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メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2019-12-20 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): Language Policy, juken-eigo, ELT methodology, educational reforms, Japan 作成者: TATSUKI, Donna メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://kobe-cufs.repo.nii.ac.jp/records/2519

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1. Introduction

Foreign language policies are not static—they reflect the times or context in which they are articulated. However, they also reflect the co-text of previous policies much in the same way that the accumulated previous conversations between people will influence and inform present and continuing talk. For such reasons, this chapter will take a long look at the history of foreign language learning and foreign language policy with a special focus on English in order to establish the recurring themes and motifs in the Japanese context.

One might first question and explore whether or not the notion that the struggle between pro-English and anti-English sentiments is evidence of an existential struggle between globalism and nationalism (Otani, 2008, personal communication cited in Yamaoka, 2011). Other researchers have framed this duality as “traditional methods for reading-based cultural enrichment” versus “English for global communication” (Wada & McCarthy, 1984; Kitao & Kitao, 1995).

Perhaps, however, it is not a pro-con duality but rather a different interpretation of what English means as it is used in a Japanese context. McVeigh (2004) differentiates between the English of *eigo* (English for Japanese), which is used to prepare for examinations, and *eikaiwa* (non-Japanese-oriented English), which is seen as (a less valued) extracurricular activity that may be merely taken up as a hobby:

...*eigo* is a sort of non-communicative, artificial language designed for testing purposes...The non-Japanese version of English, or “non-Japan-oriented English” is “English for communication”... (p. 2015)

However, could it also be a methodical with methodological pendulum swing between opposing “knowledge about English” and “communication in English” camps? Or perhaps are both camps in full operation at all times, yet alternate in terms of their prominence in popular media or public sentiment? These are some of the questions explored in this chapter.

Otani (2008, personal communication cited in Yamaoka, 2011) apparently identified and described seven alternations between pro-English and anti-English sentiments: 1) 1868-1885 Meiji Restoration [pro], 2) 1885-1907 surge of nationalism during wars [anti], 3) 1907-1922 Taisho democracy [pro], 4) 1927-1945 surge of nationalism during war, 5) 1945-1955 post war US occupation [pro], 6) 1955-1991 surge of nationalism during economic boom [anti], 7) 1991-2008 post bubble financial crisis [pro]. Although his calendar ran out in 2011, the year the paper was published, from 2019 onwards one might venture a guess that (if his alternation theory holds water) a new anti-English is or soon will be upon us.

2. “Capture” Knowledge without “Sharing” Intelligence

2.1 Yakudoku and the basis of the “Anti-Communication” stance

Although records are not exact, the learning of what is now considered to be “classical” Chinese began close to two millennia ago. The predominant method was *yakudoku*, a grammar translation technique; *Yaku* (訳) meaning “translation,” and *doku* (読) meaning “reading.” It is done in three stages: 1) the target language sentence is first translated word-by-word, 2) the resulting translation reordered to match Japanese word order as part of the process of reading comprehension, then 3) the reordered elements are recoded in a final clean translation in Japanese (Kawasumi, 1976).

What is significant and relevant about this is that *yakudoku* continues even today to be the main method in Japanese (*kokugo*) language classes to teach students how to “read” classical Chinese (Hino, 1988). Hence the first experience Japanese students have of learning a foreign language is through *yakudoku* and it might be argued this first experience imprints so strongly on students that is nearly impossible to erase or overwrite the belief that *yakudoku* is the (only) way to learn language. This will be discussed more in section 2.4.

2.2 Other languages introduced to Japan before English

The first European foreign languages introduced to Japan were Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch (see Shibuya, this volume, for more detailed account of other foreign languages in Japan). The former two were brought between 1543 and 1639 through interactions with traders and religious missionaries. Dutch language was introduced around 1580, limited to communication for trade and persisted even after 1638-9 when Japan adopted an isolationist policy to keep out Spanish and Portuguese ‘dangerous influences’ and therefore, isolated itself from the rest of the world (Shimizu, 2010). Contact with foreigners could only be made on Dejima Island (and only with the Dutch since Holland was the only European nation allowed access at that time), off Nagasaki for trade purposes. According to Shimizu,

