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# Student Use of Japanese in the EFL Classroom

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## Introduction

In his article *Using the First Language in the Classroom*, Cook (2001) points out that since the "Great Reform" at the end of the 19th century, there has been a tendency for language pedagogy to be based primarily on communicative approaches which exclude the mother tongue from the foreign language classroom. However, over the past thirty years, some scholars have come to question this propensity to favor L2 exclusively and have begun an inquiry into the roles that the mother tongue may play in the foreign or second language classroom. Despite this newer wave of research (Burden, 2000; Prodromou, 2001; Roberts-Auerbach, 1993; Schweers, 1999) many institutions and the teachers who work in them automatically adopt target language-only policies. It may be safe to assume that some institutions advocate English-only education as a marketing tool. However, teachers often adopt these policies not only because of institutional pressure but also because they believe without question that exclusive use of the target language will help students reach their goals more quickly than allowing the use of their mother tongue.

My own experience teaching in both ESL and EFL contexts seems to reinforce the notion that English-only policies are in place in many regions of the world. In fact, every institution that has employed me over the past 15 years has eschewed the use of the mother tongue in the classroom. Although my colleagues and I often had trouble enforcing English-only policies, we did not question their validity and instead focused our attention on schemes which would prevent our students from using their first language which included distributing yellow and red cards and making students pay a fine for infractions. Despite our efforts, most teachers admitted that it was next to impossible to maintain an English-only classroom. I attributed my own failure to enforce exclusive use of English to the fact that I did not completely agree with the policy on an ideological level and because attempts to ban the use

of the students' first language often took away from the task at hand due to the constant reminders and interruptions that were required.

I had always assumed that my students were reverting to using their mother tongue due to a lack of proficiency in English and that trying to force them to make the effort to express themselves in L2 was good practice for the "real life" situations they may face outside the classroom when use of their own language may be impossible.

It was not until 2007 that I began to question the reasons why my students may be using their mother tongue in the classroom and if their use of L1 was somehow mediating and facilitating their acquisition of L2. This inquiry began as a result of being placed in a unique teaching situation. While working at an international school in Tokyo, I was assigned to teach a group of twelve students who did not fit into any of the four established English departments. In the class were native English speakers who spoke Japanese well, advanced students whose mother tongue was Japanese, and advanced students whose mother tongue was not Japanese but who were proficient in the language. At the beginning of the academic year, we established class rules together and the students chose to adopt an English-only policy. Despite the students' own wishes to see such a policy enforced, it proved once again to be impossible. However, in this case, limited proficiency could not be squarely blamed for the use of Japanese and I decided to investigate the matter further in hopes of discovering the reasons motivating my students' language choices, their attitudes towards that usage, and, based on that information, establishing a more pedagogically appropriate language policy for the class. In order to do so, I planned an action research project which aimed at answering the following questions:

a. What are teachers' evidence-based views of student use of Japanese in the classroom, and are there any patterns to be found in that usage?
b. What are students' views about their own use of Japanese in the classroom, their attitudes towards that usage, and are there any commonalities apparent in their comments?
c. How do the teachers' and students' views in this study compare with published classroom-based research in this area?

**Review of the Literature**

In the following section, I will briefly survey the literature which leans in favor of L2-only policies and that which advocates allowing some use of L1 in the classroom. Then, specific

attention will be focused on the situation in Japan and how the increasing complexity of this context is pushing the simple argument of "for or against L1 use" out of the limelight. This complexity is demanding a new paradigm for English language education that encompasses a student body which is gradually becoming more and more diverse.

*Scholars and Teachers in Favor of L2-Only Policies*

In his book, *A History of English Language Teaching,* Howatt (1984) traces the shift in trend from the Grammar Translation Method to more communicative approaches that began with The Direct Method at the beginning of the 20th century. He states that the backlash against Grammar Translation produced a pedagogical approach which almost utterly rejected use of L1 in the language classroom and to demonstrate this, he explains the rationale behind The Direct Method and then reviews some of the most influential studies carried out on the issue by Wilkins (1970), Swain (1980), Krashen (1985). This research bolstered the notion that L1 should be banned from the foreign language classroom so that students' learning of the new language could be fast-tracked through maximum exposure to input and maximum opportunity for output of the target language.

Cook (2001) further supports Howatt's view that 20th century pedagogical approaches were centered around direct or communicative methods and he outlines the typical justifications which have been used to keep English-only policies in place. Cook (2001) argues that the ban of L1 has been common in English language pedagogy based on three theories of how foreign language learning occurs: first, that L2 can be acquired in the same way as L1; second, that compartmentalization of the two languages in the brain is both possible and necessary; and third, that maximum exposure to L2 will produce faster results than allowing the use of the first language.

Although neither Howatt (1984) nor Cook (2001) advocate the ban of L1 from the classroom, their work provides us with a background for understanding the reasons why many scholars and teachers favor L2-only policies. In addition to this historical grounding, it is important to look at work which directly advocates a near complete ban on the use of the students' language.

In her response to Roberts-Auerbach's (1993) article on allowing students to use L1 in the language classroom, Polio (1994) argues to the contrary. She begins by pointing out that the terms "allow" and "use" need to be clearly defined before any legitimate language policy can be put into place. She also puts into question the rationale behind the amount of

L1 that Roberts-Auerbach (1993) advocates and states that it cannot be proven that the use of the mother tongue empowers students or that L1 actually aids them in their learning of L2. Finally, Polio (1994) takes issue with Roberts-Auerbach's (1993) argument that banning L1 is primarily an ideological move which reinforces post-colonial power structures and ends her work by stating that any pedagogical decisions about language use need to be made based on SLA theory rather that political opinion.

Prodromou (2001) argues that there is a place for the students' language in ESL/EFL situations and that the majority of his students want the option of being able to use their first language when studying English. Prodromou (2001) states that using the students' language or allowing them to do so helps to increase grammatical awareness, is useful for contrastive analysis, and can help students better prepare themselves for activities to be carried out in L2. In contrast, Gabrielatos (2001) argues that grammar explanations can be delivered with equal efficiency in L2 and that contrastive analysis and language preparation can also be accomplished through the exclusive use of the target language.

While the studies mentioned above are primarily theoretical arguments against allowing the use of L1, there has also been a considerable amount of action research carried out in the field which appears to indicate that the majority of teachers feel the use of L1 is unhelpful and that an attempt to restrict its use is the goal that educators should be striving towards (Lin, 1990). One example of such a study was conducted by Bawcom (2002) in Spain, the aim of which was examining the reasons why her students were using L1, followed by a post study which attempted to limit this usage. Although Bawcom herself determined that the students were using Spanish in the EFL classroom to lower the affective filter, transfer learning strategies, and for expedient translation of unknown vocabulary, she does not appear to find these reasons to be legitimate because in her post study she attempts to show that these purposes for using L1 can be accomplished just as efficiently in L2.

While some may argue that Bawcom's (2002) study is an isolated one that does not accurately reflect the complexity of teachers' attitudes towards the use of L1, the work of Chavez (2003) and Belz (2003) appears to confirm that the majority of teachers working in both ESL and EFL situations favor L2-only policies and are concerned about how they can be enforced. Chavez (2003) points out that most of the research on this issue emphasizes the ways in which teachers can reduce the use of L1 in the classroom. Gathering information from a less academic setting, Belz (2003) uses comments posted on an internet website with more than 10,000 members and which is dedicated to addressing the issue of English-only

policies to demonstrate that the vast majority of teachers link the use of L1 to laziness and deficiency and prefer to devise ways of preventing students from using their language rather than examine the reasons why this may be happening.

*Scholars and Teachers in Favor of Allowing Use of L1*

While the force of pedagogical tradition lies in favor of L2-only education, and it appears that researchers who challenge L2-only policies open up debate, and it also seems as if the bulk of action research done by teachers tends to focus on methods of reducing L1 usage, there is a body of literature that has been growing over the past thirty years which advocates the use of the first language in the foreign language classroom. Studies that endorse the use of the mother tongue can be grouped into four different categories: ideological arguments, student attitudes towards L1 use, teacher attitudes towards L1 use, and recent research in SLA theory.

