12
25. I liked reading in English.	3	<u>4</u>	4	1	0/12
26. I liked writing in English.	3	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	1	0/12
27. I liked learning new English words and expressions.	1	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	1	0/12
28. I liked doing listening activities.	3	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	1	0/12
29. I liked studying English conversation.	0	5	<u>5</u>	2	3/12
30. I liked to practise writing exam answers.	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	0	0	0/12
31. I liked talking to classmates in English.	4	<u>5</u>	2	1	7/12
32. I liked the teacher asking us what we wanted to study in our English classes.	0	4	<u>4</u>	4	6/12
33. I liked learning about the culture and customs of English speaking countries	0	2	<u>5</u>	5	6/12
34. I liked learning English for travel purposes.	0	3	<u>6</u>	3	6/12
35. I liked classes which focussed on speaking and listening.	1	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	2	6/12
36. I liked classes which focussed on grammar and translation.	3	<u>5</u>	2	2	0/12

The results for item 22 indicate that most students did not like studying grammatical rules when they were high school students. The group's responses for item 23 were evenly split over all four response categories. Therefore it is difficult to make any conclusions about these students' attitudes towards doing translations. The majority of the ELICOS participants indicated for item 24 that they had not liked speaking in English at school, but seven out of twelve students indicated that they liked studying English conversation, as reported for item 29. For some of the other items the group was

evenly divided between liking and not liking the stated activities. This was the case for item numbers 26, 27, and 28, which corresponded with the activities of writing, learning new vocabulary, and doing listening activities.

Item 30 however, “I liked to practise writing exam answers” produced a definitive result, which was clearly negative. All 12 students indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. In considering the preoccupation that exists amongst Japanese senior high school teachers to prepare students for the university entrance examinations, this result is significant. As indicated in the literature review, students’ motivation to study a foreign language is affected by what they do in the classroom. If teachers feel pressure to focus on preparing students for the entrance examinations, and this is largely done by practising exam answers, then based on the results of this study, this practice is likely to have a negative effect on students’ attitudes towards studying English and on their motivation.

For item 31, the results were also negative, with most participants revealing that they did not like talking to classmates in English. It should be noted that more than half of the participants also indicated that they had never actually experienced doing this. Possible explanations for this result could be that the students felt that their classmates’ ability to speak English was poor, and they wouldn’t learn anything from engaging in such an activity. Alternatively, they may have felt embarrassed about speaking in English to classmates, but still wanted to learn English conversation so that they could communicate with English speakers. They may have been given very few opportunities to speak to their classmates in English, so felt uneasy about doing such an activity. Alternatively it might have been because they were not given the opportunity to practise

speaking to their peers in an informal and non-threatening environment and so they hadn't enjoyed such an activity. Here again, short answer responses would have been very useful to assist a better understanding of "why" students responded in this way to this particular item.

Most participants gave favourable responses to item 32, "I liked the teacher asking us what we wanted to study". However, only half of the students had actually been asked by their teachers what they wanted to study. This result could indicate that Japanese students may respond well to needs analyses being conducted in classes.

Items 33 and 34 were both favourably evaluated by the majority of participants. This suggests that most of these students liked learning about the culture and customs of English speaking countries, and learning English for travel purposes. However, only half of the students had actually studied these things at school.

Although for item 35 "I liked classes which focussed on speaking and listening", the result is inconclusive, item 36, "I liked classes which focussed on grammar and translation" resulted in an overall negative result. For item 35 it should be noted that half of the participants indicated that they had never had classes which focussed on speaking and listening.

As mentioned previously, one of the weaknesses of this particular research instrument has been that it is difficult to determine what the participants had in mind as they evaluated each item. They may have based their responses on what they would have

liked to study or alternatively, they may have evaluated the activities according to how they perceived them being conducted at school.

As Table 6.3 indicates, the popular activities had not actually been experienced by half of the participants. One of the participants' most liked activities, as described in item 33, was learning about the culture and customs of English speaking countries, but only half of the students had actually done that at school. This is the same case for item 34, learning English for travel purposes, and item 32, teachers asking students what they would like to study in their English classes. These results indicate that for half of the participants, they were not actually given the opportunity to do those things that they indicated they would like to have done in their English classes. Such a result has implications for students' satisfaction with the English courses they studied at school.

Part 4: Items 37 – 50: How Do Japanese High School Students Like to Study English?

This section of the questionnaire investigated students' preferences for how they liked to study in their English classes at school. Table 6.4 below provides an overview of the results for items 37 – 50. As in Part 3, this section of the questionnaire also provided students with the opportunity to indicate if they had not actually experienced the stated activities. Non-participation is reported in the far right column. This is reported as the number of students out of 12 who had not tried a particular activity.

Table 6.4**ELICOS Frequencies for How Students Want to Study English**

Items 37-50	S	D	A	S A	Non-P
37. I liked to practise speaking in English by doing activities in pairs or small groups.	2	2	4	4	10/12
38. I liked to have a native English speaker teach our oral communication classes.	0	3	1	8	7/12
39. I liked to study English by listening to English songs.	0	3	7	2	5/12
40. I liked to study English by watching movies or TV programmes.	1	2	6	3	5/12
41. I liked to study English by using computers.	2	4	5	1	9/12
42. I liked writing in English to students in foreign countries by using the Internet.	2	2	5	3	12/12
43. I liked studying English from textbooks.	3	6	3	0	0/12
44. I liked doing role-plays in class as a way of practising to speak in English.	1	4	6	1	10/12
45. I liked playing games and having contests or quizzes in my English classes.	1	1	6	4	9/12
46. I liked listening to my teachers telling us about overseas travel experiences.	0	5	5	2	9/12
47. I liked listening to my teacher speaking in English.	3	3	5	1	5/12
48. I liked to study English by rote-learning.	4	4	1	3	0/12
49. I liked working in small groups in my English class.	0	2	6	4	8/12
50. I liked working in pairs in my English class.	1	3	5	3	10/12

It is evident from Table 6.4 that many of the popular activities had not actually been experienced by more than half of the participants when they were high school students. If this is at all representative, the results suggest that the English courses in Japanese high schools may be failing to satisfy the needs and interests of many of the students.

For items 37, 49 and 50 most of the ELICOS participants indicated that they liked or would have liked to practise speaking in English at school by doing activities in pairs or small groups and that they liked working in pairs and small groups. These results differ from the way the high school students responded to these items. Perhaps this difference has arisen because the ELICOS students have had more experience of learning English in a communicative environment such as at the ELICOS Centre where they were studying. Ten of the 12 ELICOS participants indicated that they had not actually practised speaking in pairs or small groups during their English classes at school. Ten of the 12 students had never worked in pairs during their English classes at school and eight out of 12 students had never worked in small groups at school. This was possibly also the case for the high school students, and therefore many of them may have had little experience of working in pairs or small groups in their English classes. Just as the results of other studies have found (Widdows & Vollers, 1991; Hyland, 1993; and Miller, 1995), it may be suggested that the ELICOS students' response to items 37, 49 and 50 indicates that Japanese students may respond favourably to being more actively involved in classes as opposed to being passive recipients of information. As noted by Miller (1995), given the necessary guidance, Japanese students may be more willing to participate actively in their English language classes. Given that it is likely that Japanese high school students may have little experience of being involved in such activities, it would be worthwhile to investigate how they respond to the introduction of such activities in their English classes at school.

With regard to item 38, the majority of participants reported that they wanted a native speaker teacher to teach their Oral Communication classes, and yet for more than half of them, this had not been possible. Activities such as playing games and doing quizzes,

listening to English songs and watching movies were also popular. None of the participants had experienced using email to write to students in foreign countries, but the majority of students indicated that they would have liked to have had the opportunity to do so. In regard to item 41, the participants were evenly divided between liking and not liking to study English through the use of computers, but it should also be noted that nine of the 12 students had never actually experienced studying English by using computers at school.

Practising speaking by doing role-plays was also identified as being an activity that most participants wanted to do, although once again, 10 out of the 12 participants indicated that they had never been given the opportunity to practise speaking English through doing such an activity at school. The majority of students also enjoyed listening to their teachers talking about their overseas travel experiences. The two activities which all of the participants had experienced doing at school were rote-learning and studying from textbooks. The participants indicated that they had not liked either of these activities. Nor did they like listening to their English teachers speaking in English (item 47). Clarification of the participants' responses to item 47 was sought during the interviews. Their explanations of why they felt this way about their Japanese English teachers speaking in English are reported at the end of Chapter 7.

The results from Part 4 of the questionnaire reveal that many of the participants would have liked to participate in a number of activities, however they never had the opportunity to do so. They had an interest in learning oral communication skills from native speaker teachers, and at the same time they did not rate the experience of listening to their Japanese teachers speaking in English very highly. These results confirm those

obtained from the high school questionnaire that Japanese students are dissatisfied with their teachers and the textbooks they use at school. They were also dissatisfied with what they were learning and how they practised English in class. The university entrance exam system that promotes the need for students to memorise grammatical rules and vocabulary in preference to developing students' oral communication skills, clearly has a negative wash back effect. Overall, the results of this component of the study indicate that EFL education in Japanese high schools may be failing to satisfy students' needs and preferences.

The Extended Answer Section

Five of the twelve ELICOS participants elected to answer this optional section of the questionnaire. Four of these five participants wrote comments that criticised the way English is taught in Japanese high schools. The participants who answered this section also made suggestions on how they thought the EFL Program in Japanese schools could be improved. This means that the some of the data that is reported here is particularly relevant to the study's fifth research question: What do students think can be done to improve EFL education in Japanese high schools? The main points raised by each participant are described below.

MEGUMI

Megumi criticised the Japanese English teachers for having poor knowledge of the English language and English speaking countries and their cultures. She reported that this is why "their lessons are boring" She also added that she would have liked to "study about culture, tradition and history of English areas."

