

Seeking Effective Ways of Teaching English in Japan

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION

The purpose of this study is 1) to investigate the current status of English education in Japan, 2) to identify problematic factors that have affected Japan's English education system, and 3) to make recommendations in order for Japan's English education system to function more effectively. In doing so, the researcher interviewed five voluntary Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) and surveyed 71 voluntary high school students, asking their perceptions towards the current education system. The results show that student participants are not satisfied with the current English education system and that there are several more problematic factors newly identified such as students' attitudes towards speaking English and teachers' responsibilities in addition to what has been discussed by previous researchers. The results also reveal that the teacher and student

participants only agreed with each other that college entrance examination is helpful to students because it helps them improve their literal skills; they disagreed on the role of speaking skills of English in the curriculum, which needs to be resolved. In order to address the problems, three recommendations are provided regarding 1) the implementation of a new examination system, 2) the additional teacher training, and 3) the teaching method of traditional English classes.

Signature of Investigator _____ Date 4/17/2019

Chapter 1

RESEASRCH ISSUE

Introduction

Early in my studies at Millersville University, I was introduced to the use of language learning strategies in teaching English as a second language (TESOL). While taking TESOL courses as well as continuing to learn English as a language learner, my interest in English education system has increased. English learning as a second language is being considered more important in the globalized world. However, English teaching in Japan has been criticized for not functioning effectively.

My initial interest in English education system began during my first course as an international student when I took ESL (English as a Second Language) courses at Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC). During that time, I realized that what was taught in ESL classes was different from what was taught in English classes in Japan. Surprisingly, it seemed to me that those who were taking ESL courses became able to speak English better than those who studied English in Japan in much less amount of time. English education in Japan has been criticized for a long time in terms of its inefficiency; for instance, students in Japan are not capable of communicating with native speakers even after 6 years of English learning. My interest in English education system in Japan increased more when I started taking TESOL courses as a graduate student at Millersville University. As I continued to study, it made me think that there might be better ways of learning and teaching English in Japan.

I would like to explore further the topic of English education system in Japan as the capstone project for my Master of Arts in English program. I will research effective ways of

teaching English in Japan, as well as Japanese students and teachers' perceptions on English education system in my research paper. More specifically, I will investigate a current status of English education and factors that affect it.

While preparing for the study on Japanese teachers and students, I reviewed the background literature regarding the history of English education in Japan including what has been found out as problematic barriers in Japan. I am looking for the relationships between what has been discussed so far and what is newly discovered in my study to see whether what has been identified in literature is still applicable to real teaching situation so that I can move on to potentially effective ways of new teaching. Below in this literature review, I will address the history of English education in Japan, current English education system in Japan, and factors that might have affected English education in Japan.

1.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 History of English education in Japan

1.1.1 Pro English in the 19th century

When did Japan's English education system start? The evolution of it goes back to the 19th century. The Convention of Kanagawa in 1854 ended the isolation of Japan, allowing western cultures to come into Japan. In order to absorb more western culture and knowledge, more and more books were translated from English into Japanese. Meanwhile, Japan initiated studying English since they felt the necessity to learn English because of "Phaeton Incident" in 1808. "Phaeton Incident" is the incident that British Royal Navy ships preyed on Dutch shipping. Phaeton entered a harbor in Nagasaki, Japan to ambush a couple of Dutch trading ships that were expected to arrive shortly. After the incident, Japan started consider British as the threat and as the subject to be studied, and Japan's federal government ordered Japanese and Dutch interpreters to study English. Even though Japan started studying English, English was not introduced into the education system until 1872 (Hatta 1).

Japan launched a new political system when the society changed drastically and the education system became totally different as well. In 1872, a new English educational system was established. Yet, before the establishment, Arinori Mori, a Japanese statesman, diplomat, and founder of Japan's modern educational system, sent a letter to William D. Whitney, a professor at Yale University, asking to make English a national language. However, David Murray, an educator and government adviser, respected Japanese traditional culture and declined the request by saying, "Reserving national language means same as reserving national character" (Sasaki 5). Even though the political movement that attempted to abolish

Japanese and make English as a national language did not come true, there were a lot of English-as-a-national-language statements during 1874 to 1885.

In 1883, Yukichi Hukuzawa, who is regarded as one of the founders of modern Japan, mentioned, “British and the United States play biggest roles in trading field. Because of this, we need to learn English as a trading language in order to stand up in national trading market even if English is not Japan’s national language” (Sasaki 6). He also articulated, “Asian countries will need English more and more. Therefore, what we should do now, as one of Asian countries, is to learn English” (Sasaki 6). Around this time period, Japan relied heavily on Native speakers as teachers and lectures at college were done in English. One of the most famous examples is a farm school at Sapporo, Hokkaido that opened in 1876. They hired native speakers of teachers and had them teach all subjects in English there. Also, cram schools for English were established around this time period. Due to Christianity, one of the most famous ones is called Hepburn Cram School founded by James C. Hepburn who was a preacher. Since the teachers were also American, all classes there were taught in English.

To sum up, English education system around this time period is that all subject was taught in English, which was similar to, as we say, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). In other words, it was not the “Indirect Method” taught by non-native speakers, but the “Direct Method” taught by native speakers. With the “Direct Method”, native speakers of English taught all course and they started teaching from sounds with English conversation as a main goal, whereas with the “Indirect Method”, learners did not focus on phonetics and they were usually taught by non-native speakers.

1.1.2 Anti-English in the 20th Century

As a result of the national language educationism by Hirohumi Ito cabinet in 1885 and the establishment of the Empire of Japan in 1889, anti-English movement started to spread over the nation. This time period was also when the “Direct Method” was turning into the “Indirect Method” along with political incidents. One of the powerful figures who strongly advocated Japanese was Souseki Natsume, a novelist and a scholar of British literature who is considered the greatest writer in Japan. In 1911, he stated, “It cannot be helped that all study is done with English textbooks so far because there was no Japanese scholars. However, since the study is universal, it is possible to teach the knowledge through the language of Japanese if there is any Japanese scholar instead of using English textbook” (Sasaki 9). He also claimed, “Even if it is important to teach in English in some part, it would be still better off to be able to teach in Japanese in terms of academic diffusion” (Sasaki 9). Moreover, Natsume became the first Japanese who taught English literature class at Tokyo Imperial University. His class did not have a good reputation at first, but he became better soon due to his creativity. Saito regards that in this “Indirect Method” period, English lost its function as a medium of instruction and became a subject to be studied within a frame of the system (12). In other words, the age of ‘study with English’ and ‘study English’ became just ‘study English’, which, needless to say, lowered Japanese English proficiency. From 1916 in the name of an independence of education, citizens started to complain that English should be removed from Japanese education system because it is completely wrong that an independent country set a foreign language as a required course in school (Fujimaki 5). As Immigration Act of 1924 became a large trigger, Tsukuru Fujimura, a professor at Tokyo Imperial University, proposed English abolishment with his discourse “Urgent move of abolishing

English” in 1927. In general, they claimed that “Teaching foreign language as a required course is wrong in schools that expect Direct Method” and “English education is not necessary if you are not able to speak nor even write a letter after graduating from school”. Before the Pacific War (1938-1941), English education became less active and more and more people were against English use, not only because English was the language which the opponent country spoke, but also because citizens were required to work during the war. As a result, English was replaced with Japanese. Even English words which was already entrenched in Japanese society had to be replaced. For example, ‘curry rice’ and ‘perm’ were the targets for replacement. Consequently, English was not taught in school as before. Although English was not completely gotten rid of, it was barely active around this time period (Ogawa 59), although there are some who were focusing on teaching English in order to achieve their mission in Navy and Army (Horiuchi 69). One way or another, around the World War II period was a big transition when English diffusion completely stopped and disappeared from Japanese society.

Once World War II was over, Yukio Ozaki, a Japanese politician of liberal signature, claimed that Japanese was an incomplete language. He proposed that Japan should use a system of Roman letters or English, instead of Japanese letters, so as to make the national language simpler and make it function better. Since Japanese utilizes *Hiragana*, *Katakana*, and *Kanji*, it is so time consuming to master. Specifically, *Kanji* has thousands of characters and both *Hiragana* and *Katakana* have over 50 characters, whereas Roman letters, which still follow Japanese grammatical rule but use alphabets, will make it a lot easier. Since he thought that written words are only for recording what is uttered out of the mouth, it does not

have to be that complicated in the first place. Thus, he believed that Roman letters would work better than those three. Yet his plan did not happen.

10 years after the war, it was not abolishment of Japanese nor English as an official language but how English should be taught that people started to argue about. At that time, one of the teaching methods that caught people's attention was "Oral Approach" introduced by Charles C. Fries at Michigan University. It is based on structural linguistics and behavioral psychology, and it features "Pattern Practice" which requires learners to read basic sentences out loud and practice them with new vocabulary (Ogawa 59). For instance, a teacher gives a cue such as 'apple' to a sentence "I like books" and a learner modifies it to another sentence such as "I like apples". This approach became popular dramatically in the beginning of the 1960s' and spread all over the nation. However, the explosive popularity disappeared by the end of the 60s'. Although there was no clear factor behind it, "Oral Approach" was not taken over in Education field and faded away. In 1975, Wataru Hiraizumi, a politician and diplomat, argued that even though literally all citizens were required to have high English proficiency, the results were disappointing. He proposed an objective of English education, arguing "it seemed to be impossible that English is one of the required courses". He claimed, "It would be desirable if five percent of Japanese population have practical English proficiency. Realization of this objective means having six million of practical English speakers and it means a lot" (Sasaki 12). On the other hand, Shoichi Watanabe, an English scholar and one of Japan's foremost cultural critics, articulated that "the ability to read the original precisely" is the goal of language learning. Besides, he regarded it important to teach English in order to grow students' potential. In other words, their argument lasted over a year, focusing on which was more important, 'Practical English' or 'Educational English'. How to deal with practical

English and educational English is still debated today. The Argument between Hiraizumi and Watanabe was over 40 years ago, yet the focal point did not appear to be different from what it has been lately.

1.1.3 Summary

In the 19th century, with the “Phaeton Incident” as a big transition, Japan started to pay their attention towards English and made themselves immersed in English speaking circumstances. Hiring native speakers, schools in Japan, at that time, taught all subjects in English, which seemed to be pretty helpful in order to learn “Practical English”. English cram school became popular in this time period. Overall, this century promoted, so to speak, “Direct Method” which was taught by native speakers. At some point, some people believed that Japan’s national language should be replaced by English, which meant that citizens noticed the significance of English as much as current people do. However, at the end of the century, the establishment of Empire of Japan triggered the anti-English movement.

In the 20th century, continued from the end of the 19th century, more and more signs of anti-English were shown. The 20th century influenced English education system so much in negative way. ‘Direct Method’ was turning into ‘Indirect Method’, which lowered citizens’ English proficiency. Since they were proud of their nationality and national language, more people claimed that English should be abolished in school. Finally, because of the worldwide wars, English disappeared from Japan temporarily. After the wars, the need for English exploded and Japan initiated English education system. However, because of the unwanted outcomes from highly demanding education, Japan became frustrated with whether they should take “Practical English” or “Educational English”, which is a problem that still exists even now.