As briefly outlined in the previous section, Roberts-Auerbach's (1993) argument for the use of L1 in the foreign language classroom is based primarily on the theory that English-only policies are rooted in a particular ideological perspective. She argues that requiring students to use English-only mirrors policies which attempt to do the same on the national level. She bolsters her argument by citing the work of Tollefson (1991), Skutnabb-Kangas (1990), and Phillipson (1990). Unfortunately, Roberts-Auerbach's (1993) work does not address specifically how English-only policies in the classroom (as opposed to on the national level) are based on this ideology and she does not mention the counter argument that students who become proficient in English may be allowed access to greater economic and social power. Also, as Polio (1994) points out, Auerbach's arguments cannot be generalized to fit into EFL situations and one of their major weaknesses is the absence of SLA research to support them. However, her main point is to prompt teachers to weigh their own ideological perspective and examine how that comes into play when shaping their pedagogical practice.

In addition to ideological considerations, some scholars and teachers believe that the students' attitude towards the use of L1 in the classroom is an important factor to take into account when determining a formal language policy. The work of Schweers (1999), Prodromou (2001), and Burden (2000) appears to confirm that students would prefer to be allowed to use their mother tongue in the foreign language classroom in order to achieve specific purposes. Schweers' (1999) study conducted at the University of Puerto Rico indicates that students want Spanish to be used to facilitate comprehension of unknown words or instructions and to build rapport between students and with the teacher.

Prodromou's (2001) work shows that the lower their level, the more the students want to have the option of using L1 to help them comprehend the material covered in class. It also indicates that despite increased proficiency, 50% of higher level students want to use L1 primarily to support the learning of new vocabulary. Finally, Burden's (2000) survey of Japanese university students illustrates that the majority of them want to use Japanese and have the teacher use Japanese in order to help them relax.

Not only do students appear to want the option of resorting to L1 in the classroom but so do some teachers. Although the previous section indicates that most teachers feel English-only is the best policy, they report often using students' L1 amidst feelings of guilt that they are robbing their students of various opportunities to be exposed to input in the target language (Buckmaster, 1999; Lin 1990). Despite this, some teachers believe that some use of L1 serves an important function in the classroom.

Roberts-Auerbach (1993) cites Piasecka and Collingham (1988) who advocate the use of L1 for functions such as negotiation of the syllabus, record keeping, classroom management, language analysis, discussion of cross-cultural issues, error explanation and correction, idea development, and to lower the affective filter. In addition, Prodromou (2001) cites Atkinson (1987) who suggests using L1 in order to set up activities, clarify instructions, and check student comprehension. Also, Nation (2003) puts forth some instances in which L1 may be used which include word for word translation of vocabulary and to help students lower the affective filter.

While the above work illustrates how some teachers are using L1 in the classroom, the following studies indicate that teacher attitudes are gradually changing towards using the mother tongue based on their experiences in the classroom. Rolin Lanziti's (2003) study which includes a section on correcting learners by using their L1 demonstrates that the teachers who participated in her research were willing to experiment with using L1 in the classroom and changed their classroom language policy based on the results of her data collection which showed that use of L1 in error correction is often more effective than use of the L2. In addition, Foto's (1995) work indicates that more and more teachers are beginning to believe that code-switching is a natural phenomenon which occurs amongst bilinguals and developing bilinguals and, as a result, are not opposed to using or hearing L1 in their classrooms. Finally, Cohen and Swain (1976) report that several teachers they surveyed indicated that they use the L1 for discipline because it is oftentimes more effective than the L2.

Although it is important to bear in mind the ideological implications of an English-only policy as well as student and teacher attitudes towards the use of the mother tongue in the classroom, the research which examines these factors does not provide any solid evidence that the use of L1 necessarily facilitates the learning of L2. However, several SLA-based studies tend to confirm that the use of L1 can be an effective tool in learning to read, write, and speak in L2. For example, Seng and Hashim's (2006) study on using L1 to "think aloud" when reading a text in L2 indicates to the researchers that students using their mother tongue were able to solve "word related and idea related" problems in L2 more quickly than students who did not. Also, students using L1 "think aloud" while reading transferred reading strategies from L1 to L2 more efficiently and more often than students who did not use L1 "think aloud" while reading.

Anton and DiCamillas's (1998) study on using L1 while writing shows that students who switched to their mother tongue in order to mediate the task before beginning and to negotiate meta-linguistic problems they encountered while writing performed better than those who did not. A second study on using L1 while writing in L2 was conducted by Stapa and Majid (2006). Their work indicates that students who were allowed the opportunity of brainstorming ideas in L1 prior to writing a composition in L2 received better scores from independent markers in the areas of content, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics than students who did their brainstorming in L2.

Other studies which focus on speaking also confirm that the use of L1 appears to facilitate L2 learning. For example, Brooks and Donato (1994) conducted research on students learning Spanish in North America. Between two groups, one of which was permitted to use English (L1) and one that was not, the group that used English completed the task more quickly and more successfully than the group that did not use their mother tongue. As a result, Brooks and Donato concluded that the "meta-talk" that revolves around the task is best done in L1 and serves as a mediator between students and the new language.

Hancock (1997) also did research on the use of L1 during speaking tasks. In his work he recorded two English classes in Spain: one at the beginning of term and one at the end. In both cases, students were permitted to use their L1 and their conversations were recorded and transcribed. According to the data collected, students used L1 as a "task negotiation tool" and as a means of helping themselves and others "comprehend the material" (p. 218). Hancock concluded that students select L1 for the above mentioned "particular purposes" and that they either consciously or unconsciously know that using L1 will help them negotiate

meaning and work through a task. As a result, Hancock (1997) concluded that attempts to prevent students from using the L1 tool that they have at their disposal will likely be unsuccessful.

*Focus on the Issue in the Japanese Context*

When it comes to the issue of using the mother tongue in Japan, Critchley (1999) points out that relatively few studies have been conducted on the topic, probably because most institutions market courses based on the exclusive use of English during class time. Weschler (1997) and Klevberg (2000) also both note the intense institutional pressure that teachers in Japan face to implement English-only policies. Based on interviews with representatives from the three largest language schools in Japan, Klevberg reports that the rationale behind the L2-only policies which are so common is that there is parental pressure for such education and that many parents and school managers believe that students who speak Japanese "for six days and 23 hours a week…should have an intensive English lesson…and hear a native English speaker" (p. 1). Other arguments for L2-only policies include the idea that when preparing students for home-stay programs abroad, they should not be able to use any Japanese in the class because they will not be able to depend on their mother tongue once they are living with their host families (Klevberg, 2000).

Interestingly, despite these arguments for exclusive use of L2, 50% of teachers working in the institutions where Klevberg conducted her study admit to using Japanese some of the time. They report doing so in order to help out lower level students, to translate vocabulary, and to provide grammar explanations. An additional study carried out by Schmidt (1995) yielded similar findings to those of Klevberg and indicates that some teachers use L1 for simple word-to-word translations and to establish positive rapport with the class. Also, some teachers permit students to use L1 when they brainstorm ideas or prepare for tasks to be done in L2. Despite his apparently open stance on the use of the mother tongue, Schmidt (1995) warns that many teachers who use L1 in the classroom report that they feel guilty for doing so and he concludes his paper by cautioning teachers not to allow L1 to dominate, to slowly wean students from using Japanese, and to use various methods of teaching vocabulary in order to avoid an over- reliance on translation.