SHINTARO

This participant was highly critical of the way English is taught in high schools in Japan. He claimed that teachers in Japan are using “wrong methodology”. He suggested that the school curriculum should include more listening practice so that students can “get used to speak the language, like babies do.” He added that “Japanese university students can’t speak English even though they’ve been studying English for many years.” He also criticised his high school’s English Curriculum. He said it was focussed on grammar and translation, which he described as “useless”.

MASA

Masa’s view was similar to Shintaro’s. He, too, complained about the fact that most of his high school English classes were focussed on developing the skill of translation. He advocated a more practical approach to teaching English in schools in Japan. Classes were described as being too large (40 students), and “...teacher is doing one-way talking. It is so boring.” He suggested that smaller class sizes would help to improve the situation, and that teachers should make their lessons “more fun and enjoyable”. He blames poor student motivation and “no enthusiasm in English classes in Japan” on the way English is being taught. Masa was in favour of teachers using a topic-based approach to their lessons. He also suggested that if students could use the Internet and have more contact with overseas people they would feel more motivated to study English.

HIROMI

Hiromi stated that she would have liked to have had more opportunities to study English with a native speaker teacher when she was a high school student. In her case, she only

had two lessons a month with an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) from an English speaking country. She suggested that Japanese teachers should teach grammar, translation, and writing, but speaking and listening lessons should be taught by a native speaker teacher in the schools.

RYOKO

This participant said that she would have liked to have had the opportunity to go on an overseas trip with her high school English class but she had never had the opportunity to do so. She suggested that a program of overseas school trips and student exchange programs would have a motivational influence on students.

Conclusion

The ELICOS Questionnaire and the data from the extended answers section reveal the opinions of a sample of students who had graduated from Japanese high schools. The responses are an indication of what this sample of participants thought about various aspects of EFL education in Japanese high schools. This included the courses they studied at school, their teachers, the textbooks, and the university entrance examinations. The participants' various motivational orientations have been identified, as well as their attitudes towards studying English. It has also been possible to identify their needs in regard to what they liked to study and how they would have preferred to study English at school. The data reveals that the students were largely dissatisfied with their teachers and English courses. The comments that were made in the extended answer section of the questionnaires also provide insight into what these students believe could be done to improve EFL education in schools.

Although the difference in sample sizes restricts any statistical comparison between the high school questionnaire data and the ELICOS data, a number of similar trends are apparent in their responses. However, one noticeable difference between the samples was that the ELICOS students responded more favourably than the high school students with regard to participating in pair work and group work in their English classes. This is likely to have been due to their recent and greater exposure to more student-centred and communicative classroom activities.

CHAPTER 7

THE ELICOS INTERVIEWS

Introduction

The ELICOS interviews allowed follow up of some of the themes that emerged from the questionnaire data. Data from the interviews has greatly assisted the study's research aims. In particular, this component of the study has provided data which helps to validate and extend the information gathered from the questionnaires. It has also provided data that facilitates the formulation of possible solutions to the study's fifth and final research aim; i.e. to identify what students think can be done to improve EFL education in Japanese high schools.

The interview data provides insight into why students felt the way they did, and describes the school situation from the point of view of these participants. They are an abundant source of qualitative information about how a sample of Japanese ELICOS students view the English language studies they completed at high school. The data reported here includes the participants' main criticisms of EFL education in Japanese schools as well as their suggestions on what kind of changes they think should be made in order to improve it. Many of their concerns are the same as those that were identified in the literature review in Chapter 2. Additionally, most of the participants made suggestions on how they thought the problem of poor communicative ability amongst many Japanese students of English could be remedied within the school system.

Finally, additional related topics of interest which arose during the course of the interviews are reported at the conclusion of this chapter. Please note that in reporting the interview data, pseudonyms have been used for the purpose of preserving the anonymity of the participants. The following is a description of the data that was collected through the process of interviewing the 12 ELICOS participants.

The Interview Data

The interview data is presented below according to the order of the questions contained in the interview schedule. On many occasions, this report utilises direct quotations of the participants' responses to the interview questions. In some instances, the speakers have made errors in their speech. These have not been corrected, but rather have been reported verbatim, as they reflect the nature of the participants' current English language proficiency.

1) How Is English Taught In High Schools In Japan?

The participants reported having had between four to eight English classes per week while they were studying at senior high school, and the average number of different English teachers they had during one week was three. Class sizes ranged from 38 – 50 students, with 40 students being the most common reported class size. More than half of the students had experienced having an ALT from a foreign country teach some of their English classes (See Appendix 5 for background information on each participant). This is indicative of the spread of the Japanese Education Ministry's JET Program initiative since its inception in 1987. Not surprisingly, three participants who had graduated from high school prior to 1993 reported that they had never experienced English classes with a foreign teacher at school. It follows that these students had also never studied one of the

new Oral Communication courses as these were introduced under the *Monbusho* 'Guidelines' which were set down in 1994. However, it also should be noted that two of the participants who graduated in 1996 and 1997 respectively, had never experienced having an ALT teach any of their English classes, despite the fact that the JET Program had been in place for almost a decade by that time. This indicates that even as recently as the last five years, it cannot be presumed that all high school students in Japan have experienced being taught Oral Communication by a native speaker ALT.

It would seem that some schools gave a low priority to the Oral Communication courses. The three most recently graduated participants, (2000 and 2001), reported that they had not been given the opportunity to study an Oral Communication course during their final two years of senior high school. In the case of one student, this was because he was in a special Science Program which meant that he had to give up studying an Oral Communication English course in order to accommodate extra Science classes into his timetable. In the case of another student, who reported that he had attended a very high academic level school, his school had not offered the Oral Communication courses in the final two years of his schooling. This was because students at the school were being prepared for very high level university entrance examinations and this exam preparation was given priority over the Oral Communication courses. The situation was the same for the third student. He had studied one of the Oral Communication courses during his first year of senior high school, but the courses had not been available for him to study in his final two years of school.

The schools mentioned in the above cases are operating within the *Monbusho* 'Guidelines'. However, if such low priority for the Oral Communication courses is widespread amongst high schools in Japan it is clear that it will be a long time before the

stated aims of the new courses (i.e. to improve students' communicative ability in English) are realised.

The majority of the students said that the English syllabus at their schools had focused on Grammar, Reading, Writing, Translation, and Exam Preparation.

When asked the question "What did you do in a typical English class when you were a high school student?" students replied with answers such as: "textbook exercises", "teachers talked and we listened", "teachers translating to us, and they explain in Japanese", "just one-way teaching", "reading, grammar, translation" and "checked homework answers".

The participants were unanimous in stating that their Japanese English teachers (JTEs) had mostly spoken in Japanese during their English classes. One student said that his Japanese English teachers had "never" spoken in English during classes: "...just reading a text, so we don't have a good model." Other students supported this comment, saying that the only time their teachers had used English in their classes was when they were reading aloud from a textbook.

2) Did You Like Studying English At High School?

None of the participants appeared to be satisfied with the English classes they had experienced at school. When asked the question, "Did you like studying English at high school?" the majority of students answered "No". When asked why this was the case, the participants either blamed their teachers or cited the fact that they thought the classes weren't interesting. Even when participants indicated that they had liked English as a subject, they still were critical of either the teachers or what they had been taught. The

following is a summary of the comments made by each of the participants in response to Question 2 in the interview. Their comments facilitate an understanding of why many students revealed negative attitudes towards their English language studies when responding to the questionnaire items.

MASA: “ I like English, but some teachers weren’t good. I’m interested in English, so I like.”

MAKI: “ I liked. Because I like translating from English to Japanese.”

SHINTARO: “Yes, but less than in junior high school. But it was too busy to study English (in high school).”

AKIKO: “I liked English, but didn’t like how it was studied - always grammar, grammar, grammar.”

HIROMI: “Just reading class, but I didn’t like grammar.”

MEGUMI: “No. Because I hated my English teacher. He was poor at teaching English. Classes weren’t interesting. Most of the teachers couldn’t speak English.”

KYOKO: “No. Too much homework and the classes were boring. Very competitive.”

AKEMI: “I didn’t like studying English so much. Because our teachers couldn’t teach well and we used to do same things. (Translate English into Japanese for each sentences and teacher checked.) And our teachers didn’t speak English well.”

HARU : “No, because I loved Science.”

RYOKO: “I didn’t like English because when I was a junior high school student, I wasn’t very good at grammar, so I lost my direction at that time. So, I didn’t really interested in English.”

NAOYUKI: “No. I didn’t like studying any subject.”

YASU: “I liked English, because I was good at getting a good mark in the test, and it felt nice. But just I disliked to learn the vocabulary by heart – it’s boring, not interesting.”

3) Have You Ever Been Taught By An ALT Native Speaker Teacher? If Yes, What Did You Think About His / Her Classes?

There were mixed reactions from the participants to this question. On the one hand, all of the participants who reported that they had never been taught by a native speaker ALT teacher at high school regarded the prospect of such classes favourably.

Conversely, five out of seven participants who had experienced being taught by a native speaker teacher at their school made negative comments in regard to these classes. These participants indicated that some students in their English classes might have been dissatisfied with the ALT’s English classes because the students’ communicative skills were too poor to cope with the demands of such a class. Their speaking and listening skills had not been sufficiently developed to cope with the communicative nature of the classes. If this scenario is common, it would have implications for the success of the JET Program. The participants’ responses to this question about ALT native speaker English teachers and their views on the effectiveness of the JET Program are reported below.

Firstly, positive views are presented, and then those that were negative.

Megumi had never experienced being taught by a native speaker teacher in her English classes at school, however, she stated that she thought the idea “is very good”.

Similarly, Kyoko had never been taught by a native speaker teacher but her attitude was also very positive. She said “It’s a good chance for students that they interest in another country and culture. It’s very useful.” Masa’s comments also reflected Kyoko’s view. He had never been taught by an ALT at school but was enthusiastic about having the chance to speak English with a native speaker. His comments were “Yes. Because I didn’t talk to another countries’ people when I stayed in Japan.”