Two methods were employed in the learning of Dutch. One was to learn practical Dutch when interpreters needed to negotiate with the Holland trading spokesmen.... The other was to learn Dutch in order to study European academic disciplines like medical science.... As contact with Dutch people was extremely limited, and in the absence of Dutch speaking instructors, the study of Dutch aimed at the translation of Dutch scholarship and research. (2010, p. 6)

The isolationist policy held tight, yet literature was allowed again from the 1730s but only for the purposes of knowledge collection. In 1838 Tekiyuku cram school was established to let aspiring Japanese medical students learn Dutch language and medical science but due to a lack of Dutch speakers the method of choice was grammar translation. In the *Kunten Oranda Buntten* (1857) Japanese kanji equivalents were written out, and Japanese word order was noted by each clause (Hino, 1988). Important to note is that pronunciation was not at all preserved or even attempted. Thus, language learning was not equated with functional communication; for the most part it was relegated to mere de-coding for the purpose of knowledge accumulation.

2.3 Arrival of the English language

In 1600 William Adams was the first known English native speaker to serve as a translator of letters from the British King James I into Japanese and the reverse but according to historic records he did not teach English (Reesor, 2002). The first

known teacher of English was Jan Cock Blomhoff, a Dutch assistant to the trade office in 1809, who taught Japanese interpreters of Dutch by an oral method without any textbook (Shimizu, 2010). In 1809, in response to the visit of the British Royal Navy ship, the HMS Phaeton, Japanese interpreters fluent in Dutch were commanded (for the sake of national security) to learn English.

One of these interpreters, Shozaemon Motoki, edited two books (one of which was titled *Angeria-kogaku-shosen*, published in 1811) in which English words were transliterated into *katakana* according to the way they would have been pronounced by Dutch speakers. These non-native pronunciations and the use of *katakana* to render them have had a lasting influence on textbook English. Oral competence was viewed with some suspicion. Hagerman states:

In the early 1800's the Bakufu (the ruling military government of Japan during the Edo period) sent six 'interpreters' abroad with orders to learn English and Russian and gain intelligence about those imperial powers. However, **due to fears that those six might transmit ideas to others they were ordered on pain of death to not become literate in those languages.** This incident highlights a theme within Japanese foreign language policy that continues to this day. There was, and continues to be, a tension between the desire for useful foreign ideas, along with the desire to avoid foreign influence. (2009, p. 48, emphasis added).

The first native speaking English teacher was the captured navigator, Ranald MacDonald who arrived in Japan in 1848. Unsurprisingly, he too taught aspiring interpreters by an oral method without any textbook. According to Shimizu,

In June, 1848, an American named Ranald MacDonald, came ashore on Rishiri Island, off Hokkaido in defiance of the Japanese policy of isolation. He was caught and sent to Nagasaki for questioning. Fourteen translators who were proficient in Dutch were chosen to learn English from him. Each day for six months in front of MacDonald's cell floor, they lined up on tatami mats to learn English from him, after which MacDonald was sent back. Dutch translator, Einosuke Moriyama (who would later act as translator for Perry and Harris) was in charge of this task. They also asked MacDonald to

pronounce words in the *Angeriagorintaisei*, which was published thirty-five years previously in order to correct the pronunciations of many of the words. MacDonald was, therefore, the first native speaker and teacher of English in Japan. (2010, p. 7)

2.4 English Boom and Bust

From 1860, English was taught at the *Bansho-Shirabesho* to a limited number of high-caste Samurai and continued to serve as a foreign language school even after the start of the Meiji era in 1868 (Sasaki, 2008). In the early years of the Meiji Restoration, according to Løfsgaard (2015), Japan experienced an “English boom” (p. 10). Students, statesmen and diplomats were sent abroad to collect the means for the country to Westernize and to “project Japan’s image as a modern state” (Løfsgaard, 2015, p. 10) and many English-speaking foreigners flocked to Japan to teach science, medicine, and technology in English.

Løfsgaard (2015) notes that very little teaching material had been translated into Japanese and also that foreign specialist had little knowledge of Japanese, so by 1873 English became the medium of instruction for almost all classes at *Kaisei Gakko* (which later became Tokyo University). English was compulsory six periods per week at middle school and was even introduced to a few elementary schools (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006; Koike and Tanaka, 1995). Enamored with English, Mori Arinori, the first Minister of Education, even recommended that English become the national language of Japan (Ramsey, 2004) although this idea was not widely supported (Imura, 2003). Sasaki (2008) notes, English was taught mainly to children from families in the upper and elite middle classes until 1945.