*A New Language Teaching Paradigm for Japan?*

The research of Weschler (1997), Klevberg (2000), and Schmidt (1995) demonstrates that although there is pressure to submit to the L2-only policies established by institutions for various reasons, many teachers are in fact using some L1 in the classroom. However, the work of these teachers appears to portray the situation in Japan as a monolithic one in the sense that all students are native speakers of Japanese and use Japanese exclusively in their daily lives. While this may be true for the majority of students, the situation in Japan, particularly in Tokyo, is changing rapidly and is becoming more complex. As a result, the issue of allowing the use of L1 to a certain extent or attempting to ban it completely is also becoming more difficult to address.

Several scholars in Japan are beginning to explore this new phenomenon of diversity from within their own context. In their book, *Studies in Japanese Bilingualism*, Noguchi and Fotos (2001) focus on the emerging multilingual, multicultural situation in the country and stress that the creation of a new English language education paradigm is required in post-modern Japan which includes native English speakers, near-native English speakers, returnees, heritage learners, language minority students, and EFL learners. Although Japan is a country which is known for its one nation, one language, one culture construct and bilingual and multilingual identities are often seen as threats, some scholars believe that within a new paradigm, it will be possible to re-imagine "foreign" language education as a boon rather than a danger by focusing on how cross-cultural, multicultural and socio-cultural education are beneficial to Japan both economically and socially (Train, 2005; Yamamoto, 2001).

Despite the apparent enthusiasm of Noguchi and Fotos (2001), Yamamoto (2001), and Train (2005), the goal of creating a new paradigm to fit the varied profiles of students in Japan is a daunting one. As Seibert Vaipae (2001) notes, the majority of teachers who work with "language minority" students (defined as students whose mother tongue is not Japanese) often lack special training to help them cope with this new population and there are no solid programs set in place by the Ministry of Education for these students. Furthermore, as Katz (2003) points out, while native or near native speakers who are in EFL classes have valuable linguistic and cultural insight, they often have no clearly defined role in the classroom. Another contentious issue is that traditional EFL students are often intimidated by "returnees" who are proficient in English and, as a result, students with a high level of English and a native-like accent may become the target of bullying. In addition, numerous returnee

students feel self-conscious in the English language classroom and do not want to be singled out by the teacher or set apart from the rest of their classmates (Noguchi, 2001).

**Summary**

At present, there is a debate in the fields of ESL and EFL on whether or not to allow the use of L1 in the classroom and, if so, how much and for what purposes. Although most scholars, regardless of where they stand on the issue, do not advocate any completely fixed policies and recommend that each teaching context be considered before concluding what the official class rules are regarding the usage of the mother tongue, the majority of teachers are of the opinion that L2 exclusivity is the best policy and face pressure from the institutions they work in to enforce English-only rules. Despite this ongoing debate, the time may soon come when the argument is moot because of rapidly increasing diversity amongst populations.

The ESL context is almost always more diverse than the EFL one, and teachers are normally faced with students who do not share the same mother tongue. As a result, those working in ESL have often insisted on L2 exclusivity in the classroom. Perhaps this is because it is impossible for the teacher to know and use all of the students' first languages and also because they may believe the fairest, most practical way to address the students and for them to address each other is in the target language. Despite this, the ESL situation is slowly changing as some teachers are beginning to realize some of the benefits of allowing the students to use their own language, maybe not with other students, but by themselves or in small groups when they are preparing to write or speak in L2.

Unlike the ESL context, EFL situations have almost always lacked diversity and, as a result, the issue of L2-only policies and how to enforce them may be a greater "bone of contention" in Gabrielatos' (2001) words, since most students share the same mother tongue. However, even in countries such as Japan, this is changing. As a result, the debate of allowing or banning L1 will likely move gradually from L2 exclusivity towards a new paradigm, however problematic its establishment may be, which allows for bilingualism and multilingualism to manifest itself in tangible ways in the language classroom.

The following study seeks not only to contribute to the debate of whether or not the students' first language may facilitate learning of another language but also to examine student attitudes towards the use of L1 in the English language classroom. As mentioned earlier, Critchley (1999) highlights the fact that studies of this nature are not often carried out in the Japanese context. Also, Noguchi and Fotos (2001) have called for the creation of a

new paradigm for teaching in Japan which addresses the diversity which is rapidly becoming commonplace. This study is an attempt to begin to fill the gap in research in this area and to endeavor to shape a new paradigm for teaching which may be used at the grassroots level, in this author's own teaching situation.

**Methodology**

*Setting and Participants*

The following study took place at Kanto International School in Central Tokyo. The school has approximately 2000 students enrolled in five different English departments: Regular English, which is a program that covers the normal EFL curriculum based on guidelines set up by the Japanese Ministry of Education; General English, which includes more hours and has a stronger academic focus than the Regular Program; Super English, which is a program recognized by the Ministry of Education and includes more contact hours than either the Regular or General English Programs and only admits students who achieve a high academic level in both their English classes as well as their other classes; the "Returnee" Program which is dedicated to serving the needs of Japanese students whose mother tongue is Japanese but who have spent a portion of their lives studying abroad in either in Japanese or English medium schools; and the Study Abroad Program, a department which was established for Japanese EFL students of any level who share the goal of post secondary education in an English speaking country.

The students who took part in this study were enrolled in The Study Abroad Program and were in their first year of high school. All participants were either 15 or 16 years of age at the time the research was conducted. At the beginning of the school year, these twelve students were separated from the Study Abroad homeroom class and put into a special class because their high level of English proficiency did not make them suitable candidates for the lower level curriculum normally used in the first year of the program. They were selected to be members of this group based on their entrance examination scores and on the results of personal interviews about their backgrounds. Although some of the students would have been suitable candidates for the Returnee Program, they chose to enroll in The Study Abroad Department because of the program's intense academic focus and their goal to pursue a degree from an English medium university upon graduation.

Despite the fact that all of the students have a high level of English, their proficiency can be grouped into three categories: native English speakers, native Japanese speaking

students with an advanced level of English, and advanced level students whose mother tongue is neither Japanese nor English. Of the four native speakers that make up the first category, one was born to an American mother and a Japanese father, raised in Texas and moved to Japan at age 14, one was born to an American mother and a Japanese father, raised in Colorado and moved to Japan at age 12, another was born in Japan but spent all her life abroad in English medium schools in South Africa and Jordan and used English at home with her Japanese parents, and one who was born in Japan but completed the majority of his schooling in New York. Of the six students that form the second category, one was born and raised in Japan and speaks Japanese at home but studied in bilingual English-Japanese schools in Malaysia and the US for five years, three others are of mixed Chinese and Japanese heritage and have never lived abroad before but speak both Japanese and Chinese at home and acquired a good level of English through study in both EFL settings in Japanese schools as well as private night schools, one student is of mixed Japanese and Iranian heritage and uses Japanese and Farsi at home, and one student is Japanese, has lived in Japan all his life, uses Japanese exclusively at home but has an upper-intermediate level of English due to self-study. Two students form the final category have Korean ethnic backgrounds. Both were born in Korea and speak Korean exclusively at home. One moved to Japan at age 9 and the other at age 12. Both report that they can speak and write Japanese well because they studied it in Korea and, since coming to Japan, they studied in schools which provided instruction in Japanese, Korean, and English.

*Study Design and Data Collection*

This study was conducted over the period of a week during which time students had two reading classes, two speaking classes, and two writing classes. All the classes were 50 minutes in length and were designed so that a maximum of interaction could occur amongst students. Prior to beginning the classes for the week, I explained to students that we would have a different language policy during each two lesson block. In the reading classes, students were requested to try to maintain an English-only policy when discussing and composing group answers. In the speaking classes, I told native English speakers that they could use some Japanese and non-native English speakers that they could have limited use of Japanese but I did not specify for what purposes. Instead, I asked the students to use Japanese when they felt it was necessary, either to help others or to help themselves. In the

writing classes, I told the students that they could have unlimited use of Japanese to accomplish a series of task-based activities which prepared them to write an expository essay.