1.2 What is going on in Current English education

1.2.1 English as a Lingua Franca in the 21st century

English education in the 21st century has been influenced so much by one policy, which is “An Action Plan to Cultivate ‘Japanese with English Abilities’” introduced in 2003. The objective of this action plan was to require English abilities across the country. For example, “Students should be able to hold simple conversations about their daily lives” when graduating from middle school, “be able to discuss familiar everyday topics” when graduating from high school, and “should be able to use English in professional setting” when graduating from college were presented as goals of action plan at each stage (Tukawaki 11). This action plan was based on “Japan’s Goals in the 21st Century” presented in January, 2000. At a private social gathering, Keizo Obuchi, prime minister of Japan at that time, proposed, “Of course the Japanese language, our mother tongue, is the basis for perpetuating Japan’s culture and traditions... Nevertheless, knowledge of English as the international lingua franca equips one with a key skill for knowing and accessing the world.” (10). Japanese government indicated that not focusing on “speaking” and “listening” was a big failure of English education in Japan. In fact, Japan recorded the lowest scores of all Asian countries in the English proficiency test, TOEFL held in 1998.

Obuchi also proposed “English as an official language”. It was quite different this time from Japanese abolitionism and Kanji abolitionism, because it attempted to add English as an official language while keeping Japanese as the mother tongue. In short, a specific idea of “Japan’s Goals in the 21st Century” is “An Action Plan to Cultivate ‘Japanese with English Abilities’”, which functioned as a basis of English education in the 21st century. The idea of “Practical English”, which Hiraizumi proposed 40 years ago, was this time expected

nationwide. What the “Action Plan” requires is “Practical English that works”. In other words, “Practical English” is considered equivalent to “Being able to speak English”. In fact, “Communication Skills training” had been set as goals in the Government Curriculum Guidelines for middle and high school, as described below in the next section. With the revision of Curriculum Guidelines, Oral Communication Classes were added to the curriculum and students were expected to foster practical English proficiency.

It is JET program that has contributed to the development of Oral Communication Classes. JET program (The Japan Exchange and Training Programme) is a program which invites young native speakers to get involved with international businesses and foreign language teaching at different levels such as local governments, the Board of Education, and public and private schools. This program provides opportunities for Japanese to have conversations with native speakers so as to develop practical English. As of 2016, there were 4,000 to 5,000 native English speakers, or Assistant Language Teachers (ALT), sent all over Japan. Moreover, English was introduced in elementary schools. Implementation of “English Activities” were permitted in interdisciplinary classes since 2002. Moreover, in 2008, the government declared that English classes were set up as a required courses for 5th and 6th grades once a week since 2011 in order to facilitate “Practical English Learning” (Tanaka 6). Now, I would like to explain current objectives and contents of English education from elementary to high school, referring to the Government Course Guidelines.

1.2.2 Elementary School

Currently, in elementary school, English class as ‘international activities’ are held for 5th and 6th grades once a week. According to the Government Curriculum Guidelines by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), pupils are

expected to develop foundation of communication abilities, foster their positive attitudes for communication, and familiarize themselves with foreign language.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

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

As seen above, "Communication" has been used often in the overall objective. It is obvious from this that the government places emphasis on "speaking" and "listening". Since children are good at learning "speaking" and "listening" more than adults because of the Critical Period Hypothesis, the government has taken action to implement initial English education in elementary school in order to get students used to "sounds" and "rhythms" of English from early stage (Lightbrown & Spada 22). Also, they set a goal such as "fostering a positive attitude towards communication" because they have regretted their past English education system. As this is just an early stage of English learning, the course guidelines consider it important to touch on interesting aspects of English in teaching as well as sounds and rhythms. Therefore, Instructions should be given in order for pupils "to become familiar with the sounds and rhythms of the foreign language, to learn its differences from the Japanese language, and to be aware of the interesting aspects of language and its richness" (MEXT 1). As Uematsu reports that since an advantage is shown in English test scores for vocabulary and grammar, reading, and listening even though it did not reach a statistically significant

level, early English education in elementary school can exert an effect on fostering the foundation of communication skills in English (1).

1.2.3 Middle School

In middle school, there are four English classes a week throughout 7th to 9th grades. According to the Government Curriculum Guidelines, middle schoolers are expected to develop their basic communication abilities, deepen their understanding, and foster positive attitude for communication.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To develop students' basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, deepening their understanding of language and culture and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages (MEXT 1).

Continuing from elementary school, the government aims to facilitate positive attitudes towards English communications and basis of “Communication Abilities” in middle school. In addition to “speaking” and “listening”, “reading” and “writing” have come up as new skills to be studied in middle school. Students are required not only to be able to speak one's thoughts and feelings, but also able to write about thoughts and feelings in everyday situations in middle school. In addition, students are expected to “become familiar with the basic characteristics of English sounds such as stress, intonation and pauses and pronounce/listen to English sounds correctly” (MEXT 1). Unlike elementary school that expect students to just touch on interesting aspects of English, middle school expects students to be aware of the characteristics of English.

Language activity use in middle school is considered different from elementary school. “Language activities should be conducted in such a way as grammar is effectively utilized for communication...”, which means that grammar is supposed to be lectured effectively for communication in order to facilitate communication as scaffolding (MEXT 7). Both the letters and the corresponding pronunciation should be taken up when instructing spelling so as to develop all four skills (MEXT 7). Moreover, it needs to be taken into consideration that teachers should rather focus on practical use of grammatical items than just explain grammatical terms or usages (MEXT 7). Apparently, English education in middle school plays an imperative role since it is expected to function as the bridge between elementary and high school. It needs to not only continue fostering students’ positive attitudes towards English communication from elementary school, but also develop literal skills for later education.

1.2.4 High School

English classes are divided into two parts in high school: ‘Communication English Classes’ and ‘Grammar English Classes’. Schools require students to take both although the government only requires them to take ‘Communication classes’ in 10th grades and the rest are considered elective. Therefore, the amount of time depends on the school. In general, three or four ‘communication courses’ and two ‘Grammar courses’ are expected a week. According to the Government Curriculum Guidelines, high school students are expected to develop communication abilities, deepening their understanding of English, and fostering positive attitudes for communications.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To develop students' communication abilities such as accurately understanding and appropriately conveying information, ideas, etc., deepening their understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages (MEXT 1).

Forming the foundation of students' communication abilities is expected in elementary school and developing students' basic communication abilities in middle school. Now, the word "basis" is gone and developing students' communication abilities is the overall objective in high school. High school is aiming for full-fledged master of English communication, applying what they have learnt in the past.

What is interesting is that they state "different varieties of English are used to communicate around the world" (MEXT 1). It can be seen that Japan's English education considers English as a Lingua Franca. Japan is trying to acquire English communication skills as a Lingua Franca so that they can communicate with other countries through English worldwide, which matches what was said in "Japan's Goals in the 21st Century" in 2000. Plus, the Curriculum Guidelines anticipate teachers in high school not to focus on grammatical items but on English communication. Grammar is supposed to play a supportive role in Japan's English education in the 21st century. Overall, hands-on communication skills should be brushed up through practice in high school, and that is how the government aims to achieve "Japanese with English abilities".

1.2.5 Summary

As demonstrated by the Government Course Guidelines, in elementary, middle, and high schools, Japan's English education system has been placing so much emphasis on "Practical English Conversation". They try to let students used to "sound" aspect of English to form the foundation of English communication abilities. Not only "speaking" and "listening", but also "reading" and "writing" are taught so that students can develop basic English skills in middle school. Once they acquire the basic skills, students then explore English through actual use in class so as to master practical English conversation. It is a big transition from the written literacy centered education that had lasted for over 100 years to a new approach, which takes into consideration the importance of "speaking" and "listening". Their approach towards English as a Lingua Franca in order to access the world should also be appreciated. In reality, do those education systems function effectively as an ideal approach with no problems? If that is the case, why has Japan's English education system been criticized for not functioning well? Why are so many Japanese students not able to speak English even after six to eight years of English education? There should be some problematic factors in the education system. I would like to discuss the factors which could possibly cause the problems in Japan's education system.

1.3 Problematic Factors in Education System in Japan

This section will focus on various factors that could be obstacles to prevent Japan's English education system from functioning more effectively. Factors largely can be divided into four parts: Curriculum, Entrance Examination, Textbooks, and Teachers. All of them are separate factors but intertwined with each other in a way.

1.3.1 Curriculum

1.3.1.1 The Amount of Time

What is the most problematic factor in Japan's English curriculum? As described below, various factors make English education system less effective, including the amount of time, teaching style, the amount of discussion to output, and emphasis on translation. Yet, the amount of time to study oral skills of English is one of the biggest problems why Japanese students are not able to speak English well. Even though Japanese students study English for at least six years from middle school to high school, the amount of class time is not as much as students in other countries. Before Japan started implementing English class in elementary school in 2011, other Asian countries such as Taiwan, Korea, and China already implemented four-skills-balanced-curriculum ahead of Japan. As a result, they score more than Japan do in Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), international English test. Table 1 shows comparison of the score in TOEFL test for 10 years (Okatsu 5).

Table 1. Comparison of the Score in TOEFL test for 10 years

	Year	Japan	China	Korea	Taiwan
Listening	1995-1996	49	52	49	50
	2005-2006	51	55	56	56
	Rate of increase	+2 (4.08%)	+3 (5.76%)	+7 (14.28%)	+6 (12%)
Reading	1995-1996	48	52	52	51
	2005-2006	49	55	52	51
	Rate of Increase	+1 (2.08%)	+3 (5.76%)	±0	±0
Grammar · Writing	1995-1996	50	54	52	51
	2005-2006	50	57	53	52
	Rate of Increase	±0	+3 (5.55%)	+1 (1.92%)	+1 (1.96%)
Average Score	1995-1996	494	526	510	507
	2005-2006	497	557	530	530
	Rate of Increase	+3 (0.6%)	+31 (5.89%)	+20 (3.92%)	+23 (4.53%)

(Okatsu 5)

As shown in the table above, Japan increased its TOEFL scores for only three points whereas other three countries did 20 to 31 points in 10 years between 1995-1996 and 2005-2006. It is obvious that Japan is way behind other Asian countries. What is interesting is that even though Japan has been focusing on “reading” and “writing”, they score the lowest point out of all the countries. Taking elementary school as an example, according to Okatsu, students take 2-3 classes a week in Taiwan, 1 class a week for 3rd and 4th grades and 2 classes a week for 5th and 6th grades in Korea, and 4 classes a week in China (7). On the other hand, Japan holds only one class a week for 5th and 6th grades. The difference in starting age and the amount of class time remarkably affects its learning outcomes. If Japan would like to accomplish better result, they would need to adjust the curriculum of English class.

Language distance is one of the reasons that Japanese students need to study oral skills of English for more hours. For example, English and German belong to the same language family tree, Germanic languages, so that vocabulary and grammar are relatively alike (Anthony). However, English and Japanese are far different from each other in not only vocabulary and grammar, but also character and pronunciation. According to The Foreign Service Institute (FSI), it takes 2,200 hours for English speakers to be proficient in Japanese. If that is the case, it would also take approximately the same amount for Japanese speakers to be proficient in English. In reality, middle schoolers in Japan study English for 270 hours through a whole of three years and for 470-650 hours in high school, so they study less than 1,000 hours for six years of English learning, which is not even a half of 2,200 (Okatsu 15). On the other hand, it takes around 900 hours for English speaker to be proficient in German (FSI). Students in Germany study English for 350 hours in 1st to 5th grades and 700 hours in 6th to 10th grades, so the amount of time they study exceeds the desired amount to be proficient speaker (MEXT 1). Considering those, it is just natural that Japanese are not able to speak English well because they do not have enough amount of communicative English study.