On the other hand, the oral-communication trend did not venture much beyond the confines of elite groups. For many, English was learned mixed with Dutch using modified grammar-translation and *yakudoku* methods. The first known English conversation textbook, *Eibeitaiwa Shokei* (1859) by Manjiro (John) Nakahama (Hino, 1988; Shimizu, 2010), in which Japanese words are rendered in *hiragana*, followed the English word order of a word-by-word translation from English written in *romaji* and *katakana*.

However, English went from boom to bust very quickly thanks to a confluence of

events. Japanese victories in two wars (the Sino-Japanese war 1894-95 and the Russo-Japanese war 1904-05) fanned the flames of nationalism, sparking an ideology called *kokutai*, which asserted the distinctive characteristics (superiority?) of Japan (Mason & Caiger, 1997). Coupled with this, the Japanese who had been sent overseas for training began to return home, bringing with them the means to produce Japanese translations of core Western scientific texts so they replaced the foreign specialists as instructors. Naturally (but unfortunately), the returning Japanese scholars wanted to teach their specialties in Japanese so English was no longer kept as the medium of instruction. As Fujimoto-Adamson states,

This turn-around in the status of English was relatively quick, a result of both the practical consideration of returning Japanese lecturers from abroad wishing to teach Western knowledge through Japanese, and of the perhaps more politically-driven government initiative to regard the Japanese language as the language of instruction for nationalist purposes. (2006, p. 267)

A further ripple effect was that Japanese language was now re-emphasized in middle school, displacing English. By 1882, English was banned as a language for use as a medium of instruction and Sasaki (2008) claims that this loss in status had huge consequences for the way English was taught and that these effects remain felt to the present day. For example, Sasaki (2008) mentions that Japanese English teachers in the mid to late Meiji period taught English in Japanese in order to explain grammatical features—a classic grammar-translation method named *yakudoku* that, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, was (and still is, according to Hino, 1988), the prime method for teaching classical Chinese. It could also be argued that this method persists to this day in most English classes and explains the continued dismal levels of communicative proficiency.

With the purpose of teaching English (or other foreign languages) framed as the “cultivation of minds”, the design and contents of entrance examinations for high school and later for college/university would forever be mired in tricky translations of arcanelly complicated sentences of questionable communicative value.

English became primarily an academic pursuit, learned mainly for the

purpose of reading written texts rather than as a means of communication. Even after the nationalistic movement of this period ended, English was widely adopted as a screening process for elite education. As a result, the so-called *juken eigo* (English for the purpose of entrance examinations) became the main goal of learners rather than English for communication. (Butler & Iino, 2005, p. 28)

Løfsgaard also (2015) notes that in the early 1900's "two streams in foreign language education became evident that are still present in the current Japan" (p. 14), namely *juken-eigo* (English for exam preparation) and communicative English (to meet the government goals of importing Western technology). Writers at that time referred to these two divergent methods as *hensoku* "irregular" and *seisoku* "regular" teaching. To understand the *hensoku* method, as one writer explains, one needs to be familiar with the method of teaching classical Chinese:

Its sole object is to get the sense of a sentence and therefore it gives no heed whatsoever [to] how a word sounds. If it is necessary to pronounce an English word...as little respect is paid to the pronunciation of the original as in the case of *Kango*... (Nitobe, 1929, cited by Omura, 1978, p. 94).

Teachers of *juken-eigo* employed the *yakudoku* method routinely used for *kango* (classical Chinese). Since elite students and their teachers were very familiar with its use to render Chinese classics, "[s]yntactic similarities between classical Chinese and English were often exploited to aid learners in the understanding of English" (Ike, 1995, pp. 7–8, cited by Smith & Imura, 2004, p. 30). Soon *juken-eigo* took a dominant position in language programs in public schools as well as after-school exam preparation academies as English was seen merely as a screening process to gain access to elite education (Iino, 2002). The proponents of *juken-eigo* discouraged 'wasting time' on speaking and listening (Kawasumi, 1979).