In order to collect data for this study, I employed three methods. First, I set the tasks to be accomplished at the beginning of each class and then sat as an observer, keeping notes in a logbook on what I noticed about the students' use of Japanese. Second, I invited six different colleagues to observe one class each and write down what they noticed about the students' use of Japanese. I asked teachers to write down instances of Japanese usage and to identify the purpose of that use if possible (vocabulary translation, task clarification, etc.) All of the teachers who took part in collecting data for this research have MA degrees in TESOL or are in the process of pursuing an MA in this field. All had been teaching in Japan for over two years and all except for one identified themselves as intermediate or advanced speakers of Japanese. Finally, I asked the students for their written feedback on their views about how they used Japanese, why they think they used Japanese this way, and how they felt about their Japanese use at the end of each two class block (see Appendix 1). In response to the above three prompts, students were asked to free write for a period of 15 minutes. Students were also requested to fill out a questionnaire which aimed at gauging their attitudes on the use of Japanese in the classroom (see Appendix 2). Unfortunately, due to strict privacy laws in place at the school, it is not possible to make either audiotapes or videotapes of students and therefore impossible to expound on the data by replaying or transcribing the lessons. However, I will attempt to add validity and reliability to this qualitative inquiry through categorization of data and specific examples taken from student interaction observed by teachers as well as quotes from student comments.

**Findings**

Upon examination of the data collected from the logbook, colleagues who observed the classes, and the feedback from the student participants, a number of similarities can be found in the comments on the use of Japanese in the classroom. In addition, the findings of this action research project appear to substantiate some of the findings of previous studies conducted on the same topic and outlined in the literature review.

In this section, I will summarize the main points of the findings of this study by combining data collected in my logbook with the data submitted to me by my colleagues who observed the classes. The data collected from student feedback forms will be reported on separately. Finally, I will draw parallels between the findings of this study and those of other

research carried out previously. In doing so, I will attempt to address the research questions (*a*, *b* and *c* below).

*Findings Based on Teacher and Observer Data*

a. What are teachers' evidence-based views of student use of Japanese in the classroom, and are there any patterns to be found in that usage?

According to the data collected by the teachers, students used Japanese to achieve several goals. First, students used Japanese to define unknown words. Seven out of seven teachers noticed that students used sentences like, "I forgot how to say ----- in English." or "I don't know how to say ----- in English." Some words that students translated from Japanese were "discrimination," "expose," "theory" and "rural." Interestingly, while native English speakers knew the Japanese for these words and were able to provide English equivalents, they did not know the Kanji (Chinese characters) for these words and the Japanese students were able to teach them. Second, seven out of seven teachers noticed that Japanese was used for task clarification. When unsure of how to proceed, students said, "What should we do now?" or "What are we supposed to do?" in Japanese. Native English speaking students tended to provide explanations in English while others provided task clarification in Japanese. Third, four out of seven teachers noticed that class members used Japanese to explain to fellow students about language appropriacy or to do contrastive analysis. One example of this is when a native English speaking student told a native Japanese speaker that the word "bitch" is not appropriate to use in the classroom and is derogatory. In Japanese, the borrowed word "bitch", made popular in ads for a line of clothing, simply means a girl who is streetwise. Another example is when a native English speaker explained to students in her group that the word "stalker" cannot be used flippantly in English as it may cause offense, unlike the glib usage that is permissible in Japanese-English. Forth, all teachers noted that all students, including native English speakers, used Japanese fillers. Examples are the Japanese words for "let me see," "really?," "great," "got it," and "I see." Finally, four teachers out of seven noticed some of the native Japanese speakers using their own language to voice their discomfort during the English-Only class block. One student said, "I feel nervous" and another said, "This is embarrassing, isn't it." Two other students apologized in Japanese to others in their group for their "weaker English ability" when they struggled to find a word. Teachers noticed that native speakers responded to these comments in Japanese, trying to encourage their fellow students and reassure them by saying things like "take it easy," "don't

worry about it," and the Japanese word *gambatte*, loosely translated as "go for it," thus perhaps using L1 to lower the affective filter.

*Findings based on Student Data*

b. What are students' views about their own use of Japanese in the classroom, their attitudes towards that usage, and are there any commonalities apparent in their comments?

In their feedback, student remarks appear to confirm what teachers noticed about use of Japanese in the classroom. First, all students reported that using Japanese improved the atmosphere in the class. The phrase "more comfortable" appeared 17 times in the free-write feedback gathered after the limited Japanese use classes (see Appendix 1). Other phrases used to describe this block of classes were, "much less tense," "so much easier," "under less stress," "not so much pressure," "I felt more relaxed," "I felt relieved," and "I didn't feel pushed." Second, all students reported using Japanese to provide translation for unknown words in English and all students except for one stated that they felt being able to use Japanese for quick translation was preferable to trying to use circumlocution or the dictionary. The one student who did not want to be able to use Japanese for translation was a native English speaker. He commented that:

> I choose to try not to use Japanese to help other students with vocabulary. The reason for this is simple. If you don't know how to say a word, you can just use the dictionary. Asking for words will be a distraction for people trying to focus on their own work. Also, if you ask the person next to you, you are only able to listen but if you look words up in the dictionary, you are able to read and memorize too.

Third, students reported that they used Japanese for what can be identified as social and cultural purposes. For example, one native English speaking student said that they used English exclusively to talk about academic subjects but that she wanted to use some Japanese in her group. She reported, "I've noticed that when I talk about things that do not have to do with what we are studying, I talk in Japanese because I want to fit in with the two guys in our group who usually speak Japanese. Also, English is my first language and I want to use Japanese when I can, even in English class because I worked so hard to learn it." Another native English speaking student reported that she likes to use Japanese when she wants to get her group members to do something. She said that Japanese sounds "softer" and that it is "less direct" than English.

In addition to the data collected from students' free-writing, class members were also requested to respond to a questionnaire that attempted to gauge student attitudes about the use of Japanese in the class (see Appendix 2). The data collected from the questionnaire indicate that attitudes towards using Japanese in the classroom differ depending on whether the student is a native English speaker or a native speaker of another language and there are several important points to note. First, questionnaire data appear to show that although the native Japanese speakers express a desire to use some Japanese in the class, they think that this use does not help them to learn English, but rather only serves to make them feel more "comfortable," as they put it, in the free-write feedback. In contrast, the native English speakers seemed to think that using Japanese helped other students in the class learn English. This is shown in student responses to statement one, *I like to use some Japanese because I had problems expressing myself in English*. All six native Japanese speakers responded that they agreed or strongly agreed. It is also shown in student responses to statement five, *I think that using Japanese helps me / others to learn English*, with which all the native speakers and the Korean girls either agreed or strongly agreed while all the native Japanese speakers disagreed or strongly disagreed. Second, the data appear to show that despite the fact that the native English speakers and the Korean girls thought using some Japanese would help fellow students, they did not always want to provide this help. In response to statement two, *I felt I wanted to help other students by using Japanese because I thought they were having difficulty with English* two native speakers agreed while the other two and both Korean girls responded that they felt neutral. Third, responses to statement three, *I felt pressure to use Japanese because it is the language we use in our social lives outside the classroom* seemed to indicate that although the native English speakers do not necessarily want to use Japanese to help other students, they do use Japanese to try to fit in because all the native English speakers responded that they agreed with the statement while the Korean girls and the native Japanese speakers either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Finally, all the native Japanese speaking students responded "agree" or "strongly agree" to statement four, *I sometimes feel embarrassed using English because my ability is weaker than that of other students*" while the Korean girls disagreed. This seems to indicate that there is some kind of affective filter influencing the oral performance of the Japanese native speaker students.

In summary, although the Japanese students admit to feeling embarrassed at times because their speaking is not on par with other students in the class and they would like to use Japanese to alleviate the stress this causes, they also believe that using Japanese will not be

helpful to their learning of English. Also, native English speakers are not uniformly willing to use Japanese to help fellow students. Rather, they indicate that they use Japanese in class because they feel pressure to do so since it is the language of social life normally used among students.

*Comparison of Findings with Other Studies*

c. How do the teachers' and students' views in this study compare with published classroom-based research in this area?