1.3.1.2 Teaching style

How English is taught in the classroom plays an important role in the effectiveness of Japan's English education system. Partly because of too much focus on college entrance examination, English classes are usually teacher-centered. Students just listen to what teachers say in Japanese and take notes while the teacher is talking. For example, in a typical English class, a teacher first provides a lesson introduction, teaches new words and grammar, gets students read and understand the text, and also needs to teach for the entrance

examination (Yamamoto 1). Considering that the class is teacher-centered, Japan's English education system seem to place emphasis on 'comprehension', not on 'production'. However, as Zhang points out, although non-native oral fluency could be obtained through efficient and effective input, English learners failed to speak English fluently, namely lacking effective input and output, having no real need for interaction, attaching too much importance to language forms and written tests (1). Good combination of input and output can facilitate positive outcome whereas a lack of it could lead to failure to produce English. Nevertheless, students do not have much opportunities to practice their speaking and writing in an English class. Even though an output is essential as well as input in order to cultivate English speaking ability, students in Japan hardly have any opportunity to use English (Joichi 6). Although language should be learned through both input and output, the education system lacks one of the two. Students may not see the purpose of English study in input-centered-classes, meaning that they would not only lose their motivations but have lower learning outcomes.

1.3.1.3 The Lack of Discussion Opportunities

The lack of discussion opportunities also affects students' English speaking abilities. Language as a tool is not knowledge, but what is used in order to communicate with others (LEARNie). Thus, it is necessary to express feelings and thoughts in mind when communicating. Students in the United States, for instance, have adequate opportunities to discuss with their peers. As Will mentions, "Student-led learning has been a popular instructional strategy as teachers move away from lectures to student-directed discussions in order to let students take more control of their own learning". However, Japanese students are not used to discussing in the first place since they do not have much opportunity in school for

this activity. Discussion is important not only as an opportunity to produce language, but also as a chance to empower students. “Group work is meant to teach students collaboration, and when teachers take a step back to let students initiate the class discussions, it can empower students”, says Will. Although it would be a little too challenging for students to start discussing in English, not having a chance to speak out what students have in their minds and exchange opinions further hinders the effectiveness of English learning.

1.3.1.4 Emphasis on Translation

Students in middle and high school spend a lot of their time for reading activities in English classes, and in most cases, those are done in Japanese. Japanese teachers of English often teach all the grammar in Japanese, and check if students can follow the textbook by asking them to translate the English into Japanese (Miller). Of course it is imperative to translate English sentences into Japanese in order to facilitate students’ understandings, or sometimes it is necessary to fathom how the sentence is structured.

However, learning English always by translating it into Japanese could be problematic. We need to know that Japanese and English are completely different languages. For instance, subjects can be omitted in Japanese because of the high-context feature of the language, whereas English always has subjects. You have no idea whether it is male or female and it is singular or plural in Japanese, yet you do know if it is in English. Birds ‘sing’ in English but ‘cry’ in Japanese. There are words and phrases that do not exist in each other’s language. The majority of words and phrases may be somewhat similar but not identical even if English can be translated into Japanese. If translation is emphasized too much, students will not be able to comprehend the nuances of English. Moreover, English and Japanese may become intertwined too much so that students have difficulty with processing conversations

in one language since one burdens the other if they become used to translation. According to Brown and Lee, they need to develop strategies of high-speed, automatic processing in which language forms are on the periphery of attention in order to cognitively manage the incredible complexity and quantity of language systems (68). It is challenging not to focus on the language forms if the learners rely too much on translation. Therefore, in order to be able to speak well, translating all the time should be avoided. Otherwise, it may impede learning outcome.

1.3.1.5 The government Course Guidelines

The government Course Guidelines could affect students' English abilities, especially the ones for high school students. According to the Guidelines, the instruction of English class should be conducted in English in high school. The Course Guidelines requires high school that "when taking into consideration the characteristics of each English subject, classes, in principle, should be conducted in English in order to enhance the opportunities for students to be exposed to English, transforming classes into real communication scenes" (MEXT 7). However, students' level of English vary. Depending on the students, all-English classes might cause too much burdens on them. Nakai mentions that students would not be able to understand English if the class was done in English even though they did not comprehend even in Japanese (6). Consideration should be given to use English, depending on students' level of comprehension, in order to prevent students from failing to deepen their understandings. Otherwise, the approach could hinder their learning outcomes.

1.3.2 College Entrance Examination System

1.3.2.1 Too much Focus on Examination

Another cause of the inability of students to speak English is the primary role of Entrance Examination in the education system. This is probably what many, who have studied or taught English in Japan, would think as the main burden. Examination for high school and college often consists of reading and writing and it usually takes students a year to prepare. The content of the examination, in most of the case, requires deep understanding of isolated grammar rules. For examples, it asks students whether they need an ‘-s’ as third person in the sentence as in “He likeses to play basketball”. Moreover, it often asks students what preposition they should use in specific sentence such as “This is different from that” instead of “This is different than that”. Both sentences are correct and mean basically the same, but the examination in Japan tend to decide one is more proper than the other. Thus, students inevitably have to comprehend grammatical rules.

One factor of requiring deep understandings of grammar in Entrance Examination stems from the Government Curriculum Courses. It is found, in the Curriculum Courses in middle school learning contents, that words which imply accuracy have been used frequently even though nothing about accuracy nor correctness is written in its overall objective. As the Curriculum Courses expect students to comprehend English “correctly”, the Examination also requires them of correctness as well as their English competencies. Yet, requiring accuracy in middle school is questionable since it is where students are expected to develop “basic” communication abilities. Even though being accurate is required as well as developing basic communication abilities in middle school, it makes student focus on the correctness of English they use.

Since students study English in the environment where they need to understand grammatical rules “correctly” in great detail, they try to use English perfectly all the time. What happens next is that they become too sensitive to speak ‘perfectly right English’ when they actually talk to people. In other words, they focus too much on the form of English, not on the meaning of the conversation. As a result, they become afraid of making mistakes because they are required to use correct English for examinations. As Tuboya mentions,

“It is said the cultural norms mean that Japanese are not willing to speak up in front of others in case they cause a disruption. Plus, they are too afraid of making mistakes and feel they must speak perfect English. In a sense they impose silence on themselves”.

Together with the Japanese cultural norm, the Examination system has a lot to do with Japanese students’ inability to speak English.

1.3.2.2 Unpractical Use of English

Examinations also have influence on English that students use. Sentences and expressions used in examination, in many cases, are not practical for casual conversations. For instance, you might see this sentence in the examination, “I am no more able to operate this machine than he is” (Yasuda). They choose to use that sentence because they would like to ask students whether they know the idiom, “no more ... than ...”. However, you do not hear the expression in everyday casual conversation, but such as “I can’t operate this machine, and he can’t either”. In short, what students learn for the examination is short expressions and grammatical rules which they would not use when they speak English in real life situations. As Mizuno states, “English-language teaching in Japan does not help students develop their communicative abilities, but serves only to help students pass university

entrance examinations” (247). It seems that no matter how hard students study English for entrance examination, they would not be able to speak well because of the unpractical expressions.

1.3.2.3 Unbalanced Focus on Study

As mentioned earlier, college entrance examination consists of reading and writing. Typical students memorize meanings of tons of vocabularies, comprehend grammar structures, read long passages, and translate them into Japanese (Studyplus). No matter what kind of website, what is found for studying for examination is basically the same: memorize, read, and translate. They do not study listening and speaking because they do not need the skills for the examination. In fact, writing is not even studied much either since majority of the examination is made up of vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. Students do read and comprehend different kinds of passages, but English competence improves by practicing four skills of English: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Hinkel articulates,

“Today, after decades of research in language teaching and learning, it seems clear that, in many cases and for many purposes, the separation of the four macro skills is likely to be less effective than integrated instruction simply because, in reality, communication does not take place in terms of discrete linguistic skills.” (22)

Students would not be able to speak well as long as they just focus on reading, writing, and grammar. Focusing on reading and writing is not bad, but it would be more effective if the examination system includes listening and speaking sections as well. Then students would have to study all four skills for examination, which will help foster their English competency.

1.3.3 Textbooks

1.3.3.1 Structure of the Textbook

Textbook is another factor that makes Japan's English education less effective. First of all, schools are supposed to use a specific textbook approved by the Board of Education, so they have no choice. Typically, one chapter in a middle school English textbook in Japan consists of around 12 pages and the majority of the content is focused on reading, grammar, and vocabulary (Sanseido 2016). Even though it has listening and speaking sections for only a page and half of out of the 12 pages, they are relegated to the end of the chapter, which are not utilized in many cases because the teacher does not have enough time for those activities. However, textbook in Korean starts with listening activities and moves on to speaking activity before reading and writing activity at the end (Oi 7). In other words, students in Korea have more opportunities to improve their overall English proficiency since they go through all of four skills activities per chapter. In the first place, the number of the page of the textbook shows marked difference in thickness of the content. The Korean textbook, '*Middle School English 1*', has ten units which are to be covered over an academic year and has 268 pages (Cripps 12), whereas, '*New Crown 1*' a popular junior high school textbook, has nine units and only has 119 pages (Cripps 13). Apparently, Korean students study twice as much as Japanese students do so that they are more able to speak English, which is quite understandable. Inadequate amount of content in textbook can have influence on students' poor learning outcome.

When it comes to the reading section, there are remarkable differences between what is expected in Japan and other Asian countries. A comparison of the number of the words that students come across during their three years in middle school in Asian countries such as

Taiwan, Korea, China, and Japan shows that they encounter approximately 4,500 words in Taiwan and Korea, 6,000 words in China, and 2,000 words in Japan (Tono 4). As you can see, the amount of reading in Japan is half as much as Korea and Taiwan, and even one third as China. That is considerable difference only in middle school. In addition, the amount of the text that students encounter during middle school is around 35,000 words in Taiwan and Korea, 65,000 in China, and 15,000 in Japan (Tono 4). Textbooks used in Japan contains much less information compared to other Asian countries. Drastic revision of the textbook is in need if Japan would like change English education to achieve “Japanese with English abilities”.

1.3.3.2 Topic Use in Textbook

Topics used in each chapter in Japan seem unapproachable for middle and high school students. Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) have to teach grammatical forms through unpractical topics in chapter. For example, the JTEs have to teach grammar through topics such as recycling plastic, people and animals dying in WWII, and boring Japanese history, causing students to be apathetic to English study (Miller). Ogura also articulates that MEXT-approved textbooks in her study do not offer students enough practice in developing communicative competence (2). In contrast with the topics used in Japan, those used in Korea are more focused on communication. According to Yuasa, Korean English textbooks are designed to require students to use English as actively as possible rather than focusing on grammatical correctness (157). More approachable topic use might motivate students more than unpractical ones if Japan really expect better learning outcome in English classes.

1.3.4 Teachers

1.3.4.1 Teachers' ability of English

The last factor is Japanese teachers who actually teach English. MEXT requires both middle and high school teachers to have over 730 out of 990 points in Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), which is a test for reading and listening.

Nevertheless, according to a survey for implementation of English education, out of 29,807 middle school teachers, only 10,004 score over the requirement and 15,018 of 22,948 high school teachers meet the standard (MEXT 2 and MEXT 7). The rate of accomplishment is 33% in middle school, 65% in high school, and 47% in combined number of teachers. It is not desirable that less than half of English teachers do not have decent English ability. Some complains that it is not possible that students can speak English well because they are taught by teachers whose English ability is not adequate enough. Even though MEXT demand English teachers to “teach English in English” to facilitate “Communicative English”, it is unlikely that they would accomplish the approach with deficient English ability. According to the survey conducted by Tuchimochi, 58% of middle school teachers answer that they are not confident in teaching English in English (8). Also, as to their concern in teaching, 67% of them answer that their English abilities are not good enough (Tuchimochi 8). Taking those results of survey into account, it may be unrealistic for teachers to “teach English in English” since they themselves do not have confidence in their teaching.