Three other students who had been taught by an ALT spoke positively about their experiences with these teachers. For example, although Haru had only experienced being taught by an ALT in his first year of high school, he said that he had enjoyed the classes. He later said in the interview that he wished all of his English teachers could have been native speakers. Similarly, Hiromi was very positive in her response. She said : “Yes, that’s very good. ALT is “real English” so it’s interesting.” She added that in her case, she had only had Oral Communication classes with an ALT twice a month, and she pointed out that more frequent Oral Communication classes with a native speaker teacher were needed. According to Hiromi:

If we have many Oral English classes it is very helpful for students, but just twice a month or once a week it is not enough for students.

Another student, Akiko, was positive in her response to this question, but also mentioned the problem of shyness and the unfamiliarity of speaking in English that many Japanese high school students are reported to experience in their Oral Communication classes. In Akiko’s words:

I liked the games we played in the ALT's classes. I felt shy to speak because I didn't know how to.... I learned, but I couldn't speak.

One of the students, Naoyuki, who had attended a very high level academic school, said that he thought the ALTs assigned to his school were very "unlucky" because as he described it, "ALT teacher cannot have a chance to have a class in my high school." In his first year of high school he had experienced having an ALT's class once every two weeks. In his final two years at school he did not have the opportunity to study an Oral Communication course because second and third year students at his school were not offered these courses as they had to prepare for the university entrance examinations. It should be noted that Naoyuki was not actually negative in his attitude towards the native speaker teachers. On the contrary, he was critical of the fact that students' were insufficiently prepared to cope with the communicative nature of an ALT's classes. He also reported that many of the students were too shy to fully participate or enjoy the classes. "Students didn't like ALT's classes because they were too shy." They (the students) can only fill in the blanks. They cannot speak." " They (the students) only knew the techniques for the exam, but this is different to English knowledge."

When asked what he thought about the JET Program and whether or not it was helping to improve students' English ability, Naoyuki answered that he thought the JET Program was working, but that his school was a special case.

Two other participants' comments reflected Naoyuki's concerns about his classmates being unable to cope with the communicative demands of the native speakers' classes. Maki, for example, describes why she didn't like the ALT's classes at school:

When a native speaker teacher came my class, every students got tense. Because we almost didn't study listening English.

Maki also added that she found the ALT's speaking classes to be "very boring, because it's not for the exam." This comment is indicative of the influence of the system of university entrance examinations in Japanese classrooms for students who would seem to be instrumentally motivated. It also shows how the content of the university entrance exams can have a negative wash back effect on students' attitudes towards studying Oral Communication courses at school.

Another participant, Akemi, explained her experience in the ALT's classes as follows:

The foreign teachers tried to make classes fun but still students kept silent. I didn't want to see the ALT feel bad.

Akemi's description of how the students reacted to the ALT's classes is worthy of note. She had the impression that the ALT was embarrassed about the students' reluctance to participate in the classes, and she, as a student, felt embarrassed for the ALT. She later went on to say that she thought that the JET Program had merit, but that the Japanese high schools "don't know how to use this teacher effectively, so this Program doesn't work." She made the suggestion that native speaker teachers should be introduced from kindergarten so that Japanese students can get used to communicating with native speakers from a young age.

Another student, Shintaro, who also had experienced having a native speaker English teacher, was rather cynical in his appraisal of the school system and the effectiveness of

the JET Program. He said “It is just good to see the foreigners, but no other meaning.”
“Better to change the basic system of education.”

It would seem from the participants’ responses that visiting native speaker teachers may only have a limited effectiveness. For some students, the presence of a foreigner can be motivating. It gives them an opportunity to learn first hand about another country and culture and provides an opportunity for students to communicate in English. For other students, particularly those who are more instrumentally motivated, the fact that Oral Communication is not tested in the university entrance examinations means that they do not value these classes. Some participants felt that Japanese students were not only very reluctant to speak in English because of shyness, but many are also insufficiently prepared to cope with the communicative nature of the foreign teacher’s classes. It is possible that in such cases, this may lead to students viewing the ALT’s classes as being a negative experience.

4) Can You Remember the Best Thing You Liked About Your English Classes At High School?

One third of the participants were unable to remember anything that they had particularly enjoyed about their high school English classes. Two participants who were able to answer this question cited creative or fun class activities such as a Halloween Party, or making a children’s picture book in English as being the best thing they had done in their English classes. Another student recalled having received praise from the teacher for doing a homework task well. One of the common themes which surfaced in response to this question was the students’ interest in hearing about their teachers’ overseas travel experiences. As Kyoko said:

My teacher studied English in Australia. And he travelled another country. He told us his story. And he taught us many useful English expressions.... I want to know about other countries and culture.

Hiroshi, on the other hand, said that the best thing she had liked about her English classes was when a native speaker teacher taught her class. "They taught us about "life situations" so if we go to a shop, how to order and greetings." She said that she had enjoyed learning this kind of "useful" English.

5) What Kind Of Changes (if any) Should Be Made to EFL Education in Japanese High Schools?

The types of responses that participants made to this question can be categorised under six broad headings, namely:

- a) Class sizes
- b) Teacher training
- c) University entrance examination system
- d) Native speaker teachers
- e) Overseas school trips
- f) English class options

Class sizes

More than half of the participants cited class size as a problem that they thought the Education Ministry in Japan should address. Students suggested that class sizes for learning English should be in the order of between 10 to 30 people rather than the present average class size of 40 students.

Teacher training

More than half of the participants commented on the need for an improvement in teacher training of Japanese teachers of English. The participants criticised the Japanese English teachers for having poor ability in spoken English. A couple of participants suggested that more Japanese teachers should spend time studying overseas in order to become better English teachers. The following comments made by participants have implications for the training of English teachers in Japan:

MEGUMI: “A future teacher should study abroad.”

KYOKO: “Teachers should study more English conversation and another countries’ culture.”

MAKI: “Teachers should be able to speak English better.”

AKEMI: “Government should set strict standards that teachers have to get high scores on speaking and listening tests.”

MASA: “Teachers should have experience in overseas, because I heard their pronunciation, something terrible.... just they have knowledge.”

KYOKO: “Teachers to study more English conversation and another countries’ culture.”

YASU: “Change the teachers. They should speak English.”

The university entrance exam system

Eight of the twelve participants stated that they felt that high school English language education would benefit if changes were made to the system of university entrance examinations in Japan. Each of these eight students cited the content of the exams as being their major criticism. More specifically, most of the participants felt that the exams should include a listening and speaking component and that the emphasis on grammar and translation should be reduced. The participants' comments on this topic are summarised below.

Megumi said that she thought speaking and listening should be included in the exams because "I think listening and speaking are very important." Haru criticised the present exams because no speaking component is included, but he added that "...it is difficult to change (the system)". Naoyuki and Maki also stated very specifically that they thought the exam system should be changed and the exams should include a speaking and listening component. Yasu, too, supported this view, adding the comment "If they did so, we would study speaking and listening." This remark reflects the emphasis that schools give to grammar and translation in course content. It also reinforces an earlier observation made by one of the students in regard to how some students' perceive the Oral Communication classes, namely that they are a waste of time because communication skills are not tested in the university exams.

Shintaro said that the exams should "focus more on listening and reduce the reading and grammar component." Naoyuki also supported this idea of reducing the focus on grammar and reading. Akiko stated that the "tests were always on grammar and writing,....should test listening and speaking." Hiromi made the comment that the university examinations are "just grammar" ... "it's not useful for real foreign country.

Doesn't help you to communicate." She said that she felt that she had been forced to study a lot of very difficult grammar that was not actually necessary for being able to communicate effectively in English.

Native speaker teachers

Five of the participants said that they thought having more native speaker English teachers would help to improve the present system of English language teaching in high schools in Japan. Another student suggested that more team teaching with ALTs and JTEs would be an improvement to the current system.

Overseas school trips

Two participants suggested that if students were given the opportunity to participate in an overseas school trip, it would help to motivate the students to study English. For example, Hiromi gave an account of how she had travelled to the United States when she was a high school student and had stayed for one month as an exchange student. She said that when she returned to Japan she had felt very motivated to study English.

English class options

The notion of optional English classes was raised by two of the participants. Hiromi suggested that students be allowed to choose classes which focussed on English conversation if they wished, so that "those who don't want to speak are then separated from that group." Ryoko supported this idea, and said that she thought perhaps English should not be a compulsory subject for all students.

6) How Could High School English Teachers Make the Study of English More Interesting?

All of the participants had a number of things to say in response to this question. Their answers ranged from recommendations about how the course content should be changed, to suggestions on how teaching approaches and teaching materials could be improved. One student said it was the teachers themselves who needed to adapt. Some of the participants remained pessimistic about the possibility of teachers making classes more interesting as long as the present system of university entrance examinations exists. The following is a description of the participants' responses to this question.

Megumi suggested that students should be allowed to study about overseas culture and traditions. She had not studied these things when she was a high school student, but said that she would have been interested to study them. Kyoko agreed with Megumi's comments. She noted however, that during her time at school, classes were "too busy" preparing for the examinations to study such things.

This perspective of the demands that the current exam system places on teachers and students was reiterated in the responses made by Maki and Shintaro. Maki identified the problem as being a result of the constraints of the exam system. She said that there was "no time to have interesting classes". Her perspective on the students' views on their English classes is noteworthy. She said "Some students study English for entering university only, so they don't care if the class is interesting or not." Shintaro was also sceptical about the possibility of teachers making English classes interesting for students whilst the present system of university examinations exists. In response to the question he said "Impossible. Way of studying is influenced by the exam system."

Masa suggested one way to make the English classes more interesting would be for teachers to “get students involved more in the classes”. Yasu said that “Teachers should speak English and they should let us speak English.” He also added that he thought it would be a good idea to have foreign exchange students visit Japanese high schools. Another student who mentioned student involvement was Hiromi. She said that she would have liked teachers to use more group work in her English classes, adding that the students would feel less embarrassed to speak in small groups than in front of the whole class.