In addition to teacher, observer, and student data containing common points about how Japanese is used in the classroom, the findings of this study also share similarities with the results of other research which has been published on the topic. Perhaps the most salient commonality can be found when comparing portions of the work of Roberts-Auerbach (1993) to this study. In her article on the use of the first language in the "foreign" language classroom, Roberts-Auerbach's (1993) only argument in favor of allowing L1 that is based on SLA research is the notion of the "affective filter". She states that permitting students to speak some of their native language during lessons will reduce the affective filter and help them feel more at ease and less embarrassed. Although Polio (1994) disagrees that the affective filter theory has been proven, there seems to be some evidence of it in this study based on both what the teachers observed in the classes and what the students reported they felt. As previously mentioned, teachers noticed that some students voiced their discomfort in the "English-Only" classes by using words in Japanese like "nervous" and "embarrassing" and students wrote on their feedback forms that they experienced "stress" and were "uncomfortable" enough that they stated their speaking performance was affected by the fact that they felt they were "under pressure".

Another similarity between this study and the results of other research can be found in the complexity of student attitudes towards the use of Japanese. As both Weschler (1997) and Klevberg (2000) address in their work, there is a strong bias in favor of English-only policies in Japan. This bias is also manifest in the comments of the student participants of this study. As mentioned above, while native Japanese speakers consistently reported that they were "uncomfortable" during the "English-Only" classes, they always added that despite this feeling of discomfort, they believed that using English would only be more affective in helping them learn English. One student also stated that one of the reasons his parents had

chosen to put him in the Study Abroad Program was because of the English-only classroom policy.

Despite the fact that the majority of students feel L2-only is best, their comments also indicate that they benefited from the "Controlled Use of Language" classes in that they were more relaxed and they were able to translate vocabulary and clarify tasks in Japanese. This leads to another similar point: students need flexible options for language use inside the classroom rather than a fixed, target-language-only rule. According to Prodromou (2001), Schweers (1999), and Burden (2000), the majority of students in both higher and lower level classes in various regions of the world want the option of using their L1 when studying another language. Although the lower level students of this study tend to believe use of Japanese would hold them back, their comments indicate that they would like the option of using some Japanese in order to accomplish certain tasks, particularly translation of vocabulary. Also, despite the fact that most students in this study are native or near native speakers of the target language, they too wanted (or felt neutral about) using Japanese in order to translate vocabulary, clarify tasks, and provide pragmatic instruction or contrastive analysis.

A further similarity between the findings of this study and those of previous studies can be seen in student use of language for quick translation of unknown words or phrases. As Nation (2003) points out, direct translation from L1 to L2 is often the most expedient way to convey meaning. While one native English speaker felt that learning to use the dictionary is more constructive than depending on others to provide translation, the majority were comfortable providing word to word translation, probably because they thought it to be most expedient in the classroom when working on group tasks and, as previously noted, the translation can go both ways. Not only do native English speakers help Japanese students but so do native Japanese speakers help English speakers with their Japanese.

Finally, despite benefiting from being able to use some Japanese in the classroom, all students reported that the "Free Use of Language" lessons were the least helpful for them. Students said that if Japanese is to be permitted during English class, it would be most constructive to lay down ground rules about the circumstances under which it can be used. These comments appear to validate Polio's (1994) argument that the terms "allow" and "use" need to be defined and limits set so that students are clear on when they are permitted to use another language as well as the pedagogical rationale behind this usage.

**Discussion**

Regardless of whether they lean in favor of L2-only policies or if they advocate the use of L1 for a variety of purposes, the majority of researchers and teachers studying this topic agree that rules on language usage in the classroom cannot be completely fixed and depend on specific variables of the teaching context including institutional constraints, instructor beliefs, and student attitudes. Although it is valuable to read as widely as possible in order to gain an understanding of why English-only policies are currently favored by the majority of institutions and the teachers working in them, and to map the groundwork of scholars who are currently challenging L2-only policies, it may be most helpful for individual teachers to do action research in order to determine the language usage rules most appropriate for a given group of students. This has been the impetus behind this project and, by combining the results of previous research conducted on this subject with the findings of this study, it is possible to formulate a classroom language policy which is context appropriate as well as pedagogically sound. However, if the language policy of this class is to deviate from the usual English-only one put in place by the administration, one primary goal must be accomplished prior to introducing a new set of rules: students must become aware of the concept that an English-only policy may not be the best option pedagogically, despite the fact the majority of institutions in Japan as well as the students' parents tend to believe that such policies are most beneficial. One way of accomplishing this task could be to present the students with the results of the research in which they participated and discuss it.

If students agree that they believe some limited use of L1 may provide them with the optimum learning environment, the next step is to outline a policy. In order to provide students with some ground rules about language use in the classroom, their language choices and the reasons behind them need to be re-examined. Five significant points can be made about how the students of this class use language and, based on this data and similar findings of other studies, it is possible to begin to formulate language rules that can be put into place in order to more suitably address the needs of the students and facilitate their learning. First, according to the results of this and other studies, there seems to be some evidence of Krashen's (1981) "affective filter" hypothesis. Because the "affective filter" is raised when speakers feel anxiety, students' comprehension of input and their ability to produce quality output are put into jeopardy during classes when an English-only policy is being strictly enforced. Similar to what Schweers (1999) reported in his study on Puerto Rican students, the students of this class tended to use their common language (Spanish) to create a more

relaxed atmosphere and to build rapport. In order to lower the affective filter which seems to be quite apparent amongst these students, limited use of Japanese should be permitted to satisfy this need. It may also be used for social purposes by the native speakers of English.

Second, similar to the findings of Nation (1993), students in this class use Japanese in order to provide quick translations for unknown words. Although not all students thought this technique was better than looking the words up in the dictionary, the majority did. As a result, the use of Japanese or other L1s may be permitted for translation of vocabulary during group work. Third, in keeping with Atkinson's (1987) findings, students selected to provide clarification of task instructions in the L1. This may also be due to the fact that those doing the clarifying thought that it would be quickest and easiest in the native language of the person asking for clarification. As a result, some teachers may conclude that L1 could be permitted in order to accomplish this purpose. Lastly, just as Prodromou (2000) found in his study, the students of this class used Japanese to address questions about English pragmatics and to provide less proficient students with some contrastive analysis. Since students themselves chose to use Japanese to accomplish these tasks, perhaps the common language of all the students could be permitted for these purposes.

Enforcing a strict English-only policy may possibly hinder the accomplishment of the above goals. However, it is important to bear in mind that without clear understanding of these ground rules and their consistent enforcement, students may overuse Japanese.

**Conclusion**

In his book, *Teacher Cognition in Language Learning,* Woods (1993) argues that a foreign language teacher's classroom practices are shaped by three overriding factors: values, goals, and assumptions. As stated in the introduction, I do not necessarily agree with English-only language policies as I do not feel that they reflect either my core values or my ideological stance. However, one of my goals as a teacher is to try to provide students with what I think is the best learning environment. For most of my career, my attempt to achieve this goal was based on the assumption that English-only policies were important to have in place because I thought that using the target language exclusively would be most beneficial to students. This assumption was based on two factors: first, my own experience as a language learner and second, my understanding of the importance of English-only policies in the Japanese context. My assumptions about how a language is best acquired were based largely on my own experience as a learner and were left unchallenged partly because I did not test them myself

and partly because the institutions I worked for and my colleagues seemed to fully support my assumptions. However, one of the problems with English-only policies is that they tend to prompt teachers to hypothesize monolinguals in the making (Chavez, 1995). As Cook (2001) argues, many language instructors still assume that a foreign language can be learned in the same way as the mother tongue and that bilingual people can and need to compartmentalize languages in the brain.