So paradoxically, "even though the status of English diminished, it became a requirement for higher education, learnt mainly to read texts and pass examinations rather than for communication" (Løfsgaard, p. 13). Yet, the teaching of English through *yakudoku* methods (and by extension *juken-eigo* as a goal for teaching) was not without critics. Hino (1988) translates a criticism of *yakudoku* written in

one of the first rigorous studies of the state of English language teaching in Japan by Okakura (1911):

In the teaching of English in our country, students are taught to translate word-by-word, with forward and regressive eye movement. This is a strongly established convention. I think this comes from our traditional method of reading Chinese, in which Chinese words are reordered to match Japanese word order.... This is a wrong method, which treats Chinese not as a foreign language, but as a kind of Japanese. We should not use this method in studying English.... It is a pity that everyone considers this to be the only way of reading foreign languages.

In reading Chinese, it is best if you understand the meaning of a text in the original word order. The contents are understood well enough in this way. As a matter of fact, this is the best way to achieve understanding. Likewise, direct reading is the best way of reading English in terms of time, energy, and efficiency. (Reprinted in Kawasumi, 1976)

A general anti-English mood continued well into the Taisho period even engendering a “movement advocating the abolition of teaching English” (Fujimoto-Adamson 2006, 270) and “as the end of the Taisho Era (1912–1926) approached, English teaching in schools had not changed very much overall, and standards of oral English in particular had been little improved” (Smith & Imura, 2004).

Oddly, despite the overall anti-English mood in the country in the latter part of the Taisho period, in 1922 the Ministry of Education invited British linguist Harold Palmer of University College London to direct the Institute for Research in English Teaching (IRET) which was devoted to adapting Palmer’s oral direct method for use in Japanese secondary schools. Smith and Imura (2004) summarized the approach that Palmer took:

Although Palmer’s ideas were grounded throughout in an unswerving belief, justified by contemporary linguistics, in the “primacy of speech”, he was guided also by a context-sensitive philosophy of “principled eclecticism”.... [his] 1924 *Memorandum on Problems of English Teaching* ... offered a

general statement of pedagogical principles, at the same time suggesting a map of possible paths reform could take in the Japanese context. He then devoted considerable effort to developing experimental materials for different lines of approach, and to gathering feedback from Japanese members of the Institute. (p. 32)

IRET hosted a conference in 1925 at which a number of Palmer's reform proposals were presented:

... reduced class sizes, increased freedom for teachers in textbook selection, improved in-service teacher education and more effective involvement of native speaker teachers. There were also calls for university entrance examinations to be reformed to feature "plain English" (as opposed to over-literary words and expressions) and for oral/aural testing to be introduced in counterweight to translation tasks. (Smith & Imura, 2004, p. 32)

For a number of reasons, but most likely because of a shifting political climate, the government failed to act on these reform proposals, so Palmer had to come up with approaches more amenable to the current Japan context. The result of this work was the development of a reading textbook-based system where oral introductions and oral question and answer activities framed a target reading passage—an arrangement that is very similar to the core component of many government approved English textbooks used even today. Unfortunately, amidst the intensifying atmosphere of dark rhetoric wherein English was referred to as "the enemy's language" (Koike & Tanaka, 1995), Palmer left Japan in 1936. By 1942 English education was removed entirely from girls' middle school curriculum and all British and American lecturers were expelled (Imura, 2003).

3. Post-war Reforms, Resistance and Recalcitrance

The end of World War II and the start of the American occupation of Japan signaled a re-emergence of interest in English. By 1947 new educational reforms were proposed and by 1952 the first Fulbright teachers were sent from the USA (Butler & Iino, 2005; Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006). Despite these events, *juken-eigo* continued to dominate classrooms and by 1956 when English became an official subject for high school entrance examinations (Butler & Iino, 2005), *juken-eigo*

consolidated its stranglehold. Despite repeated pleas by business leaders at the time to improve students' proficiency in "practical English" these urgent requests fell on deaf ears and entrenched hearts, so no changes were forthcoming from public universities or other schools. The Ministry of Education and business leaders realized that it was necessary to change tactics.