On the topic of teaching materials, several students offered suggestions on how they could be improved. Ryoko suggested that teachers should use materials that are interesting for the students, including the use of movies and songs. Naoyuki’s comments also reflected this idea saying that teachers should introduce foreign culture to the classes through the use of movies and music. He also said that he thought that lessons without textbooks would be more interesting for students. He suggested that teachers should bring in other materials to their classes instead of just following the textbooks. Masa proposed that teachers should talk about overseas experiences during their English classes. He also said that teachers should introduce “real subjects” about world events, and include the use of articles from newspapers.

Akiko said that she would have liked to study more daily conversation at school. As she described it, “We can’t use the English which we studied.” This perspective of the English that is studied at high school as being “useless” is one which was also raised by many of the high school participants when they described their experience of studying at school in the extended answer section of the questionnaires.

Akemi said that “before teachers can make the study of English more interesting they need more skills, more training.” And finally, Haru described the Japanese teachers in a way that was not dissimilar to how the Japanese university students in Shimizu’s (1995) study described their Japanese English teachers. He said that the Japanese English teachers needed to “change personalities” and “become funnier.” “They are too serious.”

7) Should Oral Communication Skills Be Tested in the University Entrance Examinations?

Four of the twelve participants stated that oral communication skills should not be tested in the university entrance examinations as is the case at present. The four participants who answered “no” to this question qualified their answers in the following ways:

KYOKO: “No.” “Because I can’t listening and speaking.”

MAKI: “No.” “Students only study reading and grammar. So if this test is held students can’t do. It’s pointless.”

HARU: “No.” “In my case I didn’t study Oral Communication so I would have been disadvantaged.”

RYOKO: “No.” “Continuous testing throughout the term is better.”

From these answers it is apparent that three of the four respondents who answered negatively didn’t agree with the proposal of testing oral communication skills in the university entrance examinations because they lacked confidence in these skills. They felt that students such as themselves would not have been able to cope with producing these skills in an examination. It can be argued, however, that if the skills of speaking

and listening were to be tested in the university entrance examination system, the teachers would devote a greater proportion of time and effort to developing students' communicative skills. As reported in Chapters 4 and 6, item 13 in the questionnaire also sought the participants' opinion on this topic. The result for the high school participants was negative and for the ELICOS students it was positive. It may be possible that the majority of high school students responded negatively to this questionnaire item because they felt they lacked the necessary skills to cope with the demands of an exam that tests communicative competency.

The ELICOS participants' responses show that the majority of students felt that the benefits of testing oral communication skills in the university entrance examinations far outweighed any perceived drawbacks or difficulties. One of the participants who answered "yes" to this question qualified her response by saying that students' oral communication skills must be tested otherwise students will not take such lessons seriously. Her response is quoted below:

Oral Communication classes were considered as "rest time" or just to "kill time". The classes were not taken seriously because they were not in the exam. I think the school actually doesn't want that class, just focus on the exam.

Another two participants gave similar responses. When asked if she thought students would work harder to improve their communicative skills in English if they were tested, Megumi answered "Yes, I think so. I need the exam to motivate me." Akiko supported this view. Kyoko was asked if she thought that students would not place much importance on oral communication skills if they are not tested in the university examinations, and she answered "Yes. If I don't have a test, I don't study conversation.

Improved student motivation was a reason given by other participants. They said that students would study harder in the Oral Communication courses if these skills were tested in the university exams. Yasu also commented that focussing on developing students' communicative skills would make the study of English more enjoyable for the students. His comments are reported below:

Students would feel more motivated to study English more. It is more interesting for students to study speaking and listening rather than grammar and translation. At first it would be difficult for the students, but if they could communicate with foreign students it would be more exciting for them.

Kyoko said that her main motivation for studying English was the university entrance examinations, but she had also wanted to study "to learn to speak for travel, and to learn about other cultures."

Naoyuki pointed out that testing the communicative skills would lead to students working harder to improve these skills: "Japanese students think that being good at English is about passing exams and getting good scores. But they can't speak – so need to have speaking and listening in the exams."

As discussed in the literature review, the issue of whether or not the university entrance examinations in Japan should include a speaking and listening component is pivotal to the successful implementation of the Oral Communication courses and the attainment of the courses' stated aims. This is an issue that has been debated for at least thirty years in Japan, and yet in 2002, it remains unresolved. This topic is discussed further in Chapter 8 when the results of both the high school questionnaire and ELICOS data are considered together.

8) Are Your ELICOS Classes More Interesting Than the English Classes You Had at School?

The students were unanimous in their appraisal of their ELICOS classes in Australia as being more interesting than their high school English classes in Japan. The common reasons given for why they preferred their ELICOS classes were: a) the style of teaching, b) the teachers' personalities, c) the atmosphere of the classes, d) the small class sizes, and e) the fact that the classes were comprised of a mixture of nationalities.

Students such as Kyoko and Maki said that they appreciated the interactive nature of the ELICOS classes. For example, Kyoko described her experience as a high school student as follows:

In my high school days I couldn't say I didn't understand. And now I said I couldn't understand and the teacher explains a lot. In Japan, teacher speaks very fast and we couldn't say I don't understand, and the lesson is very fast.

As mentioned in the literature review, previous studies such as Hyland (1993) and Miller (1995) have found that Japanese students respond favourably to being actively involved in English classes. Maki's response to this question in the interview similarly reflects a preference for being involved in interactive classes. Her response is reported as follows:

It's more interesting than high school classes. And it has many speaking and listening English. And its atmosphere is quite different. In Japan, students hear only one-sided teacher's saying. And student almost don't speak English each other.

Masa said that he thought some of the teaching approaches and class activities he had participated in during his ELICOS classes could be used in schools in Japan. He said

that he particularly enjoyed participating in pair work and that this kind of activity could be used successfully in Japanese schools. He also stated a preference for teachers introducing topics about “real things”, and not just relying on textbooks as his Japanese teachers had done.

Haru’s observation about how he viewed his Australian and Japanese teachers was: “The teachers at ELICOS are funny and crazy. The JTEs just teach for the work.” A summary of the students’ answers to Question 8 are given below:

Megumi : Yes. “Teachers are funny, smaller classes, teachers are good at speaking English.”

Kyoko : Yes. “Atmosphere of the class and teachers.”

Masa : Yes. “Could talk to another country’s students.”

Maki : Yes. "Because teacher speaks English all classes. And classes interesting.”

Akemi : Yes. “I have chance to speak with other countries people.”

Shintaro : Yes. “Can’t compare them. So different. Students more “active” in ELICOS classes.”

Haru : Yes. “Everything. The teachers are good, funny...activities are interesting.”

Akiko : Yes. “We have to speak more.”

Hiromi : Yes. “There are many more conversation chances and discussions.”

Ryoko : Yes. “I can talk to the people around me so it is very useful for me.”

Naoyuki : Yes. “Because my class has a lot of foreign students and talking to them is very nice.”

Yasu : Yes. “I have to concentrate more because teacher always speaks English. I have a lot of opportunity to speak, so it is very interesting.”

9) What Are the Main Reasons for Why You Are Studying English ?

The most common answer given by participants to this question was that they were studying English for personal development and travel purposes. Slightly less than half of the participants also stated that studying English would help them improve their employment prospects in Japan. Three students reported that they hoped to further their tertiary studies at a foreign university. A selection of some of the participants’ comments are reported below:

MEGUMI: “I want to speak more foreign countries’ people, and I want to know another countries’ culture, but we didn’t learn at school.”

KYOKO: “I would like to make a friend with other countries’ people. And I like travelling, so if I go somewhere, if I can speak English, I could communicate everybody.”

MASA: “I think I need English in my future. I want to talk to many kinds of nationalities’ people.”

MAKI : “I am interested in studying (at a) foreign university.”

10) What Needs to be Done in Order to Improve Japanese High School Students' Communicative Ability in English?

Many Japanese students have been heard to say: "Japanese people study English for six years at school but they still can't speak it!" This question was asked so that the participants could have the opportunity to make suggestions on how they thought Japanese students' communicative ability in English could be improved. They answered that before any improvement could be achieved, the following changes would be needed: a) the course content for English language education in schools must be changed, b) more native speaker teachers are needed to teach Oral Communication classes, c) the university entrance examinations must include an oral skills component, and d) the Japanese English teachers must improve their communicative language skills.

The comments that the participants made in response to question 10 in the interview contain a number of interesting insights into the present system of English teaching in high schools in Japan. This is especially true in terms of the focus of course content and pedagogical methods used by Japanese English teachers. The participants' responses are reported as follows:

MAKI: "Firstly, English classes' content is unfair. Speaking, listening, reading, writing should be held in the same amount in class."

MASA: "At first I want to organise teachers. Teachers must have experience overseas. In their class time, if students talk each other by Japanese, it's not good for English class. Also, teachers make students not interested. Students need a chance to talk to foreigner, foreign countries' people."

- MEGUMI: “I think many lessons. I think we need to do lessons about listening and speaking. Because in Japan we have never listening and speaking.”
- KYOKO: “My friend goes to an English language conversation school in Japan because she wants to learn to speak English. She thought that school study is for university entrance exam, and language school is for English conversation.”
- AKEMI: “If we have Oral Communication class, this class doesn’t work, so our speaking skills don’t improve.”
- HARU: “More teachers from foreign countries and focus on all skills equally.”
- HIROMI: “We study just the grammar and writing...” “We don’t have chance for speaking and hearing, so we need more of that. These days, English class is for to enter university, but I think English class is for having communication with foreign countries’ people. We don’t need to study such high level grammar.”
- RYOKO: “If you worry about grammatical mistakes too much, you can’t talk.”
- NAOYUKI: “Change entrance examinations, and classes should be smaller. High school English should be taught like at an English conversation school.”
- AKIKO: “Students should do more speaking at school. The JTEs should speak more English in classes and there should be more ALTs.”
- YASU: “Make changes. We need native speaker English teachers and we need speaking and listening classes. This is a problem of school or *Monbusho*. But I also think students have a problem – students have a lot of problems. They are too shy to speak English. That is Japanese character. They are shy to speak unless they have confidence. It’s a big problem. Teachers shouldn’t point out their mistakes. They should admire and motivate them.”