Although I did not make these assumptions, I did believe that using the target language exclusively would help students achieve their common goal of being able to use L2 as if it were their L1. However, my experience with the students who participated in this research indicated that code switching was indeed a normal part of language use amongst bilinguals and that oftentimes, even amongst high proficiency bilinguals, the knowledge of one language was deeper than that of the other. The language that is more familiar to the student can be used to support that language that is less familiar.

The question now remains how one can best encourage students to use the stronger language to facilitate the learning of the second, particularly when students in the class have different mother tongues and when some students are in fact native speakers of the target language. As Noguchi and Fotos (2001) advocate, a new model is needed to accommodate this kind of unique teaching and learning situation. One of the greatest challenges to teachers wanting to contribute to the creation of this new paradigm is to develop a sense of belonging and community in the classroom which will in turn help students overcome the issues that arise because of their varying backgrounds and levels of proficiency (Blythe, 1995). Perhaps the first step one can take in the creation of this new teaching model, which is broader and more inclusive, is to endeavor to construct a context in which the rich personal, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the students are respected rather than ignored (Bialystock and Hakuta, 1994). One possible way to begin to accomplish this goal may be to allow some use of other languages inside the English language classroom and to encourage all students to supply both comprehensible input in the target language, as well as support in the languages more familiar to them.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1

Feedback Forms for the Kaede 1 Class

On the following sheets of paper, please write down what you noticed about:

1. Your use of language.

2. Why you think you used language this way.

3. How you felt about your use of language.

You will have 15 minutes to write after each two-class block. Thank you very much for your help and your honest answers ☺ !!

Appendix 2

Student Attitudes Questionnaire

Please respond to the following statements about your experiences in class this week.

5=Strongly Agree 4=Agree 3=Neutral 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree

1. I like to use some Japanese because I had problems expressing myself in English.

5 4 3 2 1

2. I felt that I wanted to help other students by using Japanese because I thought they were having difficulty with English.

5 4 3 2 1

3. I felt pressure to use Japanese because it is the language we use in our social lives outside the classroom.

5 4 3 2 1

4. I sometimes feel embarrassed because my English ability is weaker than that of other students.

5 4 3 2 1

5. I think that sometimes using Japanese helps me / others to learn English.

5 4 3 2 1

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# Possible Strategies for Listening Comprehension: Applying the Concepts of Conversational Implicature and Adjacency Pairs to Understand Speaker Intention in the TOEFL Listening Section

Yaoko Matsuoka

## Introduction

Recently, reflecting the growing needs of young people who intend to become more competent in the English language and plan to go abroad for study and work, not only universities but also more high schools in Japan have started to conduct preparation courses for English proficiency tests such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), in addition to ordinary English classes. Also, the Ministry of Education, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan (MEXT) has encouraged high schools to enhance students' communicative competence in foreign language education so that they can play an active part in international society. I currently teach a preparation course using TOEFL ITP (an assessment tool composed of previously administered TOEFL tests) at a co-educational high school attached to a university in Tokyo. A pre-course questionnaire shows that many of the students who enrolled in this elective class are eager to improve their overall English ability, especially listening and speaking, and some of them are planning to study abroad in the near future. Furthermore, according to the questionnaire, many of the students expressed their preference of learning listening to reading and writing, though they acknowledged listening is the skill most difficult to master. Listening is essential not only as a receptive skill but also to the development of spoken language proficiency (Rost cited in Nunan and Miller, 1995), and my own experience as a learner of English shows that the skill of L2 listening requires a lot of time and effort for Japanese learners to acquire. All these factors led me to give priority to studying listening comprehension compared with the structure and reading in TOEFL. In this research project I

focused on Part A of TOEFL listening comprehension because the part includes a several short conversations, which expose students to a variety of authentic spoken English language (Brown, 2001). This is important in the process of acquiring communicative competence but rarely takes place in Japanese high schools.

In the beginning of the course in April, I carried out my listening instruction by teaching vocabulary and grammar with repeated CD listening, focusing on listening to key-words. Then, after an actual TOEFL ITP test was conducted inside the school in June, my students' negative reaction against the test led me to attempt new strategies applying conversational analysis to the study of TOEFL listening. A post-examination survey filled out after the actual TOEFL showed that students were overwhelmed by the difficulty and time length of the test. In particular, they expressed difficulty with dialogues in Part A, which contain speaker's primary intention and implication concealed under the surface meaning, and showed confusion in selecting correct choices, which requires deep understanding of the dialogues. It was obvious that not only practicing listening to key words and phrases but also analyzing conversations is necessary for the better interpretation of TOEFL listening. In an attempt to apply *conversation analysis* to the new strategies for listening comprehension, I selected three topics and incorporated them into three lessons: the identification of types of speech, conversational implicature, and adjacency pairs. *Conversation analysis* refers to "a research tradition evolving from ethnomethodology which studies the social organization of natural conversation by a detailed inspection of tape recordings and transcriptions" (Richards & Schmidt, 1985), in which the emphasis is "on the close observation of the behavior of participants in talk and on patterns which recur over a wide range of natural data" (McCarthy, 1991), and various aspects of spoken interaction have been investigated. *Conversational Implicature* can be interpreted as what is implied, suggested, or meant by saying something, studied by linguists such as Grice (1975), Searle (1969), and Austin (1962). Understanding conversational implicature might give learners deep insight into spoken discourse, which often includes speakers' hidden intention and implication under the words and expressions uttered verbally. *Adjacency pair* refers to a pair of utterances which are mutually dependent (e.g., greeting- greeting, and apology- acceptance) and such relationships are often found in ordinary talk (McCarthy, 1991). The three lessons were implemented to the whole class in different weeks in September. Students' improvement was examined by comparing the scores between two mock tests, Mock Test 1 in April and Mock Test 2 in November, including entirely different exam questions but the same format. The efficacy of the strategies and the

effects of strategy training were examined through the data of class-discussion and the evaluation of a questionnaire.

In addition, the fact that there have been few studies investigating the efficacy of conversational implicature to enhance Japanese high school students' communicative competence was another cause for me to start this research. Though some experimental studies have been done (see Bouton,1992; Broersma, 1994; Kubota, 1995; and Taguchi, 2007), the subjects of their research were university students and immigrants. Few people seem to have examined students' development of communicative ability in Japanese high school. This paper will attempt to investigate possible strategies in current secondary education in Japan in light of the following research questions: 1) Is strategy instruction applying the concepts of conversational implicature and adjacency pairs to the listening comprehension feasible in a TOEFL preparatory course in a Japanese high school? 2) Can the strategies help students to understand the speaker's intention in the short conversations of TOEFL listening?

**Review of the Literature**

*Strategy Training*

In language learning, the use of strategies "has been observed to produce a positive effect on student achievement" (Flaitz & Feiten, 1996, pp.211). The term *learner strategies* refers to "language learning behaviors learners actually engage in to learn and regulate the learning of a second language" (Wenden, 1987, p.6), and also refers to what learners know about the strategies they use and what they know about other aspects of their language learning (Wenden, 1987). According to Rubin's classification of three kinds of strategies used by language learners, *learning strategies* directly contribute to the development of the language system which the learner constructs to affect learning, while *communication strategies* and *social strategies* are indirectly related to language learning (Rubin, 1987). On the other hand, O'Malley et al. (cited in O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) classified learner strategies into three categories depending on the type of processing involved: *cognitive*, *metacognitive*, and *social/ affective*. Metacognitive strategy refers to "a learning strategy that involves thinking about or knowledge of the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring learning while it is taking place, or self-evaluation of learning after the task has been completed", while cognitive strategies refer to "one that involves mental manipulation or transformation of materials or tasks and intended to enhance comprehension, acquisition, or retention"

(O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, pp.229 -230). Social/ affective strategies include cooperative learning, asking questions, and self-talk. Researches of strategy training (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1987) suggest that both the metacognitive and cognitive strategies are essential for learners to improve. In fact, O'Malley (1990) concludes that "Students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction and ability to review their progress, accomplishment, and future learning directions" (p.8).