When it comes to the number of teachers who have studied abroad for over a year, there are 2,928 teachers in middle school and 2,604 in high school (MEXT 2 and MEXT 7). The rate of study abroad experience is 9% in middle school, 11% in high school, and 10% in combined. On the other hand, 62% of Korean teachers in college in Seoul have studied

abroad to obtain Master's degree (Ishikawa 2). In Taiwan, elementary school teachers are supposed to take English training program for 240 hours (MEXT 20). Even if it is not studying abroad experience, 240 hours of English training should be helpful enough for them to become adequate English teachers. As mentioned earlier, in the 21st century, Japan has been focusing on "Communicative English" in order to be "Japanese with English abilities". However, the majority of the teachers would not be able to do that due to their own English proficiency. It is true that studying abroad and having decent test scores are not the only measure on whether the teacher is proficient enough, but the question is that how would they teach "Communicative English" if they have no idea about what practical English is.

1.3.4.3 Teacher training program

Teacher training program is another point to touch. Currently, university students who would like to obtain a teaching license in Japan need to take three to four weeks of teaching training program at either middle or high school. Some schools ask the students to observe classes for the first or possibly two weeks, and let them actually teach only for one or two weeks. Cripps claims, "The current system of pre-service and in-service teacher training needs a radical overhaul" (18). Instructions of novice teacher are supposed to be overseen by senior teacher who is too busy to provide him/her with practical mentorship. As a result, the students who receive teacher license are, in most of the case, unprepared for their future teaching career. Overall, inadequate mentorship produces novice teachers who do not go through enough challenges.

1.4 Summary

Curriculum of English class is definitely one factor that students are not able to speak English well. The amount of the study in Japan is the least of all other Asian countries.

Students only study less than a half of what they are supposed to do in order to be proficient in terms of language distance. Even though good combination of input and output is desirable for language learners, Japan's education system tends to put a lot emphasis on input. English class in Japan also tends to rely on translating English into Japanese pretty often. Too much focus on entrance examination needs to be rethought as well. Since examinations require students to know grammar in great detail, they care too much about the form of English. Persist Perfect form of English takes a root in their minds. Testing only students' "reading" and "writing" skill is not a smart way to measure their English ability in examination.

Textbooks students use plays an important key in developing communicative English skill. Although utilizing educational topics such as social problems and serious histories are not negative, the amount of them used in class is debatable. The data that less than half of all teachers do not hold required score in English test and only 10% of them have studied abroad and placed themselves immersed in English speaking countries is problematic. Even though it has been argued that English class should be conducted in English to foster communicative English, over half of teachers are not confident in teaching in English. The fact that novice teachers would not be able to obtain much experience from only three to four weeks of trainings is debatable as well.

Researchers have identified broadly four factors that might affect English education system in Japan, as described above. In this study, I will investigate whether those all are still obstacles or not. Are there any positive aspects in English education in Japan? Are there any other factors that may possibly obstacles in Japan's education system? In order to answer these questions, I have conducted surveys and interviews with Japanese English teachers and Japanese high school students. The purpose of this study is to explore Japanese students' and

teachers' perspectives towards English learning, especially oral English learning, in Japan; it also intends to find out how much the problems that previous researchers have identified still apply to this context and whether new factors can be identified. Also explored is whether teachers and students consider English education system in Japan effective or not. After collecting and analyzing data, I will provide recommendations based on issues that teachers and students identify to improve English education in Japan.

Chapter 2

Research Design

2.1 Research Project

In this chapter, I will explain what procedures are followed in examining the research questions and how the research was conducted. The data collection aspect of my project attempts to focus on perspectives of Japanese about English education system in Japan.

My research examines from two perspectives what Japanese English teachers and high school students think about Japan's English education system. I first conducted interviews of Japanese English teachers. I interviewed these participants in an attempt to learn about what works well and what not of Japanese Education system for students and teachers, whether there is any obstacle in teaching, whether they think it is necessary for students to learn oral English, and what change they would recommend to improve English teaching and learning within the Japanese education system.

I also surveyed current Japanese high students who have studied English since their middle school. This survey asked them whether they think current English education system is effective or not, what their goals of learning English are, how much they think they are able to speak English after 6 years of English education at school, and whether they think the college examination helps/prevents them to achieve their goals.

2.2 Participants

Five teacher participants voluntarily participated in the study: three are Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) and two are Americans who have taught English as Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). The teacher participants have taught English at Japanese institutes

from three years to twenty years: Teacher A (ALT) 5.5 Years, Teacher B (ALT) 3 years, Teacher C 20 (JTE) years, Teacher D (JTE) 5 years, and Teacher E (JTE) 14 years. Their teacher backgrounds vary. Only teacher C has completed TESOL certificate and others have just taught without it. Teacher D and E used to live in countries where English use is necessary, but teacher C have never left outside Japan. Teacher A and B have taught as ALT. The reason that I have interviewed teachers with different teacher backgrounds is that the more different teacher perspectives would be collected by asking teachers of various background. The purpose of interviewing the teacher participants is to find out the factors of English education system in Japan that might affect them in English learning. This project has been approved by IRB. See details in Appendix C.

71 students voluntarily participated in the survey. The student participants were high school students in typical Japanese high school and were 18 years old. The main criterion for selecting them is that they are the students who have studied English at least for six years at their middle and high school. The purpose of studying the student participants is to look for factors of English education system in Japan that might affect students' attitudes towards English learning.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Interview with Teacher Participants

In my interviews, I asked teachers for their participation. Since I got to know teachers when visited to observe classes, I first contacted them via Email and invited them to participate in the study. Then, I interviewed five voluntary teacher participants, asking questions via email for the study. The interviews use open-ended questions conducted in a semi-structured format. Each interview has seven questions which ask them their perspectives

towards English teaching in Japan, such as whether they think current way of teaching English is effective enough for Japanese English learners in terms of oral English proficiency. I also ask them some follow-up questions mainly about the necessity of increasing the amount of time for English classes and for teacher training. See more detail of the questions in Appendix A.

2.3.2 Survey with Student Participants

I asked students for their participation in my survey. Since I was in the U.S., I designated a teacher to help me conduct the survey for me. As a total, 71 students voluntarily took part in the survey. The survey was distributed to the student participants in an English class at a private high school. The survey was conducted in a structured format. Students were asked nine questions such as whether they liked current English learning system, what skill they would like to improve, what their goals were in English learning, and such. See more detail of the questions in Appendix B.

Chapter 3

Data Report & Analysis

3.1 Teachers' Interview

In this chapter, I will report and analyze the result of the study I have conducted. I interviewed Japanese Teachers of English (JTEs) and surveyed Japanese high school students, asking about their perspectives towards the current English education system in Japan. In this chapter, I would like to find out whether the problematic factors discussed in literature are applicable to this actual teaching situation and whether the teachers and students in this study had identified any other problems or issues. The results showed that there are both similarities and differences between what has been previously identified and the results of this study. Below, I will discuss the results in terms of the following categories, most of which are compatible with the problematic factors described in chapter 1: education system, college examination, textbook, teacher, students' attitudes, and necessity to be proficient. At the end of this chapter, I will share recommendations that teacher participants made in terms of what change is in need in Japan's education.

3.1.1 Education System

Interestingly, only JTEs have discussed the English education system in Japan, and they focused on three main points in particular: classroom size, the age of initiating English education, and the amount of time available for English education.

All of JTEs have answered that the large size of the classrooms are problematic for teachers, which is a new factor not identified in literature. Class size often tends to be bigger than ideal in Japan. In one of the teachers' classes, he currently teaches 35 students and even taught 48 students where he used to work. According to LoCastro, language classes should be

comprised of no more than fifteen students to adequately give all the learners chances to practice (495). Fifteen should be large enough to provide diversity and student interaction and small enough to give students plenty of opportunity to participate and get individual attention. However, the number of the students in his class is way beyond the ideal classroom size. Teacher C actually mentioned that the English proficiency levels of his students varied widely, and he did not have much opportunity to interact with students individually. Therefore, he could give feedback only when tests were conducted. Because of those downsides of large class size, small class instruction has been introduced gradually yet there are still a lot of schools where there are more than 30 students in one class. The higher the number of students in a classroom, the smaller the opportunity to practice in depth becomes. Given these findings, it needs to be taken into consideration that schools have smaller classrooms so that student could have more chances to interact with each other and to receive feedback from teachers for their improvement.

Next, two of the JTEs mentioned the start of English education in elementary school, which is also a new factor not described in previous literature. One teacher articulated that early education from fifth grade is beneficial for students whereas the other one claimed that it is harmful for the development of their first language. Teacher D mentioned that first of all, it is good that students can learn English from the very beginning in Japan since Japanese are, in general, not good at English. Due to that fact, teacher D considered it a great advantage that students can learn English focusing on grammar in order to equip more Japanese with English abilities. Besides, he thought it good that English classes start from elementary school, since students would have more time to study conversational English. Instead of

learning grammar in middle school, they can learn it in elementary school, meaning that they can focus more on conversational English in middle and high school.

On the other hand, teacher E wondered why students need to learn English from elementary school even though their native language is not perfect enough. Students need to acquire their mother language first and then move on to another language, he claimed. He pointed out that learning another one before their native language become solid could be harmful for them to be proficient enough in their native tongue. Learning two languages at the same time could cause the learner a problem that he/she might not be able to be proficient in his/her native language. Thus, initiation of early stage language learning might need to be taken into consideration to ensure students' appropriate development of their native languages.

Third, two of the JTEs in their comments touched on the amount of time for English classes. This point has been described as one of the problematic factors in literature. Teacher D articulated that there is not enough instruction regarding conversation and presentation. As mentioned by Tsuboya, although Japanese need approximately 2,200 hours to be proficient in English, students only study less than 1,000 hours through their school curriculum. Only basic survival level of speaking is expected with 720 hours of study (Tsuboya). In addition, since over a half of the instructions in school usually focus on grammar and reading comprehension, only 300 to 400 hours are available for students to study communicative English, which makes it much harder for them to be proficient speakers.

Teacher E pointed out the lack of time to instruct the difference between Japanese and English. He claimed that language structure of Japanese is completely different from English because the verb is placed at the end of the sentence such as SCV/SOV sentence

forms whereas English is totally opposite with SVC/SVO sentence forms, which is an obstacle. As Japanese learners think in Japanese while speaking English, it is quite challenging for them to learn English with so limited instruction time available. Therefore, teacher E believed that it should be more acceptable for Japanese to use English aided by the use of Japanese.

3.1.2 College Examination

Concerning the question about whether college examination system has positive influence on students or not, three of the teachers agreed that it has; there is only one teacher who articulated that college examination has negative impacts on students, and one teacher who showed his neutral attitude towards it.