Almost all of the participants felt that improvement in Japanese students' communicative ability could be achieved if changes were made to the present system. The 12 ELICOS students had all studied within the Japanese school system and have an understanding and appreciation of the 'classroom culture' of Japanese schools. They have also experienced studying English in a foreign country with teachers who are likely to have been using teaching approaches that are more communicative in nature as compared to what these students experienced in their high school English classes. With their background and experience, the ELICOS participants are useful informants. It is likely that their suggestions have validity within the context of EFL education in Japanese schools.

Other Issues

English Conversation Schools

Three of the participants raised the issue of English conversation schools during their interview session. Two of the students said that they had attended an English conversation school in the evenings when they were high school students. A third participant cited the example of her friend who had attended such classes.

These students said that the reason for why they had gone to an English conversation school was because they had wanted to learn how to speak and understand English and they were not given the opportunity to do this at school. Kyoko reported her friend as saying "school study is for university entrance exam and language school is for English conversation." The popularity of English conversation schools in Japan confirms that many Japanese students are interested in developing their ability to speak English.

Clarification of the Responses to Item 47 in the Questionnaire

During the interview sessions the opportunity arose to examine some of the students' views about their response to item 47 in the questionnaire: "I liked listening to my teachers speaking in English." As the results in the previous chapter show, students were evenly divided between agreeing and disagreeing with this statement. When questioned about their responses to this item, some of the students answered that they had given a negative response because they felt that their JTEs' English speaking ability was either very poor, or the teachers had "never" used English in their classes. As reflected in the participants' responses to Question 1 (f) in the interview schedule, many of them were very critical of their Japanese teachers' English speaking skills and that was why the results for this item were not as positive as may have been expected.

Conclusion

The information collected from the participants during the interviews reveals what these students thought of their English language studies at high school. It has also helped to clarify why participants may have answered a particular way in response to some questionnaire items. The interviews have provided a lot of data which includes suggestions provided by the participants on how the system of English language teaching in Japanese high schools could be improved. It would seem that these participants were particularly concerned with the need to change the content of the university entrance examinations, so that course content may be changed to incorporate a stronger focus on developing students' speaking and listening skills. The ELICOS participants also stressed the importance of improving teaching practices and materials, and for Japanese English teachers to be suitably trained and skilled in oral communication.

The following chapter takes up some of the problematic issues that have been identified in this study. Based on the information gathered, conclusions are drawn about the main sources of student dissatisfaction. Recommendations are put forward as to how English language education in Japanese high schools could be improved so that it may meet the challenge of moving closer towards satisfying students' needs and preferences.

CHAPTER 8

KEY FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate Japanese students' perceptions of the system of EFL education in high schools in Japan. In order to do this, information about Japanese high school students' needs and their attitudes towards their English language studies was gathered. The study is underpinned by the belief that students' views are important and may inform teaching practice and syllabus design. This final chapter will review the key findings of the study and discuss the implications of these findings for EFL education in Japanese high schools. It will then discuss some of the issues that have emerged from the methodological design of the study. Finally it will consider areas for further research, particularly of the kind that could inform and encourage innovation in EFL teaching practice and syllabus design in Japanese high schools.

Key Findings

The aim of the present study was to gather and analyse information that would provide some understanding of Japanese students' perspectives on the English language studies they undertake at senior high school. In particular, it sought to identify students' needs and their attitudes. The study has shown that the majority of Japanese students seem dissatisfied with the EFL education they receive at high school. However, it should also be noted that with some aspects of their English language studies, the views of academic school students differed from those that were held by vocational school students. This

highlights the need for further studies and future educational reforms to take such differences into consideration.

The study revealed that Japanese high school students are likely to have a mixture of motivational orientations towards their English language studies. To some extent the university entrance examinations and the possibility of enhanced employment prospects may motivate students to study, but these are not likely to be the only reasons for why students want to study English. Students' responses suggest that they may also have personal or integrative motivational orientations.

One strong pattern to emerge was that the majority of Japanese high school students expressed negative attitudes towards their English language studies. This was particularly so for the vocational school students. The vocational school students indicated that the only reason they were studying English was because it was compulsory.

Many of the students considered that their teachers did not make enough effort to make their English classes interesting. The qualitative components of the study confirmed this finding from the questionnaire data. In both the extended answer section and in the interviews, many participants said that they found their English classes to be very dull and boring. In addition, many participants indicated that they were dissatisfied with the system that emphasises exam preparation and the memorisation of grammar points that are not "useful". The data collected in this study also suggests that Japanese students may be disenchanted with the traditional teaching approaches used by their English teachers.

The students indicated in the questionnaires, the extended answer section, and in the interviews that they believed the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language is how to speak and understand it. Related to this was the desire they expressed to have more speaking and listening activities in their English classes. Learning “useful” and “practical” English was another preference expressed by the students. The results also show that having the opportunity to interact with English speaking peers from overseas would be motivating for these students. The participants in this study also indicated that they either like or would like to have a native English speaker teach their oral communication classes. However, as the interview data reveals, students would benefit more from such lessons if they were to be given sufficient opportunities to become accustomed to listening to and speaking in English.

Based on the data obtained from the study, it would appear that many students would like teaching materials and textbooks to be more interesting and relevant to their needs and interests. The study shows that Japanese high school students have a similar tendency to that of overseas teenagers who have participated in needs analysis studies. Like their overseas counterparts, Japanese high school students also appear to like being “entertained” when they study English. They tend to favour the use of television, movies and songs as a means of studying English. They would also like to play games and do quizzes in class and listen to their teachers talk about their overseas travel experiences.

This study has confirmed the results of previous studies that found Japanese students to respond favourably to communicative teaching approaches and being actively involved in class activities. Although the high school participants may not have had much experience of student-centred learning, the ELICOS participants in the study gave a unanimously favourable appraisal of their classes in Australia. They considered them to

be far more interesting and enjoyable than their high school English classes. They also said that they believed Japanese high school students would respond well to using pair work and group work in English language classes.

Finally, a number of strategies were proposed by the students for how EFL education in Japan could be improved. These included such things as: changing the content of the English courses to include a greater focus on oral communication skills; having more native speaker teachers in schools to teach oral communication courses; changing the university entrance examinations to include an aural-oral skills component; and improving teacher training for Japanese teachers, particularly with regard to improving teachers' communicative language skills.

Implications of These Findings for EFL Education Reform and Pedagogy

Based on the results of this study it could be suggested that if the communicative aims of the *Monbusho* 'Course of Study Guidelines for English' could actually be put into practice, then it is possible that Japanese high school students may feel more satisfied with their English language studies. However, to actually meet the students' needs of improving their oral communication skills in English, additional changes may be needed within the system of English language teaching in schools. For example, this study reveals that many students may not actually be given the opportunity to study any oral courses after Year 10 because their schools may elect to have limited timetables for these courses. One possible solution would be for *Monbusho* to consider making the oral courses compulsory for the three senior high school years. Another solution might be the introduction of a more integrated skills approach to the study of English. It remains, however, that the success of such changes would still largely be dependent on how well

teachers could teach these courses and whether or not the universities changed their exams to include an aural-oral skills component.

Therefore, based on the literature that has been discussed, and the findings of this study, a number of strategies need to be put in place in order to create an environment conducive for successful EFL education in Japanese high schools. These include:

- i) Changing the university entrance exam system so that the development of oral communication skills is emphasised,
- ii) Giving students the opportunity to study an oral communication course during Years 10, 11 and 12 at senior high school,
- iii) Having a native English speaker, when possible, teach oral communication courses,
- iv) Giving students the opportunity to interact with overseas English speaking peers,
- v) Improving teacher training and, in particular, preparing teachers to be competent users of English and competent users of a variety of teaching approaches,
- vi) Promoting a more integrated skills approach, and methods of EFL teaching that are communicative and student-centred through in-service teacher training and the use of thorough documentation such as curriculum support material.

This study reveals that although positive steps have been taken in the form of the development of policy documents and ‘Course of Study Guidelines’ devised by *Monbusho*, the reality of classroom practice is very different. A consequence of this is that many students feel dissatisfied with what and how they are studying English. Such findings indicate that a new approach to change is needed if future reforms are going to be introduced successfully. Understanding students’ needs provides a useful starting

point for effective reform of EFL education in Japan, both in terms of teaching practices and syllabus design.

Methodological Issues

The main advantages and limitations of the methodology used in this study were outlined in Chapter 3. The fact that an attempt was made to have a sample population of Japanese high school students that included what may be considered a realistic mix of academic and vocational high school students has strengthened the study. This approach has meant that it has been possible to compare the student responses from different types of high schools. This aspect provides an advantage over similar studies that have been conducted in Japan amongst high school students.

This study used a multi-method approach to data collection, combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. It also used participants representing both current and past high school students. By interviewing the ELICOS students, a further dimension was added to the study's data. These participants acted as informants who had experienced both the Japanese high school system of English language study and a more communicative approach to language teaching in their ELICOS classes in Australia. Their comments on possible reforms of the EFL education system in Japanese schools may be considered particularly insightful as they have had the benefit of a wider range of learning experiences than the high school participants. However, the size of the two sample populations, particularly the ELICOS sample is a principal limitation of this study. Another possible limitation is the use of original and therefore untested

instruments.⁹ This section will discuss some of the methodological issues that have emerged from this study. The discussion will focus on the advantages of using a multiple approach to data collection and the possible disadvantages of using research instruments that are original in their design as opposed to being well tried and tested.