The model of learning strategies of O'Malley et al. (cited in O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) seems useful to describe the strategy instruction in the present research. Since the teaching of the concepts of conversational implicature and adjacency pairs proposed in my paper can be the application of unwritten "rules" used commonly in society, the strategy instruction applying these rules may represent *deducing* or *deductive strategy* (applying rules to the understanding of language) in the sub-category of cognitive strategies presented in this model (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). In deductive strategies, deduction is able to be made by schemata based on rules, and the learner can apply discourse rules and sociocultural rules, in addition to grammatical ones. In the beginning, these schema-based rules are part of declarative knowledge (information consisting of consciously known facts), but they may become procedural knowledge (knowledge of how to perform an activity) when students become able to use them in their study (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Studies on strategy training (Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1996; Yang, 1996; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1987) indicate that teaching learning strategies is effective in learner development and what students would not recognize unless instructed should be taught in training programs. Strategies for language learning can be taught in three ways: awareness or consciousness-raising training, one-time strategy training, and long-term strategy training (Oxford, 1990). Chamot *et al.* (1996) report that teachers who participated in their strategy research selected the strategies such as predicting the content of the listening text, selectively attending to key words and ideas, and memorizing for developing students' knowledge of vocabulary as most beneficial to students for listening comprehension, and this selection of strategies for instruction is "closely tied to task demands" (p. 185). In addition, it is suggested by Dornyei (2001) that in strategy training what should be done are creating the basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining motivation, and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. Above all, what was particularly useful for me when designing the strategy instruction was

Oxford's *model of eight steps in the strategy training* (Oxford, 1990), which includes the following:

Step 1) Determine the learners' needs and the time available.

Step 2) Select strategies well.

Step 3) Consider integration of strategy training.

Step 4) Consider motivational issues.

Step 5) Prepare materials and activities.

Step 6) Conduct "completely informed training.

Step 7) Evaluate the strategy training.

Step 8) Revise the strategy training.

(I will explain these steps in relation to my lesson planning in the Methodology section).

*Listening Comprehension*

Listening plays an important role in communication as it is said that, of the total time spent on communicating, listening takes up 40-50%; speaking, 25-30%; reading, 11-16%; and writing, about 9% (Rivers 1981 and in Mendelsohn, 1994). Although the teaching of listening comprehension has long been "somewhat neglected and poorly taught aspect of English in many EFL programs" (Mendelsohn, 1994, p.9), listening is now regarded as much more important in both EFL classrooms and SLA research. Richards (2003) points out that the view of listening has changed from the mastery of discrete skills in the 1970s to new theoretical models of comprehension from the field of cognitive psychology in the 80s and 90s. Then the distinction between bottom-up processing and top-down processing was derived, listening came to be viewed as an interpretive process, and at the same time, the fields of conversation analysis and discourse analysis were revealing a great deal about the organization of spoken discourse and led to the realization that written texts read aloud could not provide a suitable basis for developing the abilities needed to process real –time authentic discourse (Richards, 2003). Both bottom-up and top-down processing have directed the attention of many researchers and educationalists. Top-down processing makes use of 'higher level', non-sensory information (e.g., learner's knowledge of the world) to predict or interpret 'lower level' information (e.g., words and sentences), while bottom-up processing makes use of the information present in the input to achieve higher level meaning (Richards and Schmidt, 1985).

Mendelsohn (1994) defines listening comprehension as "the ability to understand the spoken language of native speakers"(p.19). O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper (1989, cited in Mendelsohn, 1994) offer a useful and more extensive definition that "listening comprehension is an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and from existing knowledge, while relying upon multiple strategic resources to fulfill the task requirement"(p.19). Mendelsohn (1994) points out that, in listening to spoken language, the ability to decipher the speaker's intention is required of a competent listener, in addition to other abilities such as processing the linguistic forms like speech speed and fillers, coping with listening in an interaction, understanding the whole message contained in the discourse, comprehending the message without understanding every word, and recognizing different genres. Listeners must also know how to process and how to judge what the illocutionary force of an utterance is- that is, what this string of sounds is intended to mean in a particular setting, under a particular set of circumstances – as an act of real communication (Mendelsohn, 1994). Also, according to Anderson and Lynch (1988), arguing what is successful listening, "understanding is not something that happens because of what a speaker says: the listener has a crucial part to play in the process, by activating various types of knowledge, and by applying what he knows to what he hears and trying to understand what the speaker means"(p.6). To sum up, it is widely admitted that listening comprehension is not merely the process of a unidirectional receiving of audible symbols, but an interactive process (Brown, 2001). In the eight processes of comprehension (adapted from Clark &Clark1977 and Richards 1983 in Brown, 2001), the hearer, after receiving the information, assigns a literal meaning to the utterance first and then assigns an intended meaning to the utterance. A key to human communication is the ability to match perceived meaning with intended meaning.

*Conversational Implicature*

The key ideas of conversational implicature were proposed by Grice in the Williams James lectures at Harvard in 1967 and still only partially published (Grice, 1975, 1978, cited in Levinson, 1983). Implicature can be interpreted as what is implied, suggested, or meant by saying something. Grice (1989) developed the concept of implicature in theory of how people use language, in which a set of guidelines for the efficient and effective use of language for conversation, namely conversational maxims were proposed. The four maxims include the maxims of Quality (be true), Quantity (be informative as is required, but do not make it more

informative than is required), Relevance (be relevant), and Manner (be perspicuous, and especially avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief, and be orderly) (Grice, 1989). These maxims or general principles underlying the efficient co-operative use of language jointly express a general co-operative principle. The cooperative principle describes how people interact with one another, and states, "Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1989, p.26). According to Levinson (1983), who admits the conversational implicature to be one of the single most important ideas in pragmatics, the study of language usage, the reason for linguistic interest in the conversational maxims is that they generate inferences (or conversational implicatures) beyond the semantic content of the sentences uttered. Conversational maxims are often broken and it is here that implicature, i.e. what is meant, but not expressly stated, becomes significant (Linfoot-Ham, 2006).

The notion of conversation implicature can also be associated with Speech Act Theory in conversation analysis, the study of talk-in-interaction (Psathas, 1995). Both Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics share logico-philosophical perspective on conversational organization by focusing on the interpretation rather than the production of utterances in discourse (Eggins & Slade, 1997). Questioning an old assumption that to say something is always and simply to *state* something, Austin (1962) argued that in some cases *to say something is to do something*. The utterances in those cases are called *performatives* or *performatories*. Some performatives have, according to Austin, "the grammatical make up of statements on the face of them, but are distinct from statements in that they are not utterances which could be 'true or false', which is traditionally the characteristic mark of a statement." For instance, in the course of a marriage ceremony, in saying the utterance 'I do' (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife), one is performing an act, namely marrying, rather than reporting something. Austin (1962) pointed out that some conditions are necessary for the smooth and 'happy' functioning of explicit performatives, otherwise, something goes wrong and the act such as marrying, betting, or bequeathing is at least to some extent a failure (the doctrine of the Infelicities). Similarly, Searle (1969) argues that speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behavior and all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts. These acts performed by speaking language are so-called "speech acts", and include making promises, asking questions, and giving commends (Searle, 1969). Searle proposed five macro-classes of illocutionary act (an act performed by saying something):

representatives, directives, commissives, expressive, and declarations (Coulthard, 1985). For example, think of a following exchange between two people, X and Y. X: "*Let's go to the movies tonight*", Y: "*I have to study for an exam*." The first move is directives, in which both the literal and surface meanings are X's proposal to go to the movies. On the other hand, as for the second move (representatives) uttered by Y, its literal or surface meaning is Y's assertion that he/she must study for the exam, but primary or indirect meaning hidden under the surface is Y's rejection to X's proposal. This kind of analysis seems to be useful in understanding common conversations, such as found on the TOEFL exam, because in daily conversation it is rare to express one's refusal directly. Instead of saying, "*No, I wouldn't*" or "No, I don't want to do that", people usually use more indirect ways of denial as seen in Y's response, in order to maintain harmonious communication.