Teacher A critically articulated that overall, examination system is a waste of time because students study lots of irrelevant material such as hard vocabulary and grammar rules that they will not use after their test unless they are studying English at their college. She blamed that this only reinforces rote memorization and the idea that education is only about being able to score well on tests. Her viewpoint is in agreement with STUDYPLUS. What typical students usually do for entrance examination is to memorize meanings of tons of vocabularies, comprehend grammar structures, read long passages, and translate them into Japanese. Although it doesn't mean that the way of studying is not helpful at all, it is not quite enough if students would like to be proficient speakers. Moreover, most of the students study English only for passing the examination. Thus, they do not study it with the intention to acquire knowledge and be more proficient learners, which impairs the effectiveness of their study. Teacher A's regard addresses all problematic factors discussed in literature, which means that what has been identified is so true.

On the other hand, the three teachers who are up for examination system, highlighted the importance of the examination system. Teacher E stated that it is imperative to understand high-context grammar and have a big vocabulary in order for Japanese to maintain accuracy regarding international transaction as long as Japan is industrial and commercial country. It is not desirable to have communication-focused education, which will prevent students from understanding sentences correctly. Thus, the focus on accuracy in the Government Course Guidelines, as follow-up question, is reasonable as long as Japanese learn English for commercial purpose. Overall, JTEs claimed the importance of entrance examination system even if it is modified to function more effectively.

Moreover, one supporter of college entrance examination further explained the reason why testing is, in a way, indispensable is because it is the only good way we have now to assess a large group of people when it comes to 'entrance' into a university. Although, there are more better ways to assess students such as by critical thinking or direct conversation in English, he did not think that those are implementable for two reasons. One, it would be a little too challenging for students. Second, assessing those ways of testing for thousands of student applicants would be too time-consuming and expensive. Therefore, entrance examination is, at the moment, the best way that we can do for both sides.

Different from the supporters and the opponent, teacher C has a neutral viewpoint on examination system. He regarded that college entrance examination has influence on students anyway because students would not study so hard if there was not entrance examination. It does not matter whether they study vocabularies, idioms, or grammar, but students work on studying because they are under influence of the examination. According to the survey by Naito and Tachibana, 35 of 79 high school students study English only for college entrance

examination (5). It is apparently undeniable that examination system has impacts on students' motivation. It can be beneficial that students have goals to study English in a short run. However, there are, on the other hand, downsides in examination system as well. Since there are many who think English not as language but as what should be studied, they think it waste of time to study conversational English. Because of the examination system, whether they get high score or not is the whole point of studying for students. As a result, those who score high points are admirable and those who don't are made fun of, which creates a negative mindset about making mistakes. There are also a number of parents who only care about college examination. They put intolerable pressures on their children even if that stems from their consideration. The more students care about the examination, the more they are afraid of making mistakes. Those parents don't really understand that school is not just the place to prepare for college examination, which makes their children too sensitive to college examination. Again, it is positive that students have short term goal of studying English, but the goal ends up making them focus just on the examination. Therefore, the question about entrance examination system is quite a difficult argue point for teachers.

3.1.3 Textbook

Three teachers touched on the topic of textbook; the two of them were up for the function of the textbooks but the other one was against it. The three teachers disagreed on whether the language used in the textbooks should be Japanese or not; their viewpoints differed from the focus of discussion in literature, which was there is not adequate practice offered to help students learn English efficiently (Ogura 2).

As to the good aspects, teacher E mentioned two points. One is that Japan has a plenty of lineups of English textbooks in Japanese available for purchase. Being able to

provide education in mother language from elementary school to college means that its population of the language is large enough and the language contains advanced modern conceptual terms (Ise). In short, Japan is one of, approximately, only 10 countries where learners can study English in their mother language. The other point is that English textbooks approved by the Board Of Education are well designed and systematically organized, which supports students' learning. For instance, there are only a few English textbooks for Korean 10th graders and all of them are similar in English level, while Japan has 36 to choose from (Yuasa 6). Thus, teachers can select the proper textbook depending on their students' English competency level.

However, at the same time, it is difficult for teachers to design goals by the students' level and the name of the course because one English course is technically divided into three level and textbooks vary depending upon the level even though those all courses have the same course names. This is an issue that has not been identified in previous literature. Some schools implement small classes depending on the students' level. All of the students divided into three classes take the same classes, for example, English 1. However, the textbooks that the students use are different depending upon the classes. The students in the lowest level class use somewhat easier textbooks than the other two classes and the students in the highest class use more condensed textbooks that promote their deep learning. Hence, the goals of English classes also vary depending on which class the students are in. Although it has benefit to divide students into groups depending on their levels since there would not be big differences in their comprehension in the class, which makes it easier for teachers to teach, that approach causes teachers to have difficulty setting goals for each class even though all students are taking the same class.

On the other hand, teacher D has a negative attitude to textbooks used in Japan. He questioned why Japan uses English textbooks translated in Japanese. While he was in the United States for studying abroad, he had conversations with his friend from Thailand on the language used in textbooks. English textbooks are usually written in English and rarely translated in Thai in Thailand, which made him question why Japan utilizes ones translated in Japanese. Since then, teacher D started wondering why developed countries such as Japan would want to study English in different language even though developing countries learn it in English. In addition, learning English in Japanese has caused problem such as too much reliance on translation. Students would not rely on translating into Japanese if they studied English in English. Even though it is challenging for them at first, there is still huge advantage on using textbooks written in English.

3.1.4 Teacher

Interestingly, all of the teacher participants, including both JTEs and ALTs, mentioned about the problematic factor that has a lot to do with teachers. Similar to concerns discussed in previous literature, problems with teachers have a lot of influence on English education system. Three main points were identified in this study: inexperienced ALTs, JTEs' low ability of speaking English, and teachers' responsibilities.

The three of the teachers pointed out that foreign teachers are not experienced in teaching, and few teachers are hired for their teaching ability. That is not something that has been found in previous literature. Teacher A regarded that introduction would not be effective even if there is a native speaker of English in the classroom because ALT is not experienced enough in teaching. Although JET program has been initialized in order to facilitate communication skill, inexperience of ALT might impair the effectiveness of English

education. According to a survey conducted by Sophia University, 58% of ALTs in elementary school, 68% in middle school, and 75% in high school have experiences of teaching as ALT for less than three years. (9). It can be seen that many of ALTs do not have enough teaching experience, which possibly hinders the effect of communication class.

Next, the four of the five teachers have mentioned about JTEs' incapability of speaking English or lack of ability to speak English; they have also answered that JTEs don't have enough training in teaching communicative methods, which are exactly same as the problem identified in previous literature. According to a survey conducted by Tutimoti, 58% of middle school teachers answer that they are not confident in teaching English in English and 67% of them answer that their English abilities are not good enough (Tutimoti 8). Lack of JTEs' confidence seems apparent even from ALTs' perspectives, according to the result of the study, which implies that Japanese students might feel the same way.

In addition to JTEs' confidence, teacher D claimed that JTEs overall need more overseas experiences including studying abroad. Since they don't have enough overseas experiences, they would not be able to discuss their topics in detail. For example, he has taught about the culture difference between Japan and the United States in terms of wrapping gifts as one of the topics used in a textbook. As most of teachers don't have experiences abroad, they just go over the content of the textbook and finish the class, which doesn't interest their students. Whereas for teacher D who has studied abroad in the United States, he could weave his own experiences into the class showing his speaking ability, which got students so interested enough that it motivated them to ask more questions in the class. From his experience, he really believed it important that teachers have overseas experiences and ability to speak to some extent in order to interest students.

Although almost all teacher participants pointed out JTEs' lack of speaking ability, there is only one ALT who didn't blame for their low proficiency. Not all of JTEs are good at English, yet he regarded that they can still collaborate with ALTs to teach efficiently. He has had several teachers that knew very little English, but they were very good at assisting him with the lesson he produced, connecting with him before and after class, and conveying necessary feedback. He was able to provide the English expertise and the JTE was able to provide the support to keep him going during class and getting students engaged and excited. His experience agree with what has been described in previous literature. JTEs can collaborate with ALTs even if they are not good at English so that the classes overall function more effectively.

However, majority of the teacher participants still commented that JTEs' incapability of speaking English seems problematic. Even if ALTs do not necessarily have to be good at teaching since they can cooperate with JTEs, what about JTEs. They still need to have communicative skills because ALTs are not always with them in communication classes. The instructions would become much better if JTEs were good at English. Teacher B remembered that he has had teachers who are very good at English and familiar with teaching methods; their classes were a lot of fun and so interesting because he was able to produce a lesson that heavily involved the JTE with English examples or assistance with a project the students were working on. Given his experience, there is still a lot of advantages if JTEs are capable of speaking English to some extent.

The last point that teacher participants mentioned is teachers' responsibilities outside classes, which is a new issue not discussed in previous literature. Each one of JTE and ALT have answered that JTEs' responsibilities, other than teaching, are huge burdens for them.

Teachers in Japan have different kinds of responsibilities other than teaching: club activity, handling students' parents, taking care of the class that the teacher is in charge of, and school affairs.

In Japan, each teacher is supposed to be in charge of at least one club activity and take care of it. The kinds of the clubs vary from sports clubs such as basketball to culture clubs such as tea ceremony, band, cooking, and so on. How often the club has practice depends on the club that teachers are in charge of. For example, a basketball club usually practices every day but Monday, meaning that the teacher in charge of it has to come teach students six days a week after the school. That is a number of extra work for teachers even if they are willing to do.

Teachers are also supposed to be involved with school affairs such as meeting. There are various kinds of meeting such as subjects, school events, training, and so on. They often have meetings after school and when they finish it is already past the time they are supposed to get off so that teachers do not have much to plan for the class. On top of that, they are expected to attend in-service training once in a while. However, even though in-service training is desirable, forcing secondary school teachers, who are already extremely busy with their regular jobs, to attend the training further exacerbates their busy situation (Mizuno 2).

Being in charge of one class is another thing that many teachers need to take care of. Unlike the school system in the United States, students are divided into usually six classes per each grade, and they all take same classes together in the class. Each class is taken care of by one teacher, which requires him/her more extra work. For example, Teachers have short meetings twice before and after school, discussing school events and parent-teacher conference which happens once in a while to discuss how the student is doing in school.

Teachers even take care of interdisciplinary class besides meetings to teach something they want other than regular subjects. Teacher B mentioned that as an ALT he did not have much responsibility other than teaching in English class, whereas he often saw JTEs working so hard not only on class but also on club activity so that they could not have enough time to prepare for their classes as described in problematic factors.

To sum up teachers' responsibilities, they are required to do a lot of duties other than just teaching. In other words, school in Japan expect teachers not only to be specialists in subjects, but also be generalists to deal with other responsibilities, which makes it a lot harder for them to attain adequate time to prepare for their class.

3.1.5 Students' attitudes

The three of the teacher participants have noted students' attitudes towards studying English. The two of the three mentioned that students do not want to stand out or speak up in front of other students, which agrees with what Tsuboya claims, "It is said the cultural norms mean that Japanese are not willing to speak up in front of others in case they cause a disruption. Plus, they are too afraid of making mistakes and feel they must speak perfect English. In a sense they impose silence on themselves". Since they are not willing to speak up in front of others, they are not able to have enough opportunities to practice speaking. Thus, it seems true that students' attitudes actually hinder learning outcome.

Similar to students' attitudes, their motivation have a lot to do with learning outcome. Teacher B analyzed that the most difficulty was getting students interested, engaged and self-motivated to learn on their own. He believed this is probably the most important aspect of teaching that may be overlooked in the Japanese English Education system. Shimizu claims, "Students are not motivated to learn practical English in the first

place. It is not that you cannot live in Japan without English nor you would not necessarily need to English communication skill in college. In other words, students hardly realize the necessity of English” (11). Even if the education system functioned pretty effectively, students would not be able to be proficient if they were unmotivated. According to Brown and Lee, motivation is one of the most important factors for learners to be successful in acquiring language (91). After all, it is the learners that put effort in studying in order to be proficient; other factors such as teachers and education system work just as scaffoldings. It seems that the key issue is how teachers can get students interested in learning English.