Although a number of researchers have carried out student attitude surveys about the study of English, both earlier and recent studies conducted in Japan have tended to employ a single approach to data collection. In almost every case this has been a quantitative approach. In most studies, questionnaires have used a Likert Scale to record participants' responses. Although some of the well-known studies which have been conducted in Japan have had the advantage of being large-scale, or longitudinal studies, it would appear that qualitative collection has either not been used or has only been used in a restricted way. As noted by Cohen and Manion (1994) reliance on a single method of data collection may bias or distort the researcher's understanding of the situation being investigated, so it can be suggested that there is some danger in relying on such an approach.

The present study has confirmed the advantages of using multiple approaches to data collection. The qualitative components of the study have produced an abundance of rich data. This data is valuable not only in its own right, but it has also facilitated the interpretation and confirmation of the quantitative data.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the questionnaire that was used in this study with both the high school students and the ELICOS students was original in its design, as opposed to

⁹ The questionnaires were trialled in a pilot study involving 70 Japanese high school students and consequently modified.

being a widely used research instrument such as the BALLI. Being original in design meant that it could be designed to collect data related to the study's core research questions. However, the inherent danger of using an original instrument may be that the validity of the data collected may be questionable.

Firstly, as has been demonstrated in this study, Part 3 of the questionnaire may in fact not have been measuring what it was supposed to measure. (i.e. it collected data about what students like to study as opposed to what students want to study.) In hindsight, the statements in Part 3 of the questionnaire should have begun with the generic term "I want to study..." instead of "I like to study" if in fact this part of the questionnaire was going to gather information about students' needs as opposed to their preferences. Additionally, a short answer section which could allow students to say "why" they had such views in response to the items in Parts 3 and 4 of the questionnaire would also have been informative.

As previously noted, another possible problem that can occur when using a new instrument is that participants may interpret items in a way which is different from the researcher's original intentions. For example, in Part 3 of the questionnaire, students may have responded to items 22 – 36 according to how much they presently enjoyed studying these things. Many students may have disagreed with the above items because they do not like the way they are currently being taught these skills. For example, for item 29 in the questionnaire, "I like studying English conversation" the median score category for the high school students was 2.00 which indicates that students tended to disagree with this statement. However, the data collected from the qualitative sources of the study would appear contrary to this finding, as many students indicated that they would like more opportunities to study English conversation in their English classes.

This discrepancy in findings between the results of the questionnaire and the extended answer responses confirms that this section of the questionnaire could have been improved if a short answer section allowed students the opportunity to say “why” they were responding as they did. As noted by Bell (1993, p.9): “Surveys can provide answers to the questions What? Where? When? How?, but it is not so easy to find out Why?.” Causal relationships cannot usually be proved by survey instruments such as questionnaires. For this reason, it is useful for a study to combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection, as has been the case for the present study.

Secondly, as noted by Wellington (2000, p.30) any discussion of validity depends on “how the characteristic being measured is *defined*”. In the case of the present study, the intention of the questionnaire was to collect information about students’ views regarding motivation, attitudes and their needs and preferences in regard to their English language studies. Hence the validity of this instrument depends on how well the terms have been defined, and as Wellington (2000) concludes, many educational terms are extremely problematic.

In addition, it is difficult to assess the external validity of this study. Being a new instrument, it is unclear to what degree the results of this questionnaire can be generalised to other high school students in different regions of Japan. Further studies with larger sample sizes involving students from all over Japan are therefore required.

Finally, the reliability of the questionnaire can only be tested by replication of this study by different researchers. Attempts were made to maximise the instrument’s reliability by conducting a pilot study and having the instrument translated into Japanese by a

Japanese native speaker. However, as noted by Le Compte and Priessle (1984), it may be impossible for researchers studying the social world to achieve total reliability.

Furthermore, it could be said that the data collected from this study 'may not endure'. It may provide information that gives some insight into what Japanese students think about their high school English language studies in the Year 2002. However, if successful reforms are implemented into the system in future years, as is hoped, these findings may become archival in nature.

Areas in Need of Further Investigation

Although this study has provided data that may prove helpful in assisting a better understanding of Japanese students' perceptions of EFL education in high schools in Japan, the work has also raised questions and highlighted areas that need further investigation. For example, a better understanding of how classroom practices might affect students' attitudes and motivation might be particularly important in the Japanese context. Some studies in Japan have identified that Japanese high school students may have negative attitudes towards their English language studies, but have not been able to identify causal factors (for example: Day & Iida, 1988; Koike, Matsuyama, Igarashi & Suzuki, 1990; Kosciielecki, 1994).

Other studies such as Hyland (1993) have investigated Japanese students' learning style preferences, but this study for example, does not provide answers about how pedagogy may influence students' motivation. Studies such as Widdows and Vollers (1991) and Shimizu (1995) found that Japanese university students had negative attitudes towards the traditional teaching methods used by their teachers, but further studies are needed to

survey the attitudes of high school students in this regard. Additionally, building on from the present study, larger scale studies may be needed to determine whether or not dissatisfaction with courses, teachers and textbooks is widespread amongst high school students in Japan.

As teachers and teaching methods have a key role to play in influencing students' attitudes (Chambers, 1999), it would seem imperative that further research in this area be conducted to determine which methods and practices appeal to Japanese high school students. A better understanding of how teachers, teaching approaches, materials used in class, and course content can affect Japanese high school students' motivation to study English may be useful to help overcome the problem of low student motivation in Japan.

The present study found that many of the high school students indicated that they did not like group work or pair work or speaking in English with their classmates. The ELICOS students, however, indicated that they liked working in pairs or small groups in their English classes. Studies that investigate Japanese high school students' attitudes towards communicative teaching methods could be useful in furthering an understanding of students' preferences. Alternatively, studies are needed to investigate students' possible changing attitudes over the course of time when communicative practices are introduced into English language classes.

Further studies that investigate Japanese high school teachers' attitudes such as the study by Browne and Wada (1998) may also provide useful input for future reforms of EFL education in Japan. It would be of particular interest to examine their views on communicative language teaching and the aims of the *Monbusho* 'Course of Study Guidelines for English'.

The key focus of the present study, high school students' needs and attitudes towards their English language studies, also requires much further investigation. Studies such as Orikasa (1989) and the present study have identified that Japanese high school students may be particularly interested in developing their speaking and listening skills. It would also be of interest to investigate if students' attitudes towards their English language studies improve if the courses they study come closer to satisfying their needs.

Finally, there is a need to develop new instruments and alternative approaches to research in this field so that a greater understanding of how to satisfy students' needs and improve their attitudes towards their language studies may be achieved.

Conclusion

This investigation of Japanese students' needs and attitudes towards EFL education in Japanese high schools has highlighted that many students in Japan are dissatisfied with the present system of English language teaching in schools. This dissatisfaction has affected their attitudes towards their English language studies, and this in turn, seems to have had a negative effect on their motivation. It is likely that teaching practices and course content have affected students' attitudes towards their English studies. The wash back effect of the university entrance exams also appears to be very strong. It is apparent that a great deal of reform is required in EFL education in Japanese schools. By considering students' needs and interests, more appropriate classroom practices, curricular and syllabus designs may be developed.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE for JAPANESE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Age : _____

Male / Female (Please circle)

Please circle which of the following Oral Communication courses you are studying : a) Oral Communication A
b) Oral Communication B c) Oral Communication C

Dear Student,

Thank you very much for assisting me with my research. This questionnaire is designed to identify your preferences in studying English at high school. The answers you give will remain confidential. Your participation in this study will help me to have a better understanding of how Japanese high school students feel about studying English.

Please consider all of the English classes which you have during the week when answering.

Below are 50 statements about studying English. Please read each statement and decide if you :

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) agree (4) strongly agree

PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBER WHICH BEST REFLECTS YOUR OPINION FOR EACH STATEMENT.

PART 1

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
1. The only reason I am studying English is because it is a compulsory subject.	1	2	3	4
2. After I finish high school I will not use English.	1	2	3	4
3. I am not interested in learning how to speak English. I just want to learn those things which will help me pass my university entrance examination.	1	2	3	4
4. In addition to the university entrance examinations, there are other reasons why I want to study English.	1	2	3	4
5. I want to study English because I hope to travel overseas and visit English speaking countries one day.	1	2	3	4
6. I want to study English because I would like to have friends from English speaking countries.	1	2	3	4
7. I want to study English because I am interested in knowing about different cultures.	1	2	3	4
8. I want to study English because I think it will improve my job prospects.	1	2	3	4
9. I would feel more motivated to study English if I had contact with overseas students my age.	1	2	3	4
10. I would feel more motivated to study English if my classes were more interesting.	1	2	3	4

PART 2

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree
11. I do not think it is important for Japanese people to study English.	1	2	3	4
12. I think students would try harder to improve their speaking and listening ability if these skills were tested in the university entrance exams.	1	2	3	4
13. I think that Oral Communication should be tested in the university entrance examinations.	1	2	3	4
14. I think that the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language is how to speak and understand it.	1	2	3	4
15. I think the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language is how to read and write it.	1	2	3	4
16. I am very happy with the English course I study at school.	1	2	3	4
17. English is my favourite subject.	1	2	3	4
13. I think there should be more speaking and listening activities in my English classes.	1	2	3	4
19. I think that most of my English teachers try to make our classes interesting.	1	2	3	4
20. Most of my English teachers speak to us in English during our classes.	1	2	3	4
21. I think the textbooks we use in our English classes are boring.	1	2	3	4

In **PART 3**, I would like to know what you like to study in your English classes. Please circle the numbers which best reflect your opinions. **Please Note:** Where necessary, please mark the { } with an X if you have not experienced a particular activity in your English classes. **PLEASE STILL CIRCLE A NUMBER** indicating your opinion about each activity, even if you have not experienced doing it.

Example A: Yoko would really like to learn English for travel purposes, but she has never actually done this before in her English classes. Her response to (Qu 34) would look like this : 1 2 3 4 { X }

Example B: Toshi is really not interested in learning about the culture and customs of English speaking countries even though he has never actually done this in his English classes.