3.1 Top-down innovation and exam reform

Since English had become an official subject for high school entrance exams, which then ironically increased the *raison d'être* for *juken-eigo*, the Ministry of Education realized that it needed to take different approaches to achieve some kind of reform. Prominent business leader and experts in English language education created the *English Language Exploratory Committee* in 1956 to formulate proposals to offer sound pedagogical alternatives to *juken-eigo* (ELEC, 2019). The English Language Education Council (ELEC) was formally recognized by the Ministry of Education in 1963 and it aimed to promote international understanding and especially, to improve the quality of English language education. They sought to introduce the *Michigan Method*, an oral approach developed by Charles Fries. According to Smith and Imura (2004), their scheme was doomed to failure because,

ELEC's backers and leaders generally ignored both the achievements of and the problems faced by IRET prior to World War II. Instead, they confidently expected the solution to poor standards of English teaching to lie in the most up-to-date and "scientific" method that was developed by Fries and his colleagues in a quite different setting, the English Language Institute (ELI) in Michigan. (p. 34)

When this new take on the oral approach was introduced in middle schools, Japanese teachers lacked the enough communicative competence to conduct classes without resorting to Japanese in the classroom (Koike, 2013) so very few teachers actually adopted this method. By the end of the 1960s the *Michigan Method* and other audiolingual methods began losing favor globally because of Mentalist/Chomskyan challenges to behaviorist learning theory and the movement towards more cognitive/communicative approaches.

Parallel to the proposals from ELEC to improve students' communicative capacity,

the idea of creating a nationwide standardized test to assess all four skills was discussed in the 1960s and implemented in part by 1979 in the form of the Common first-stage exam (共通第1次学力試験 *Kyōtsū daiichiji gakuryoku shiken*). This also coincided with the development of the TOEIC exam. Since the teachers following *juken-eigo* were ‘teaching to the test’ the hope was that by changing the nature of the test, teachers would be pushed to change their teaching approach.

Unfortunately, this too largely failed because most universities refused to give up their own entrance exams in deference to the new national exam. The universities claimed that their locally produced exams enabled them to tailor the questions to ensure they could select the type of student best suited for their programs. Of course, another reason was that each university’s exam represented a solid source of annual revenue that none were happy to give up.

3.2 From the great debate to *yutori kyōiku*

In the mid-70s a debate between Hiraizumi Wataru (a member of the House of Councilors) and Watanabe Shunju (a Professor at Sophia (Jochi) University) caught public attention. Hiraizumi argued that learning English was really only useful for an elite 5% of the population—that 95% of Japanese had no use for English in their daily lives. Therefore, he recommended that English only be offered as instruction to the elite 5% and that it be dropped from general education for all the rest. Watanabe countered with the claim that English was useful to develop intelligence, especially if when offered in the form of *juken-eigo* (Imura, 2003).

However, neither of these debaters acknowledged the growing public interest in learning English for the purpose of communication. Fujimoto-Adamson defends Watanabe’s appeal to “cultivate minds” through *juken-eigo*, but she admits that “[a]lthough this counter-argument to Hiraizumi was necessary to avoid the creation of an English-speaking elite, the rationale supporting it still failed to consider the ever-growing needs of the population” (2006, p. 276). In other words, the big irony was that in order to keep the learning of English available to the general population, it was necessary to pander to the “cultivate minds” argument which resulted in promoting instruction offered through the least communicatively productive method available—the *yakudoku* of *juken-eigo*.

The “cultivation of mind” argument fed right into the increased competitiveness in entrance examinations. Although such exams were once restricted to the gaining of access to secondary school, they had slowly spread (like a cancer) to lower and lower levels of education—even elementary schools and elite *yochien*. In the early 1970s, Japan was severely criticized in an OECD report for “the ‘distortion’ that the severe examination competition had brought about in elementary and secondary education” (Saito, 2002, p. 31).

As a response to the social and psychological problems related to “examination hell” Central Council for Education made a series of recommendations that resulted in huge reductions in classroom contact hours and a change in emphasis from rote-memorization-based learning to a more flexible learner centered approach to curriculum. English was primarily cast as the villain in this drama.

Nevertheless, it has been claimed that the perceived educational crisis was exaggerated for political ends (Takayama, 2007) and served several times as a distraction from the social unrest caused by the oil shocks of 1973, the bubble economy of the 1980s and the post-bubble economy of the 1990s. The mandated *yutori kyouiku* slashed English in the curriculum so that by 1989 English hours of instruction were reduced to just three hours per week (Takahashi, 2005) and the number of words required to be learned by middle school students was reduced from 507 to 100.