Students’ attitudes are correlated to education system and college entrance examination problems, because Japan’s education system makes students so unwilling to take risks and afraid to make mistakes. Although making mistakes in grammatical and structural aspects of English is important since trial and error is inevitable for language learning, their surroundings and the testing system that focus on results have a huge influence on them.

3.1.6 Necessity to be proficient in English

As to the question whether it is necessary for students to be proficient in speaking English, the results showed really interesting findings. Only one of the five teachers answered that it is necessary for students to learn oral English. He has positive thought towards oral English since most communication is not written but oral, students need to learn oral English. Actually, a couple of the opponents have mentioned the same thing, but that doesn’t mean, for them, that students need to learn oral English.

On the other hand, major opposing view is that whether students need to learn oral English depends on the students since they know the number of Japanese who is actually in

need to speak English is so limit. As Masago reports, supposedly only 10 percent of them habitually need English as essential tool (15). Conversely, 90 percent of Japanese do not really need English in their daily living. Thus, opponents don't think it is necessary to learn oral English at least in order for students to live in Japan. However, teacher C mentioned that things become different if the student is in immersion-education school, where they learn other subjects such as math, science and such in English. There are only around 10 schools in Japan.

In addition to opponents' perspectives described earlier, teacher E did not think it is necessary to emphasis conversational English in both middle and high school. Moreover, in his opinion, English conversation is considered same as writing English sentences instantly. Thus, high quality of actualization in listening and speaking is more likely to happen if students are capable of sophisticated writing and reading comprehension. Although reading and writing can improve accuracy of speaking because they help students visualize the words as you are saying them and see where they would go if you were writing it down (Walker), oral literacy has features that written literacy does not have. Focusing only on reading and writing will unavoidably result in students' less proficiency in listening and speaking.

Overall, the results of the teachers' answers were unexpected as the researcher sort of anticipated what the government aimed for would be same as what the teachers thought. Given their answers, it has been found out that teachers do not really think it necessary for students to learn oral English as the government does. This suggests that either the government is too ambitious about "Japanese with English ability" without realizing a reality or teachers are too realistic because it sounds too challenging that students become proficient in English with six years of study.

Do teachers actually teach oral English even though most of the participants don't think that it is necessary for students to be proficient? The answer is yes. All of the participants say that they teach oral English but only in conversational class. They never teach oral English in other English classes, meaning that they only teach oral English one to two hours a week. Through the interview, there is an interesting finding in their answers. The three of the teachers have a similarity among them in terms of the point which they are careful with. When they teach oral English, they try to have students think on their own during speaking. Teacher D explained that the reason of it is that students are not able to speak because they have no idea what to talk. If they didn't know what to talk, they would not be able to practically have conversations even if they knew how to speak English. In addition, thinking by themselves is one of the most important thing that they can apply in other situations after school years, he supposes. Therefore, he tries to get students ponder about anything all the time and lets them get used to thinking as well as English itself. Considering these, it seems that teachers teach oral English to students in order to teach how to think on their own even if being proficient in English is not necessary.

3.1.7 Recommendations

Teacher participants also provided recommendations on the following three aspects: education system, teacher qualification, and students' motivation.

3.1.7.1 Education System

One of the teachers' recommendations was that accepting more international students into more schools could be one of the changes that Japan could take. Even if there are ALTs in schools, they are still teachers for students, not as approachable as students are.

On the other hand, if there were more international students, students would feel more relatable to them, which may possibly motivate them to speak English.

Another teacher suggested that it is necessary to reconsider the whole English education in Japan, meaning that learning English does not have to be required since it is, in fact, not necessary for Japanese to be able to speak English unless they work abroad. As mentioned earlier, there is only 10 percent of Japanese population who actually need to be able to speak English (Masago 15). Therefore, it is, in a way, pointless to assign all the student to study English. On top of that, he claimed that what Japanese will need is not English but different languages. Because the government recently has declared to accept more foreigners as labors, especially from south Asian countries such as Vietnam and Thailand, Japan is more likely to need those who are able to speak those countries' languages. Hence, the whole education system in Japan would function better if they make English an elective course, allow students to study different languages, and implement a multilingual college examination system so as to function effectively as a country. Along with the change, teacher E suggested that language classes should be taught depending not on the students' grades, but on their levels in order for students to study regardless of their grades, which is likely to facilitate their learning.

Three teacher participants also commented on whether they think it is necessary to increase the amount of time of English classes and whether it is actually possible to do that. All of them answered that it is not necessary and it is almost impossible to make that happen; teacher E even articulated that school should decrease the amount of English class because of the reason that Japan has just declared that they are accepting more international people from south Asian countries. Since current school curriculum is already filled with all subject, there

is no space to increase the amount time for English classes. Theoretically, it is possible to replace other subject with English, yet that is not practical because English is not the only subject that students should focus on. Also, just increasing the amount of time doesn't resolve the issue. The point is to consider what we can do in order to increase the amount of speaking English instead of just increasing the amount of time. For example, school can set up a place to interact with ALTs during lunch break. Having them come to each class during short class meeting or break between classes. There should be some solutions even if it is impossible to increase the amount of classes.

3.1.7.2 Teacher

Teacher D has recommended that Japan's education system should have teachers' overseas experience program such as studying abroad as required curriculum. Although JTEs should have both Japanese and American perspectives, there are relatively more who are Japanese biased. By implementing the new curriculum, teachers would be able to have different viewpoints towards what the education should be and how English should be taught to Japanese students. In addition, teachers would be able to experience living in English speaking country with practical English use, which would help them brush up their English proficiency as well. Once they went through the studying abroad program, teachers would be more confident in their English ability; it means that the issue of lack of confidence in their English could be resolved.

Teacher E suggested reconsideration of a way of learning, which students study English by contrasting the difference between Japanese and English, based on the language pattern of Japanese. Since Japanese, most of the case, ends with a predicate, it is difficult to figure out the action in the sentence unlike English. Understanding the difference between

two would help students study efficiently. In order to make that possible, teachers need to have better understanding in differences between two languages; the change of teachers' qualification or requirement may be necessary. If the teachers' qualification changed, it would possibly empowers students' learning outcome.

The researcher have asked the voluntary teacher participants whether increasing the amount of teaching practice for pre-service teachers is necessary since they don't have enough experience at school. Surprisingly, all of them mentioned that it is pointless to implement that. It appears that having student teachers at school is a lot burdens for current teachers. They are not comfortable with having student teachers because taking the teaching practice program doesn't guarantee that student teachers are becoming teachers in the future. A lot of them decide not to become teachers after the program. For current teachers, it is meaningless to spare their time for those students. Instead, one teacher suggests to implement another teaching practice program before novice teacher start their teaching career, which would not waste current teachers' time. By doing this, novice teachers would be able to have more experience before they go through hard time.

3.1.7.3 Students' Motivation

Three teachers commented on the recommendation about students' motivation. Interestingly, there is a similarity among their answers in terms of two keywords: teachers' attitudes and stimulation.

Teacher B believed more focus on getting students motivated as well as language learning strategies to students would be helpful. He suggested that teachers need to be life-long learners, describing one teacher who was his mentor. He is always energetic and motivated to study English even at age of 50's. Since the teacher was highly motivated to be

life-long learner, his passion was apparent in his class which get students motivated as well. Teacher B explained that it was almost as if when he walked into a classroom the students automatically were mesmerized and star struck. Students would study on their own if they were motivated no matter what they were working on. It is definitely true that motivation affect students' production. Brown and Lee articulate, "Motivation has in the context of L2 learning long been regarded as fundamental for successful language learning" (91). Teachers can facilitate students' learning by teaching them how to study and getting them motivated. There are lots of students who do not have their own ways of studying effectively nor high motivation towards learning. Just studying is not as efficient as studying with helpful tips and motivation. Therefore, getting students to become life-long learners like his mentor is a huge advantageous strategy because eventually students will have to learn how to learn on their own. Motivations and attitudes of JTEs seem to have huge impact on those of students, which may be the first step to make English education function effectively.

Teacher C recommended stimulations from outside school. Secondary schoolers can be influenced easily by those who are moderately older than them such as people in their 20's, said he. Students would feel more relatable to what the speakers mention when they are close to their age. That is why, teacher C tries to have as many guest speakers as possible, who have interesting experiences to stimulate students. The aim is stimulating students by implementing a new school program. Teacher C also recommended that teachers need to always keep themselves updated, meaning that teachers ought to do anything they can do in order to improve themselves in any way. It is not only making themselves more attractive as teachers, but also stimulating their students by showing their attitudes towards doing something new. In addition to keeping themselves updated, he also suggested that teachers

should have curiosity to know something new all the time. As mentioned earlier, it is challenging but quite important to get students motivated in class. The point is that by showing teacher' attitudes, it could increase students' intrinsic motivation stemming from curiosity, and they could become more motivated when they find it interesting. His approach is that students' motivation is increased by the stimulation from outside. It is said that high level of achievement is obtained by the study with high motivation (Ashizawa 1). For those reasons, his recommendations that teachers should keep themselves updated and have curiosity to know all the time seems to be on point.

3.1.8 Summary

One of the biggest findings in this study is that as opposed to what has been identified in literature, majority of the teacher participants indicated that college examination is necessary for Japan's education because of Japan's commercial country aspect. They also believed that examination system helps students to have short-term goal so that they study hard for it. ALTs' lack of teaching experience and teachers' responsibilities have been newly identified by the participants. This implies that although teachers overall need more experience, they don't get to have enough training because they are too busy for their responsibilities other than just teaching. It has also been found out that students' attitudes towards English play a big role for Japan's education system functioning well, meaning that education system and teachers are not the only factors which might impairs the effectiveness of Japan's education.

3.2 Students' Survey

In this section, I will analyze the results of the survey to students. Overall, there were 71 students who participated in the survey. The discussion is divided into the following categories: Goal of learning, students' ability to speak English, college examination, and education system.

Before I move on, I will explain how long students have been studying English. The results of the length of study unexpectedly varies broadly. Sixty-six of 71 students have studied English for more than 6 years: 31 of 71 students answered 6 years since they started in middle school and 35 of 71 answered over 6 years. The students, who have studied for more than 6 years, are the ones who had English classes at their elementary school as English classes had been set as required courses at elementary schools since 2011. Interestingly, there are five students who have studied less than 6 years. It is assumed that they misunderstood how long they had been studying English since high school or they did not count the year they were studying at that time. Overall, 70% of the respondents have studied English for 6 to 8 years from their elementary school to high school and 92% of all student have studied English for over 6 years.

3.2.1 Goal of learning

Students' goals of studying English by and large matched with the government's goal: "Japanese with English Abilities". Thirty-six of 71 students, or about 50% of the respondents, answered that they set their goal as communications with English speakers; 41 of 71 were related to speaking skills including five students who want to use English for their future career such as studying abroad. It is not surprising that 60% of student participants aimed to acquire oral English skills in their studying due to the globalized world. More and

more English will be in need for current and future students since Japan is becoming more global than before. Apparently, students seemed to have positive attitudes towards learning language according to the results.