His response to (Qu. 33) would look like this : 1 2 3 4 { X }

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	
PART 3						
22. I like studying grammatical rules.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
23. I like doing translations.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
24. I like speaking in English.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
25. I like reading in English.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
26. I like writing in English.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
27. I like learning new English words and expressions.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
28. I like doing listening activities.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
29. I like studying English conversation.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
30. I like to practise writing exam answers.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
31. I like talking to classmates in English.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
32. I like the teacher asking us what we would like to study in our English classes.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
33. I like learning about the culture and customs of English speaking countries.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
34. I like learning English for travel purposes.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
35. I like classes which focus on speaking and listening.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
36. I like classes which focus on grammar and translation.	1	2	3	4	{ }	

APPENDIX 2

アンケート（日本人高校生 :Japanese High School Students）

年齢：_____歳

男 / 女（○をして下さい）

あなたが、勉強しているオーラルコミュニケーションクラスに、○をしてください。

a) オーラルコミュニケーション A b) オーラルコミュニケーション B c) オーラルコミュニケーション C

生徒の皆様へ

この調査にご協力頂きありがとうございます。このアンケートは、学校でどのように英語を勉強したいか調査するものです。答えて頂いた回答は、秘密厳守になっています。この研究への皆さんの参加は、日本人高校生が英語学習についてどのように考えているかを調査者により理解させるためのものです。下記の項目に回答をお願いします。

回答をする際、普段うけているすべての英語の授業について考えて、回答してください。

下記に英語学習についての50項目の質問があります。各質問を読んで、あなたの意見を一番反映していると思われるものを（1）～（4）の中で選んで、○をしてください。

（1）全然そう思わない （2）そう思わない （3）そう思う （4）大変そう思う

PART 1

	全然 そう思わない			大変 そう思う
1. 英語を勉強している唯一の理由は必修科目だからである。	1	2	3	4
2. 高校卒業後は英語を使わないだろう。	1	2	3	4
3. 英語を話すことを習うのは興味がない。大学入試に合格するために習いたいだけである。	1	2	3	4
4. 大学入試に加えて、英語を勉強したい理由は他ににある。	1	2	3	4
5. 英語を勉強したい理由はいつか外国に旅行したり、英語圏へ訪れたいからである。	1	2	3	4
6. 英語を勉強したいのは英語圏の友達をつくりたいからである。	1	2	3	4
7. 英語を勉強したいのは違った文化について興味があるからである。	1	2	3	4
8. 英語を勉強したいのは仕事の面で有利になると思うからである。	1	2	3	4
9. もし、海外にいる同年齢の学生とコンタクトをとれるならもっと英語を勉強する気になるだろう。	1	2	3	4
10. もし、英語の授業がおもしろかったらもっと英語を勉強する気になるだろう。	1	2	3	4

PART 2

	全然 そう思わない			大変 そう思う
11. 日本人にとって英語を勉強することは重要とは思わない。	1	2	3	4
12. もし、大学入試にスピーキングとリスニングのテストがあったらそれらをもっと上達させようとするだろう。	1	2	3	4

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|--|---|---|---|---|
| 13. 大学入試にスピーキングのテストがあるべきであると思う。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. 外国語を勉強するのに最も重要なことは話し方と理解の仕方を習うこと
あると思う。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. 外国語を勉強するのに最も重要なことは読んだり書いたりする方法を習う
ことであると思う。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. 学校での英語の授業にとっても満足している。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. 英語は好きな科目である。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. 英語の授業でもっとスピーキングとリスニングをとりいれるべきで
あると思う。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. 英語の先生達は授業を興味のあるものにしようと試みていると思う。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. ほとんどの英語の先生達は、授業中、私達に英語で話しかけている。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. 英語の授業で使っている教科書はつまらないと思う。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

In PART 3

英語の授業でどのように勉強したいか知りたいと思います。あなたの意見を一番反映していると思う番号に○をしてください。

注意: 下記の項目 (Part 3) について、もし、今までしたことがなくても項目に答え、○をしてください。その際、今までに経験がない場合は、{ } に X を記入してください。

例 A: ようこは旅行のための英語をとっても学びたいのだが、英語の授業では一度もそれを習ったことがない。

彼女の答えは、次のようであろう。

1 2 3 ④ {X}

例 B: としは英語圏の文化や習慣に全く興味がないし、英語の授業でも一度もそれを習ったことがない。

彼の答えは、次のようであろう。

① 2 3 4 {X}

PART 3

- | | 全然
そう思わない | | 大変
そう思う | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|---|------------|---|-----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 22. 文法を勉強するのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 23. 訳すことが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 24. 英語を話すのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 25. 英語を読むのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 26. 英語を書くのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 27. 新しい英語の単語や表現を習うのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 28. 英語のリスニングが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 29. 英会話の勉強をするのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 30. 英語でのライティングの試験のための勉強をするのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 31. クラスの友達と英語で話すのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |

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|--------------------------------|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 32. 英語の授業で何を勉強したいか先生に聞いてほしい。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 33. 英語圏の文化や習慣を習うことが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 34. 旅行のための英語を習うことが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 35. スピーキングやリスニングに集中した授業が好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 36. 文法や読解（翻訳）に集中した授業が好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |

In Part 4

英語の授業でどのように勉強したいか知りたいと思います。あなたの意見を一番反映していると思う番号に○をしてください。

注意: 下記の項目 (Part 4) について、もし、今までしたことがなくても項目に答え、○をしてください。その際、今までに経験がない場合は、{ } に X を記入してください。

例 A: としはとてもインターネットを使って外国の学生へ英語を書くことは好きであるが、英語の授業で一度もそのようなことをしたことがない。彼の答えは、次のようであろう。 1 2 3 ④ {X}

例 B: ようこは全くコンピューターを使って英語を勉強することは好きではないし、英語の授業で一度もそのようなことをしたことがない。彼女の答えは、次のようであろう。 ① 2 3 4 {X}

PART 4

- | | 全然
そう思わない | | 大変
そう思う | | |
|---|--------------|---|------------|---|-----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 37. 英語のスピーキングの練習を二人組みになってしたり、あるいは、小人数グループで練習するのは好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 38. 英語のスピーキング授業に英語圏の人が教えてくれるのは好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 39. 英語の歌を聴くことによって英語を勉強することことは好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 40. 映画やテレビ番組を見ることによって英語を勉強することことは好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 41. コンピューターを使って英語を勉強することことは好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 42. インターネットを使って外国の学生へ英語を書くことは好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 43. 教科書で英語を勉強するのは好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 44. ロールプレイで英語を話す練習を授業ですることは好きである。
例: 学生 A はお客さん役を演じ、学生 B はウェイトレス役を演じる。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 45. ゲームやコンテストをしたり、あるいはクイズを英語の授業でするのは好きである。先生の海外での経験（体験）談を聞くのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 46. 先生の海外での経験（体験）談を聞くのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 47. 先生が英語で話すのを聞くのは好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 48. 英語を暗記するのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 49. 英語の授業は小人数のグループでするのが好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 50. 英語の授業で二人組みになるのは好きである。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR JAPANESE ELICOS STUDENTS

Name : _____

Age : _____

Male / Female (Please circle)

Contact Phone Number : _____

How many more weeks will you continue to study at this ELICOS Centre ? _____

Dear Student,

Thank you very much for assisting me with my research. This questionnaire is designed to identify your preferences in studying English when you were a high school student in Japan. The answers you give will remain confidential. Your participation in this study will help me to have a better understanding of how Japanese high school students feel about studying English. Please consider all of the English classes which you had each week at school when answering.

Below are 50 statements about studying English. Please read each statement and decide if you :

1) strongly disagree 2) disagree (3) agree 4) strongly agree

PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBER WHICH BEST REFLECTS YOUR OPINION FOR EACH STATEMENT.

Please base your responses on your experience as a high school student in Japan.

PART 1

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	3	4
1. The only reason I studied English was because it was a compulsory subject.	1	2	3	3	4
2. I thought that after I finished high school I would not use English.	1	2	3	3	4
3. I was not interested in learning how to speak English. I just wanted to learn those things which would help me pass my university entrance examination.	1	2	3	3	4
4. In addition to the university entrance examinations, there were other reasons why I wanted to study English.	1	2	3	3	4
5. I wanted to study English because I hoped I would travel overseas and visit English speaking countries one day.	1	2	3	3	4
6. I wanted to study English because I wanted to have friends from English speaking countries.	1	2	3	3	4
7. I wanted to study English because I was interested in knowing about different cultures.	1	2	3	3	4

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 8. I wanted to study English because I thought it would improve my job prospects. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. I would have felt more motivated to study English if I had had contact with overseas students my age. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. I would have felt more motivated to study English if my classes had been more interesting. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

In PART 2 Please Note : Some of the following questions relate to your present attitudes as well those you held when you were at high school.

PART 2

- | | Strongly
Disagree | | | Strongly
Agree |
|--|----------------------|---|---|-------------------|
| 11. I do not think it is important for Japanese people to study English. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. I think students would have tried harder to improve their speaking and listening ability if these skills were tested in the university entrance exams. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. I think that oral communication should be tested in the university entrance examinations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. I think that the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language is how to speak and understand it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. I think the most important thing to learn when studying a foreign language is how to read and write it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. I was very happy with the English course I studied at school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. English was my favourite subject. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. I think there should have been more speaking and listening activities in my English classes at school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. I think that most of my English teachers tried to make our classes interesting. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. Most of my English teachers spoke to us in English during our classes. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. I think the textbooks we used in our English classes were boring. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

In **PART 3** I would like to know what you used to like to study in your English classes. Please circle the numbers which best reflect your opinions. Please Note : Even if you never actually tried some of these activities, I would still appreciate your opinion about them. Where necessary, please mark the { } with an X if you did not experience a particular activity in your English classes at high school.