3.3 The emergence of the JET program

From 1969 the Fulbright commission sponsored the placement of young American college graduates as Assistant Teachers’ Consultants (ATCs) in various board of education (Smith & Imura, 2004). However, McConnell reports on the “intense conflict that erupted when American ESL specialists, wedded to their particular techniques and goals, were placed in the public-school system” (2000, p. 41). One can only imagine the volatility of a situation in which young foreign “interlopers” with scant or no experience in the Japanese educational system brought communicative methods to their assigned schools with a passion verging on missionary zeal. It was a sure-fire recipe for resistance. Nevertheless, the program continued to expand and in 1977 the name was changed to Mombusho English

Fellows (MEFs). The MEF program and the counterpart British English Teaching (BET) program were combined in 1987 to create the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program.

It is also important to note that the actual roots of the expansion of the JET program were political rather than educational. According to McConnell (2000), the Ministry of Education was completely blind-sided by this program. Because they were not consulted or properly included in the creation of this program, they were initially not particularly interested in supporting it. As a result, the Ministry put into place some conditions to meant to protect Japanese English teachers: The JET participants would referred to as *assistant* language teachers; they would not be allowed to teach alone; and, all teaching would be supervised by a Japanese teacher. One legacy is that “*yakudoku* has persisted in lessons taught by Japanese teachers on their own, and occasional team-taught lessons appear as a diversion for students (and teachers) from the “serious business” of exam-oriented grammar- and translation-focused core English teaching, which continues unchanged” (Smith & Imura, 2004, pp. 37-38).

Another factor that skewed public perception of the value of learning English was related to opportunities (or the lack thereof) to use it in the workplace. In the 1990s (and until recent years) translation work was seen as a low status profession dominated by young women and was consequently very poorly compensated. Chavez (2018) writes, “public- and private-sector projects often treat translation as something minor and not worthy of investment” (p. 2). In her study of the dire conditions for (mostly female) court interpreters in the 1990s Kida relates, “Japanese courts believed that anyone, such as me, who was a native speaker of a foreign language, ... with Japanese conversational skills could be a court interpreter” (2013, p. 64). Translation and interpretation was not seen as particularly skilled employment so it was compensated as unskilled, non-regular work. Beyond working as a translator/interpreter or a language teacher, there seemed to be little else—few companies or careers explicitly stated that English language competence was required or even valued in assessments of prospective employees.

3.4 The 2002-3 reform and action plan and beyond

To counteract the failures of *yutori kyouiku*, the Ministry of Education came out with yet another action plan to be implemented 2002-3 to “cultivate Japanese with English abilities” (Tanabe, 2004). MEXT “attempted to promote higher achievement in English communicative skills among secondary school students by urging teachers to use CLT” (Nishino, 2011, p. 131). As part of that action plan they called for creation of 100 Super English High Schools where English would be the language of instruction by 2005 (MEXT, 2002). MEXT stated that all English teachers were expected to have a TOEFL score of 550 or over, a requirement that worried a good number of teachers (Tanabe, 2004) yet,

...to achieve this communicative innovation, MEXT instituted a 5-year Action Plan in which intensive teacher training programs for 60,000 secondary school English teachers and the introduction of a listening component in the Center Test (a nationwide college entrance exam) were important features. (Nishino, 2011, pp. 131-2)

The new reforms targeted the entrance exam system and indirectly *juken-eigo* by implying that “teacher-centered methods for cramming knowledge should be avoided” (Rear, 2008, p. 1). These reforms also directed universities to consider different admission methods, such as interviews and essay tests (Aspinall, 2005). The addition of the new listening component to the National Center Exams was yet another (futile?) attempt to let positive washback lead teachers to implement innovation and change in their teaching practices.

Nishino (2011) investigated high school teachers’ perception and use CLT and observed “teachers’ cognitive and practical adjustment to this landmark innovation” (p. 132). She found the paradox of respondents holding positive beliefs about CLT yet a firm conviction that rote memorization was central to language learning. More than half expressed a wish to make their classrooms communicative but when queried about actual practice they admitted to not really using communicative activities—“ a gap between their reported beliefs and practices” (p. 132). In response to their beliefs about their personal efficacy, pre- and in-service training, learning experiences and contextual factors,