On the other hand, approximately 20% of all the students did not have goals of learning, meaning that they just studied English for no purpose. Why didn't they have goals in their learning? This can be related to the EFL learning environment where they are not required to acquire English. As mentioned earlier, only 10% of Japanese actually need to use English (Masago 15). Thus, many of them do not have specific goals of learning English. Studying without any goal doesn't produce a positive outcome, as Ko mentions that not having a goal of language learning hinders a learning outcome (1). Taking Ko's remarks into consideration, schools should implement methods and activities to get students to realize their goals of English learning, which would lead to a better outcome.

As to the number of students whose goal is for passing college examinations, it accounted for only 10% of all the student participants. Given that, it is reasonable to state that most students do not study English just for passing college examinations, which means that students' performance of oral English can potentially improve if proper approaches are taken.

Next, about the skills that students want to improve the most, the answer mentioned the most was speaking; 41 of 71 students, nearly 60%, answered that they would like to improve their speaking skills. It makes considerable sense that students would like to improve their speaking skills because 42 of 71 respondents' goals had a lot to do with oral English and 55 students answered current English education system is not effective because "they do not have enough opportunity to speak English", "they do not become able to speak regardless of 6 years of learning", or "speaking is not taught/emphasized adequately". Therefore, most

students didn't think that current education system was effective because they don't become adept English speakers despite their 6 years of learning, which is why they would like to improve their speaking skills to have communications with English speakers.

Fourteen students also would like to improve reading skills probably because, as the researcher assumes, reading skills have a lot to do with college examinations. Although many students understood the importance of communicative English skill and their goals were to be able to speak English so that they could converse with foreigners, they would like to improve their reading skills because what they need to focus on now is college examinations. In other words, there appeared to be a big dilemma between their goal of learning and their requirement for the future. Since the current examination system does not test students' communicative English skills, placing emphasis on speaking and listening is not really helpful for them in terms of passing college examinations. There needs to be something to resolve students' dilemma in English learning since what they would like to improve on doesn't match with their goal of learning English.

3.2.2 Student' ability to speak English

Let's take a look at students' self-assessments regarding their speaking ability in this section. Only 11 students answered that they were able to converse with people in English and no one used English as native language. Sixty of 71 participants, around 85%, have difficulty having conversations in English, meaning that students need more practice of communication or the way of teaching needs to be modified. Since 48 of 60 students are able to respond to questions but not able to have conversations, it is likely to happen that students become proficient in speaking to some extent. Being able to respond to questions implies that they listen and understand what they are asked to some extent, thus what they need is an

adequate amount of practice to get used to speaking English as a communication tool.

Actually, 8 of 11 students, who are able to converse with people in English, have studied over 8 years and 8 of 12 students, who are not able to speak at all, have studied for 6 years or less. Overall, the results suggest that the English education system in Japan is only partially effective; what lacks from the students may just be greater amount of English study. It would be desirable if the current education system was modified in order for students to have more opportunities to speak English.

Why do students think that they have difficulty with speaking? Taking a look at the causes they provided, about half of the students answered because they were afraid of making mistakes. About 25% of students were too shy to speak English and the other 25% of the participants answered it was difficult for them to speak English because speaking was not taught or emphasized in English classes.

One reason that they were afraid of making mistakes can be because they did not have sufficient amount of practice. They did not seem to understand that language is learned through so many trial and error. Yamashita and Hirakawa articulate that trial and error is quite important to be successful in language learning because the learner would have more opportunity to acquire correct use by being pointed out (2). Less students, who are afraid of mistakes, would be expected once they realized the importance of the trial and error in language learning. Also, social norms stemmed from Japanese culture have a large influence on students' attitudes towards making mistakes. Making mistakes tends to be considered negative in Japan. Global leadership lab mentions that uniformity is considered really important in collectivism society and people tend to care about reputations from others. For example, if a returnee speaks native-like English in a class, other students would think the

student as an outsider. Since a mindset, which is “everyone should be the same”, takes a root in people’s mind, the outsider is regarded blameful. Similar to that mindset, those who make mistakes are considered strange, which makes students terribly hesitate to make mistakes.

As well as being afraid of making mistakes, students’ shyness to speak English has a lot to do with ‘being afraid of making mistakes’. Since students think that making mistakes are something blameful and embarrassing, they become shy to speak up in a class in order not to make mistakes. One thing to claim here for both reasons is that changing students’ attitudes mentally would draw out positive results of English learning. Some of the students, who are not able to speak at all, cannot speak even though they have studied over 10 years. One point in common among them is that none of the students had their personal goals of English learning. Moreover, one of them just do not like English at all. As described earlier, Ko encourages to have a goal of language learning because just studying without any goal hinders a learning outcome (1). The learner is able to be motivated by having a goal and a textbook, which should be used, varies depending on the learner’s goal. Better learning outcome is less expected if the learner does not have a specific goal to achieve even if they study for a long time.

Based on the results from the survey, almost 80% of the student respondents do not seem satisfied with English classes since there is not enough speaking-focused class in school. Hence, increasing the amount of opportunities, where students can apply what they learn, can improve the effectiveness of English education in Japan.

3.2.3 College examination

Students’ answers about college examinations were the most surprising to the researcher. Even though 55 of 71 have answered that the current English education system is

not effective, 70% of all the respondents answered that it helps them to achieve their goal in English learning. What do these results actually mean? One explanation could be that the results show college examinations help students to achieve their goal in that they can learn the skills such as knowledge of grammar and reading, otherwise they would not study much as described in teachers' interview. Shimizu and Okajima report that almost all of the students in their survey, in fact, study English only for college examination even though 31% of student respondents answer that the purpose of their studying English is for college entrance examination (9). On top of that, it is presumed that students may just separate English classes and college examinations; they considered English classes ineffective since they don't become proficient in English, but regarded college examinations helpful because they can improve literal skill with a heavy amount of study for it. Therefore, college examinations, in a way, encourage students to study so that they can improve their basic skills of English, which they would think it helpful to achieve their goal in terms of developing their foundational abilities.

Therefore, the results of the survey suggest that students considered college examination helpful to achieve their goal of English learning although neither speaking nor listening is necessary for the examinations. However, more than half of the student respondents still would like to improve their speaking skills to be able to speak English well.

3.2.4 Education system

Given students' answers, 55 of 71 students, approximately 80% of the student participants, answered that the current English education system is not as effective as they expect. Students, whose goals were related to communicative English, considered the education system not effective because what they anticipate in English classes is not

provided. Forty-eight of 55 students (the rest of 7 did not answer), who answered that education system is not effective, explained that it is because “they do not become able to speak English despite six years of learning” and “speaking is not taught/emphasized in English classes”. Even though the government has been focusing on communicative English in the Course Guideline, speaking is not still emphasized in reality.

On the other hand, 10% of all the students said the current education system is effective. They considered it effective because “They can learn basic skills of English”, “They become able to read English”, “They not only learn writing but also read English out loud”, and so on. Interestingly, the students appreciated the effectiveness of textbooks for the same reason. Nearly 70% of the student participants answered that textbooks used in the classes are not helpful to achieve their goal whereas the rest of 30% answered that textbooks are helpful because of the reasons provided above.

However, there was no similarity between the student supporters’ answers; each of the student has a different answer of why it is effective. Overall, the answers from all the students, who are up for education system, have nothing to do with communication skills, and all of those who focus on communicative skills were not satisfied with the current English education system. An interesting finding through this student survey is that their answers tend to be bipolar as in “English education in Japan is not helpful because oral English is not emphasized” or “it is helpful because they can learn literal skill”. In order to meet the majority of the students’ expectation, it is obvious that there is something which has to be fixed in the education system in terms of communicative aspect of English.

3.2.5 Summary

The survey to students has found out that students' aims were more focused on oral English skills. Sixty percent of the student participants aimed to acquire oral English skills as their goal of language learning and they would like to improve their speaking skills same as their goal of learning. Sixty of 71 students struggled with speaking because 75% of the students were afraid of making mistakes or they were too shy to speak English. In other words, the causes that they have difficulty speaking have a lot to do with collectivistic perspectives. Approximately 70% of all the respondents believed that the college examination system helps them to achieve their goal in English learning even though 55 of 71 answered that it is not effective. Students were not satisfied with the current education system because they don't become adept English speakers and speaking is not emphasized in English classes. Since students' expectation doesn't match with what is actually taught in the classes, there is a big gap between the two. I will compare the teachers' perspectives with those of the students' to see what viewpoints are agreed and what not.

3.3 Comparison with Teacher and Students

In this section, I will discuss similarities and differences between teachers' and students' perspectives. Some of their viewpoints are compatible but some are totally opposite. There are four points to be discussed: college examination, textbook, students' attitudes, and education system.

3.3.1 College examination

Teachers' perspectives and students' are compatible in terms of that both side believed examination system is helpful. They both considered that the examination system helps students to learn accurate English such as grammar and have a big vocabulary. However, there is a big difference between the two as to the purpose of college examinations. Teachers believed that college examination helps students to have goals of leaning whereas students don't really think that way because only 10% of the respondents answered that their goal of learning English is for college examination.

3.3.2 Textbook

Teachers' perspectives towards textbooks are completely different from students'. Teachers analyzed that textbooks used in Japan's education are helpful because they are translated into Japanese, which is not usual in this field. On the other hand, students didn't see the textbooks in the same way. They regarded textbooks not helpful because they don't become proficient in English despite six years of their learning. Or rather, students' perspectives seem to be similar to what has been discussed in previous literature. As discussed earlier, Oi critiques that textbooks in Japan don't contain much listening and speaking opportunities whereas ones in Korea starts with listening activities and move on to speaking before reading and writing parts (7). Also, Korean textbooks has twice as many

pages as Japanese textbooks, which would help students to have more opportunity to practice English (Cripps 12). To meet students' expectation, teachers need to decide what textbook to use so that students can practice more speaking and listening.

3.3.3 Students' Attitudes

Teachers seem to have well understandings about students' attitudes towards speaking English since 75% of the student participants answered that they are either afraid of making mistakes or too shy to speak English, which is exactly mentioned in teachers' response. Even though teachers understood what prevented students from practicing speaking much, it is still problematic because they have not fixed the problem yet. Given this, coming up with how to change students' attitudes and bottom up their motivation to speak is one of the most important changes that the current education system needs. Teachers need to consider what way would help to change students' attitudes in order to teach English more effectively.

3.3.4 Education System

There is an agreement for teachers and students in that there is not enough time to study conversation English. However, teachers didn't think that students need to be proficient in English whereas students thought that they would like to improve their speaking skills because that is the majority's goal of learning English. That seems to be the biggest confliction between the two. Although 60% of the student participants aimed to acquire oral English skills as their goal and they would like to improve their speaking skill same as their goal, speaking is not emphasized in classes. However, it is physically impossible to increase the amount of English classes because of the limited amount of class schedule along with

other subjects. Therefore, schools need to come up with other way to help students achieve their goal.

3.3.5 Summary

Through this comparison, the researcher has found out there is a similarity between teachers and students in that they both consider college examination is helpful. As opposed to the problematic factor in previous literature, examination system seems necessary for teachers and students to help students learn English, especially in literal aspect. However, overall students' perspectives disagreed with teachers' in terms of oral English. Majority of the students prioritized conversational English as their goal whereas teachers did not necessarily believe so. Students considered Japan's education system not effective because they don't become adept English speakers regardless of their six years of learning. It is because of the limited amount of English classes, on the one hand. But on the other hand, it may be because teachers just don't prioritize speaking and listening since they know the few number of Japanese who are actually in need of English. Students' attitudes are also huge burdens for them to be proficient speakers. If they didn't practice speaking as they were afraid of making mistakes or too shy to speak, they could not become proficient even if they would like to improve their conversational English skills. In order for students to be able to speak English, there are problems to be fixed not only on the institution side but also on the student side. Thus, I will discuss what should be changed in next chapter so that English education in Japan would be more effective.