Example A : Yoko really would have liked to learn English for travel purposes, but she never actually did this in her English classes at school. Her response to (Qu 34) would look like this: 1 2 3 4

Example B : Toshi was not really interested in learning about the culture and customs of English speaking countries even though he never actually did that in his English classes at school. His response to (Qu. 33) would look like this : 1 2 3 4 { X }

At high school :

PART 3	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	
22. I liked studying grammatical rules.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
23. I liked doing translations.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
24. I liked speaking in English.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
25. I liked reading in English.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
26. I liked writing in English.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
27. I liked learning new English words and expressions.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
28. I liked doing listening activities.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
29. I liked studying English conversation.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
30. I liked to practise writing exam answers.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
31. I liked talking to classmates in English.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
32. I liked the teacher asking us what we wanted to study in our English classes.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
33. I liked learning about the culture and customs of English speaking countries.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
34. I liked learning English for travel purposes.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
35. I liked classes which focussed on speaking and listening.	1	2	3	4	{ }	
36. I liked classes which focussed on grammar and translation.	1	2	3	4	{ }	

アンケート (Japanese ELICOS Students)

名前: _____

年齢: _____ 歳

男/女 (○をして下さい)

連絡先: _____

ELICOS であと何週勉強を続けますか? : _____ 週

あなたが、高校で勉強したオーラルコミュニケーションクラスに、○をしてください。

a) オーラルコミュニケーション A b) オーラルコミュニケーション B c) オーラルコミュニケーション C

生徒の皆様へ

この調査にご協力頂きありがとうございます。このアンケートは、高校でどのように英語を勉強したかったか調査するものです。答えて頂いた回答は、秘密厳守になっています。この研究への皆さんの参加は、日本人高校生が英語学習についてどのように考えているかを調査者により理解させるためのものです。下記の項目に回答をお願いします。

下記に英語学習についての 50 項目の質問があります。各質問を読んで、あなたの意見を一番反映していると思われるものを (1) ~ (4) の中で選んで、○をしてください。

(1) 全然そう思わない (2) そう思わない (3) そう思う (4) 大変そう思う

日本での高校時代の経験をもとに回答ください。

PART 1

	全然 そう思わない			大変 そう思う
1. 英語を勉強した唯一の理由は必修科目だったからである。	1	2	3	4
2. 高校卒業後は英語を使わないだろうと思った。	1	2	3	4
3. 英語を話すことを習うのは興味がなかった。大学入試に合格するために習いたいだけであった。	1	2	3	4
4. 大学入試に加えて、英語を勉強したかった理由は他にあった。	1	2	3	4
5. 英語を勉強したかった理由はいつか外国に旅行したり、英語圏へ訪れたかったからである。	1	2	3	4
6. 英語を勉強したかったのは英語圏の友達をつくりたかったからである。	1	2	3	4
7. 英語を勉強したかったのは違った文化について興味があったからである。	1	2	3	4
8. 英語を勉強したかったのは仕事の面で有利になると思ったからである。	1	2	3	4
9. もし、海外にいる同年齢の学生とコンタクトをとれていたならもっと英語を勉強する気になっていただろう。	1	2	3	4
10. もし、英語の授業がおもしろかったらもっと英語を勉強する気になっていただろう。	1	2	3	4

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In PART 2 注意: いくつかの質問は、現在思っていることについてですが、いくつかの質問は、高校時代に思っていたことについてです。

PART 2

	全然 そう思わない			大変 そう思う
11. 日本人にとって英語を勉強することは重要とは思わない。	1	2	3	4
12. もし、大学入試にスピーキングとリスニングのテストがあったらそれらをもっと上達させていたであろう。	1	2	3	4
13. 大学入試にスピーキングのテストがあるべきであったと思う。	1	2	3	4
14. 外国語を勉強するのに最も重要なことは話し方と理解の仕方を習うことあると思う。	1	2	3	4
15. 外国語を勉強するのに最も重要なことは読んだり書いたりする方法を習うことであると思う。	1	2	3	4
16. 学校での英語の授業にとっても満足していた。	1	2	3	4
17. 英語は好きな科目であった。	1	2	3	4
18. 英語の授業でもっとスピーキングとリスニングをとり入れるべきであったと思う。	1	2	3	4
19. 英語の先生達は授業を興味のあるものにしようと試みていたと思う。	1	2	3	4
20. ほとんどの英語の先生達は、授業中、私達に英語で話しかけていた。	1	2	3	4
21. 英語の授業で使っていた教科書はつまらなかったと思う。	1	2	3	4

In PART 3

英語の授業でどのように勉強していたか知りたいと思います。あなたの意見を一番反映していると思う番号に○をしてください。

注意: 下記の項目 (Part 3) について、もし、高校時代にしたことがなくても項目に答え、○をしてください。

その際、今までに経験がない場合は、{ } に X を記入してください。

例 A: ようこそは旅行のための英語をとっても学びたかったのだが、英語の授業では一度もそれを習ったことがなかった彼女の答えは、次のようであろう。

1 2 3 4 {X}

例 B: としは英語圏の文化や習慣に全く興味がなかったし、英語の授業でも一度もそれを習ったことがなかった彼の答えは、次のようであろう。

1 2 3 4 {X}

高校時代について:

PART 3

	全然 そう思わない			大変 そう思う	
22. 文法を勉強するのが好きであった。	1	2	3	4	{ }
23. 訳すことが好きであった。	1	2	3	4	{ }
24. 英語を話すのが好きであった。	1	2	3	4	{ }
25. 英語を読むのが好きであった。	1	2	3	4	{ }
26. 英語を書くのが好きであった。	1	2	3	4	{ }

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- | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 27. 新しい英語の単語や表現を習うのが好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 28. 英語のリスニングが好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 29. 英会話の勉強をするのが好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 30. 英語でのライティングの試験のための勉強をするのが好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 31. クラスの友達と英語で話すのが好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 32. 英語の授業で何を勉強したいか先生に聞いてほしかった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 33. 英語圏の文化や習慣を習うことが好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 34. 旅行のための英語を習うことが好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 35. スピーキングやリスニングに集中した授業が好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |
| 36. 文法や読解（翻訳）に集中した授業が好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | { } |

In Part 4

英語の授業でどのように勉強したかったか知りたいと思います。あなたの意見を一番反映していると思う番号に○をしてください。

注意：下記の項目（Part 4）について、もし、高校時代にしたことがなくても項目に答え、○をしてください。その際、今までに経験がない場合は、{ }にXを記入してください。

例A：としはとでもインターネットを使って外国の学生へ英語を書くことは好きであったが、英語の授業で一度もそのようなことをしたことがなかった。彼の答えは、次のようであろう。 1 2 3 ④ {X}

例B：ようこは全くコンピューターを使って英語を勉強することは好きではなかったし、英語の授業で一度もそのようなことをしたことがなかった。彼女の答えは、次のようであろう。 ① 2 3 4 {X}

高校時代について：

PART 4

- | | 全然
そう思わない | | | 大変
そう思う | | |
|---|--------------|---|---|------------|--|-----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | { } |
| 37. 英語のスピーキングの練習を二人組みになってしたり、あるいは、小人数グループで練習するのは好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | { } |
| 38. 英語のスピーキング授業に英語圏の人が教えてくれるのは好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | { } |
| 39. 英語の歌を聴くことによって英語を勉強することことは好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | { } |
| 40. 映画やテレビ番組を見ることによって英語を勉強することことは好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | { } |
| 41. コンピューターを使って英語を勉強することことは好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | { } |
| 42. インターネットを使って外国の学生へ英語を書くことは好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | { } |
| 43. 教科書で英語を勉強するのは好きであった。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | { } |
| 44. ロールプレイで英語を話す練習を授業ですることは好きであった。
例：学生Aはお客さん役を演じ、学生Bはウエイトレス役を演じる。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | { } |

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APPENDIX 5

Summarised background information for each of the twelve ELICOS interview participants.

High School Information

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Class Size</u>	<u>ALT Teacher</u>	<u>Year Completed</u>	<u>School Type</u>
RYOKO	40	No	1991	Academic
YASU	40	No	1992	Academic
MEGUMI	48	No	1992	Academic
AKIKO	40	Yes	1993	Academic
KYOKO	50	No	1996	Academic
HIROMI	40	Yes	1996	Vocational
MASA	40	No	1997	Academic
AKEMI	40	Yes	1998	Academic
MAKI	40	Yes	1999	Academic
SHINTARO	38	Yes	2000	Academic
NAOYUKI	40	Yes	2001	Academic
HARU	40	Yes	2001	Academic

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for ELICOS STUDENTS

1. Please explain to me how English is taught in high schools in Japan.

For example:

- a) How many classes are there a week ?
- b) How many teachers ?
- c) How many students in a class ?
- d) What does the syllabus focus on ?
- e) What kind of things did you do in a typical class ?
- f) Did your English teachers speak mostly in English or Japanese ?

2. Did you like studying English at high school ?

Why ?/ Why not ?

3. Did you ever have an ALT native speaker teacher ?

What did you think about his/her classes ?

Do you think the JET programme is helping to improve the students' English ability ?

Why? / Why not?

4. Can you remember the best thing you liked about your English classes at high school?

Can you tell me a little about that ?

5. Do you think the Education Ministry (Monbusho) should make changes in order to improve the English language programme in high schools ?

If yes, what kind of changes would make it better ? For example, do you have any comments in regard to class sizes, the University Entrance Exam system, the JET programme, or teacher training ?

6. How could high school teachers make the study of English more interesting ?

7. Is Oral Communication tested in the final year exams ? _____

Do you think it should be tested ? _____

Why?/ Why not ?

8. Are the kind of lessons you have at this ELICOS centre more interesting than the English classes you had at school ? _____

Please explain. a) What do you like/ not like about the ELICOS classes ?

b) How are they different from high school classes ?

9. What are the main reasons for why you are studying English ?

10. So many Japanese people have told me, “ I studied English for 6 years at school, but I still can’t speak it !” What needs to be done to overcome this problem ?