(a) the respondents had less confidence in their ability to implement CLT than in their English skills and grammatical knowledge, (b) the respondents had fewer opportunities in pre-service training courses than in in-service training programs to receive practical training in CLT, (c) they perceived that the classroom conditions were not optimal for the use of CLT, (d) **MEXT innovations had not strongly influenced their classroom practices**, and (e) they had had few chances to experience communicative activities in English class when they themselves were in high school. It appears that these factors had a negative influence on the respondents' use of CLT. (p. 132, emphasis added)

Nishino's conclusions noted that

...the respondents held positive beliefs about CLT, but there was a gap between their reported beliefs and practices. In order to make Japanese high school English lessons more communicative, contextual factors and teacher training programs should be re-examined and **context-appropriate communicative methodologies should be developed by teachers themselves**. (p. 132, emphasis added)

4. Conclusions

Through the recounting of foreign language teaching history in Japan a number of problematic patterns have been revealed. In the words of Hagerman (2009), “[b]y examining past and present policy regarding English it becomes clear that there are great contradictions between stated objectives and actual practice” (p. 61). The research by Nishino (2011) reported in the previous section is strong evidence of this.

One of the most prominent problems is that the use of top-down innovation by government or by business engenders resistance from teachers and learners. Teacher surveys capture *tatema* acceptance since direct confrontation and disagreement is frowned upon, yet *honno* is revealed by actions where “top-down initiatives can still be “selectively integrated” (i.e. largely avoided) when they are perceived to be inappropriate at grass-roots level” (Smith & Imura, 2004, p. 39). The teachers may appear to accept new reforms but if in their hearts they do not

believe in the new system's usefulness, they will find ways to ignore or subvert the directives.

Another obstacle to effecting changes in foreign language teaching often lies in the outside expert's apparent lack of respect for local teacher's professionalism and valuable insights about the target learner population. Henrichsen (1989) noted, "ELEC's leaders – especially the American ones – seemed to think that the superiority of their new methods and materials would be enough to overcome any obstacles placed in their way" (p. 177). Some researchers go so far as to insinuate that Western reformers and foreign experts may have been guilty of cultural imperialism (Susser, 1998; Pennycook, 2000), yet it also possible that some earnest souls have been quite unjustly tarred with this kind of guilt by association.

One of the biggest flaws in the foreign language teaching reform fabric is the fallacy of hoping that a positive wash back effect from reformed exams will cause teachers to change their teaching methods or curricular priorities. If teachers believe in *yakudoku*, they will always be able to find ways to rationalize its continued use, despite the form of entrance exams. Furthermore, entrance exams are big money makers and universities (especially popular private universities) do not want to lose that revenue stream, so they will continue to hold them.

One fairly obvious recommendation is to involve teachers directly in reform decisions. Currently business leaders, bureaucrats and researchers form the advisory councils and make most recommendations. Where are the teachers—the actual practitioners—in this scenario? They are excluded and marginalized from the decisions that affect them the most.

Grassroots workshops as part of regularly scheduled mandatory professional development are another succession that will go a long way in changing hearts and minds about adopting new methods and adapting old ones. This also means that boards of education should build in professional development as an affirmative right (rather than frame it as a shameful obligation) by securing flexible arrangements for paid leave and collegial support. During the summer break some professional development workshops are being offered for teachers and ALTs already but attendance is voluntary rather than rotational. Also, teachers ought to be

encouraged and supported to take study abroad opportunities at least once in their careers but preferably on a regular schedule (once in five to ten years).

However a much more rigorous professional development effort via post-graduate training, would transform ELT in Japan. Although there are many postgraduate masters-level programs in TESOL and applied linguistics in Japan many of them are geared towards professional development for instructors and researchers employed at universities. There are a few especially designed programs for K-12 teachers, notably GSELER (Graduate School for English Language Education and Research) at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies. This program offers flexible classroom hours on a part time enrollment basis. If boards of education asked each school principal to find one teacher in their staff willing to earn a masters degree in such a program, the result would be a grassroots level renaissance of innovation and improved professional practice.

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Abstract

This chapter will provide a historical overview of foreign language policies in Japan with a special focus on English. Since the opening of Japan at the start of the Meiji period, there has been a constant swing between opposing camps: those who espouse communication and intercultural development and those who fear that bilingualism brings with it a loss of identity and threat to culture. The beliefs promulgated by these factions continue to influence the shifts in reforms, policy and practice to the detriment of the quality of language education in Japan.

Keywords: Language Policy, *juken-eigo*, ELT methodology, educational reforms, Japan