Chapter 4

Conclusion & Recommendation

In this study, I have investigated problematic factors regarding English education in Japan to see whether what has been identified by previous researchers is still applicable to real teaching situations. Based on both teachers' and students' perspectives, this study found out that some of them are true but others not; it also identified other factors not discussed previously.

To sum up the findings of this study, inadequate amount of time for English classes and JTEs' inability to speak English are still considered problematic by teachers. Even though college examination is considered one of the biggest issues that impairs the effectiveness of Japan's education system, teachers in this study don't think the same way. Instead, they regard it helpful because students get to have short-term goals to study English. Some of the teachers also see textbooks helpful in terms of that learners can study English with their native language, which is different from previous researchers' viewpoints.

On the other hand, other new problematic factors have been identified, which seem more serious for teachers. Japan's education seems to be impaired by classroom size and the early education system. ALTs' inexperience of teaching possibly hinders the effectiveness of Japan's education, too. Teachers' responsibilities other than teaching are huge burdens as they don't have much time to prepare for their classes. Moreover, students' attitudes to speaking English and their learning surroundings that discourage risks and errors play a big role of preventing themselves from being proficient. Through the comparison between teachers' and

students' perspectives, it has been identified that students' perspectives disagreed with teachers' in terms of oral English. The majority of the students prioritized conversational English as their goals whereas teachers did not necessarily believe so. English education does not function well because of the confliction between students' and teachers' perspectives towards the role of English education.

However, English education in Japan has both positives and negatives. One of the strengths is that Japanese students who go through the education system have strong literal skills such as grammar and reading comprehension. But a big problem is that students don't become able to speak English well despite their six years of learning. So, educators need to consider what changes should be implemented to address the problem. In order for Japan's education system to function more effectively, below I will give recommendations for three main categories: college examination system, teacher qualification, and English classes.

4.1 College examination system

Through this study, it has been found out that college examination system is considered necessary by both teachers and students, but teachers also indicated that there could be better ways such as assessing students' critical thinking ability. This means that instead of implementing a new testing system, current examination system would become much better if it is tweaked with adjustment. Therefore, it is recommended that educators implement a new examination system for college entrance. For example, current examination only requires students two of four English skills: reading and grammar. However, what if the government proposes that examination requires all four skills of English? Students would have to prepare for the examination with balanced practice, improving their English abilities to pass the test. In addition, if the college examination tests students' oral English ability as

well as literal skills such as grammar and reading, schools would have no choice but teach students communicative English as well. Theoretically, it is more likely to happen that students improve their speaking skills with the new examination system. In fact, the government has declared that they are implementing a new entrance examination system starting in 2020 (MEXT 1). They have decided that they are going to test all of four English skills in the college entrance examination. This new approach should change current education system to foster students' ability to speak.

4.2 Teacher qualification

Teacher qualification is another thing that should be addressed. In addition to JTEs' inability to speak English, ALTs' inexperience of teaching have been identified as problems in the study. However, since JTEs understand that ALTs don't have enough teaching experience, both of them should work together in oral communication class. Yasuda points out that roles of ALTs are not teaching English and pronunciations, but providing students with the experience where students cannot communicate each other in Japanese. English class would become more effective if students struggle with figuring out how they can communicate with ALTs. JTEs are supposed to lead the class, whereas ALTs provide students with authentic opportunities. Although it would be better off if ALTs are trained how to teach English, it is more essential that JTEs have collaborative skill to cooperate with ALTs.

In order for JTEs to have adequate collaborative skills, JTEs still need to be more able to speak English so that English classes function more effectively. The researcher has found out that majority of JTEs were not confident in their English proficiency and teacher participants considered it problematic, too. If the students feel that teachers are not confident in teaching in English, are they willing to study? Won't they wonder whether what they are

learning is really practical or not? In order to foster English education, drastic change on JTEs' attitudes seems imperative. JTEs should be more accustomed to speak English. One of the recommendations to resolve this problem is that institutions should require practical pre- or in-service training to teachers. For instance, each teacher is supposed to either study abroad for a year or have communicational experience in English for approximately 1,000 hours. This 1,000 hours comes from the assumption that one studies English 5 hours a day during weekdays for a year. In doing so, teachers could become proficient enough to be able to communicate with ALTs in order to promote effective conversational English classes. Hopefully that should lead better quality of classes.

4.3 English classes

Teacher-student interaction is the last recommendation to foster better English classes since the researcher has identified that students' unwillingness to speak hinders the effectiveness of English classes. They are not willing to speak because they are afraid of making mistakes and too shy to speak in the class. However, students' attitudes are, in fact, correlated to education system and college-entrance-examination problems because Japan's education system makes students so unwilling to take risks and so afraid to make mistakes. Although making mistakes in grammatical and structural aspects of English is important since trial and error is inevitable for language learning, their surroundings and the testing system that focus on results have a huge influence on them.

Then, how teachers interact with the students would play an important role to mitigate the negative impact. JTEs tend to ask students true-false or yes-no questions, not to ask open-ended questions that can get students think by themselves. Japan's education should allow students to be more opened-minded so that they would be better off not only in

language learning but also in many ways. As mentioned by teacher E earlier, the more the students care about college examination, the more sensitive they become because they do not want to make mistakes in order to get high scores in test. It is understandable that college examination is stuck in students' mind since it is one of the biggest challenges for them to go through. Even so, too much focus on that could cause problems to students' mindset and their learning outcome as a result. Thus, how teachers interact with their students is a key to support their negative mindset.

Also, increasing the amount of students' opportunities to utilize English can support better English classes. It has been found out that almost 80% of the student respondents are not satisfied with English classes since there is not enough focus on speaking in school. Hence, increasing the amount of opportunities where students can apply what they learn can improve the effectiveness of English education. However, modifying the amount of opportunities that students practice requires drastic change in current education system because it is not just a problem of the amount of time, but intertwined causes behind it. In order to increase the amount of time to practice, schools need to consider what textbook to use to facilitate the opportunity of communication. Reconsideration of the curriculum would be in need as well as textbooks, which means they would have to think what to focus on: oral English skills, literal skills, or college examination.

Since the drastic change on whole education system is too challenging to actually implement right away, to reconsider what we can do in order to increase the amount of speaking English instead of just increasing the amount of time is more approachable. For example, school can set up a place to interact with ALTs during lunch break. Having them come to each class during short class meeting or short break between classes is another way.

By doing so, school should be able to increase the amount of opportunity that students can apply what they have learned in English classes.

Those are the recommendations that the researcher can provide with this study. It is still challenging to change the education system since even if it was just a small modification, it is a lot of work. But, with the new testing system as a turning point, Japan can start changing their education system little by little. Hopefully, those recommendations provided above help Japan accomplish the goal of becoming “Japanese with English ability” so that Japanese would be able to thrive in the globalized world.

Future Research

Finally, looking back my study, the interview and survey questions for teacher and student participants could be improved in order to analyze their perspectives more in detail. For example, I could have asked students how they would like English classes conducted. Or, it would have been better to interview students as well so that the analysis would have been more sophisticated. For my future study, I would like to deepen my understanding on the subject. In doing so, analyzing the relationship between current education system and college examination system would be needed. I would like to figure out why students are satisfied with college examination, but not with current education system.

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Appendix A: Interview questions for teachers

1. How long have you been teaching English in Japan?
2. What do you think about the current English education system in Japan? What works well and what not for students and teachers?
3. Do you think there is any obstacle in teaching English in Japan? If yes, what is it and why is it an obstacle?
4. How does the college entrance examination affect students' English study, positively and/or negatively?
5. Do you think it necessary for students to learn oral English? In other words, do you think it necessary for students to be proficient enough to communicate orally in English?
6. Do you teach oral English in your class? If yes, how do you do it specifically? If not, why so?
7. What changes would you recommend to improve English teaching and learning within the Japanese education system?

Appendix A: 先生へのインタビュー

1. これまで何年間英語を教えていますか？
2. 現在の英語教育のシステムについてどう思いますか？良い点と悪い点等を教えてください。
ください。
3. 日本で英語を教えるにあたり、何か障害となっていることはありますか？あるとすればそれは何で何故だと思えますか？
4. 日本の受験システムは生徒の英語力にどう影響を与えていると思えますか？
5. 生徒がネイティブの人と会話ができる程度までの英語力を学校で教えることは可能/必要だと思えますか？もしそうなら、実現するためにどんな方法/工夫をとりますか？
6. 授業内で生徒達に英語を話させていますか？もしそうなら、どのような工夫をしていますか？
7. 日本の教育システムに沿いながらもより効果的に教えるために、あなたならどんな変化が必要だと思えますか？

Appendix B: Survey questions for students

1. How long have you been studying English? _____ years
2. What is your goal of learning English? Please select all relevant answers.
 - A. to pass college examinations
 - B. to use it in future career
 - C. to read in English
 - D. to communications with English speakers
 - E. Other _____
3. How much are you able to speak English?
 - A. Not at all
 - B. Able to respond to questions, but not able to have a conversation
 - C. Able to converse with people
 - D. English is my native language
4. For those who select A or B, what do you think are the causes? Please select all relevant answers.
 - A. I am too shy to speak
 - B. I am afraid of making mistakes
 - C. Speaking is not taught or emphasized in school
 - D. Others _____
5. What skill(s) would you like to improve the most? Please select all relevant answers
A. Speaking B. Listening C. Writing D. Reading
6. Does the entrance examination for college help you to achieve your goal(s)?
A. Yes B. No
Briefly Explain: _____
7. Do the textbooks in English classes help you to achieve your goal(s)?
B. Yes B. No
Briefly Explain: _____
8. Overall, is the current English education system in Japan effective?
A. Yes B. No
What change(s) will you recommend?

Appendix B: 生徒へのアンケート調査

1. これまで何年間英語を勉強してきましたか? _____年間
2. 英語学習におけるあなたの目標は何ですか?(複数回答可)
 - A. 大学受験に合格すること
 - B. 仕事で使うこと
 - C. 英文を読めるようになること
 - D. 外国の人とコミュニケーションをとること
 - E. その他_____
3. 現在どの程度英語を話せますか?
 - A. まったく話せない
 - B. 質問には答えられるが、会話をするのは難しい
 - C. 日常会話レベルなら話せる
 - D. 英語は母国語
4. AかBを選んだ人への追加質問
その原因は何だと思いますか?(複数回答可)
 - A. 恥ずかしいから
 - B. 間違えるのが怖いから
 - C. スピーキングが学校では教えられない / 重視されないから
 - D. その他 (_____)
5. 英語のどのスキルを一番伸ばしたいと思っていますか?(複数回答可)
 - A. スピーキング B. リスニング C. ライティング D. リーディング
6. 大学受験は英語学習における目標達成の役に立っていますか?
 - A. はい B. いいえ簡潔にご説明ください。 _____
7. 英語の教科書は英語学習における目標達成の役に立っていますか?
 - A. はい B. いいえ簡潔にご説明ください。 _____
8. 総じて、日本の英語教育システムは効果的だと思いますか?
 - A. はい B. いいえどんな変化があると良いと思いますか?