There are few studies regarding the effectiveness of conversational implicature to enhance high school students' communicative competence in foreign language education in Japan. For instance, Kubota (1995), claiming the lack of studies dealing with the teachability of pragmatic knowledge, stated in the study of Japanese EFL students in university that teaching conversational implicature through explicit explanations of rules and consciousness-raising tasks is highly facilitative. Another experiment was done by Broersma (1994) to the student subjects with high proficiency of English in the University of Illinois, exploring whether ESL learners can learn implicatures through explicit teaching using the materials resembling to the ones by Nicholls (1993). Taguchi (2007) investigated development of pragmatic comprehension ability across time, and Cohen (1988) showed that there existed positive effects for instruction in apologizing on written tests in class. The research relating to conversational implicature can also be found in the works in Bouton (1992), who compared the ability of non-native speakers to interpret English implicature appropriately over several years while living in America, while Montserrat (1992), explored the production of English apology strategies by Spanish speakers studying English. However, it seems that existing studies and reports have neither investigated the efficacy of the strategies which introduce conversational implicature and some elements of conversational analysis for the listening comprehension nor examined students' development of communicative ability in Japanese high schools.

*Adjacency Pairs*

Pairs of utterances such as greeting-greeting and apology-acceptance are called adjacency pairs, and are often mutually dependent (McCarthy, 1997). To examine the nature and function of a pair of utterances, (i.e., a minimum unit of conversation), is particularly useful for my teaching and helps my students understand the listening comprehension of the TOEFL test, since every dialogue in Part A of the section is composed of a pair of utterances by two participants－ that is, minimal, basic unexpanded form of an adjacency pair (Schegloff, 2007). Schegloff and Sacks (1973) explain that adjacency pairs consist of sequences which properly have the following features: (1) two-utterance length, (2) adjacent positioning of component utterances, (3) different speakers producing each utterance. Furthermore, these two turns are (4) relatively ordered－ that is, they are differentiated into "first pair parts" (FPPs, or Fs for short) and "second pair parts" (Spps, or Ss for short), and (5) pair-type related; that is, the FPP and SPP come from the same pair type to compose an adjacency pair; the pair types are exchanges such as greeting-greeting, question-answer, offer-accept/decline, and the like (Schegloff, 2007). In addition, as for the pair-type relation, the two parts may be either discriminately related or in a relation of conditional relevance (Psathas, 1995). According to Levinson (1983), the adjacency pair has been suggested to be a fundamental unit of conversation by Goffman (1976) and Coulthard (1977), as well, and such a view seems to underlie the speech act models of conversation he presents.

**Methodology**

*Participants and Setting*

The participants for this research were 17 high school students, including 5 boys and 12 girls, who enrolled in the TOEFL preparatory class that I teach. In this high school, more than 95 percent of students are to proceed to the affiliated university without taking the entrance examination for outsiders, and TOEFL ITP is used as a placement test in the university to assess freshmen English proficiency in order to divide them into appropriate classes based on their competence of English. This one-year TOEFL preparatory class I teach takes two hours, once a week. It is one of the elective courses offered to prepare students for several English proficiency tests, such as distinct levels of Eiken, and TOEIC, offered by the school to meet MEXT's plan of fostering students' communicative competence and global understanding. During the course students are obliged to take the actual TOEFL test at least once a year, though it does not matter what scores they get on the test. Most of my students have passed the pre-second or second level of Eiken test before, but none of them had experienced the

TOEFL before. On the first day of this course in April, I conducted a pre-course questionnaire to investigate the aims and background of participants. The questions asked included:

1. Which of the following four skills of English do you enjoy studying: listening, reading, writing, and speaking? Choose one item.
2. Which of the following four skills of English do you feel are difficult to learn: listening, reading, writing, and speaking? Choose one item.
3. Why did you enroll in this TOEFL course? Check up to three reasons.

Table 1-a below shows the results of the questions 1 and 2 above, in which *listening* was selected by more than 30% of students as the skill they enjoy learning, at the same time, more students chose the skill as the most difficult to master. This contradictory, but noteworthy result made me aware of the importance of teaching listening.

**Table 1-a:**

**Results from questions 1 & 2 of the pre-course questionnaire:**

**Students' preference in studying English skills in percentages**

| | Listening | Reading | Writing | Speaking |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.Skill that students enjoy studying | 35(%) | 30 | 23 | 12 |
| 2.Skill that students feel difficult to acquire | 42(%) | 23 | 12 | 23 |

Table 1-b shows the results of question No.3, which asks the reasons why they enrolled in this TOEFL class. The students were requested to circle up to three appropriate items from seven choices presented in the questionnaire. Of all the seventeen students, 24% of them chose three reasons, but the rest 76% chose only two reasons. It appeared that about 65%, the largest proportion of students, took this class in order to improve in their English study. Choice No. 2, *usefulness of TOEFL in the university*, was selected by about 41% of them, seemed to be the second most important reason for them. Moreover, it was found that about 35% enrolled both *to take credits at high school* and *for the interest in TOEFL*. Only 5.8% wanted to *challenge for a new test*, and no entry was written in the last open-ended space.

**Table 1- b:**

**Results from question 3 of the pre-course questionnaire: Reasons to take the TOEFL course and the proportion of students who checked each reason (up to 3 reasons were allowed.)**

| Reasons | Proportion of students who checked the reason |
|---|---|
| 1) to prepare for studying abroad in the future | 23 (%) |
| 2) because it is used as a placement test in the university | 41.1 |
| 3) to take credits at high school | 35.2 |
| 4) to challenge for a test that I have never taken | 5.8 |
| 5) to improve my English ability | 64.7 |
| 6) because I am interested in TOEFL | 35.2 |
| 7) recommended by family and friends | 17.6 |
| 8) other reasons | (no entry) |

* Of all the students, 24%of them circled three reasons, but the rest, 76%, chose only two reasons.

*Lessons Applying Conversational Analysis*

I organized three lessons on strategies attempting to apply conversational analysis, taking into account Oxford's *eight steps in the strategy training model* (1990). Table 2 below shows the steps I proposed and the processes in which I planned and conducted the strategy training.

**Table 2:**

**Oxford' model of *eight steps in the strategy training* and the process of organizing and implementing the three lessons following these steps.**

| Oxford's Eight Steps | Lessons for Strategy Training |
|---|---|
| 1) Determine the learners' needs and the time available. | ▪Pre-course questionnaire (to get background information of students)<br>・Post-TOEFL questionnaire (to find out learners' needs)<br>▪50 minutes were allotted to each of the three lessons |
| 2) Select strategies well. | Three compatible and mutually supporting strategies (Oxford, 1990) are selected to help learners interpret speaker |

| | |
|---|---|
| | intention.<br>(Cognitive strategies)<br>▪ Identifying various types of speech<br>▪Recognizing adjacency pairs<br>▪Recognizing conversational implicature.<br><br>▪Employing these strategies when they actually listen to them. |
| 3) Consider integration of strategy training. | ▪When the strategy training is closely integrated with language learning (in this case, the study of TOEFL), it helps learners better understand how the strategies can be used in a significant, meaningful context (Oxford, 2001). |
| 4) Consider motivational issues. | ▪Creating the basic motivational conditions.<br>(appropriate teacher behaviors; a pleasant classroom atmosphere; a cohesive learner group)<br>·Generating initial motivation.<br>(generating students' interest; provide enjoyable tasks)<br>·Maintaining and protecting motivation.<br>(making learning and tasks stimulating; setting learner specific goals; increasing their self-confidence; allowing learners to maintain a positive social image) adopted from Dornyei, 2001. |
| 5) Prepare materials and activities. | ▪Handouts were organized and distributed in each lesson.<br>▪Activities were designed to promote students' recognition of the sociolinguistic aspects of conversation in our daily lives. ▪Tasks involve group/ pair works to enhance cooperation of students. |
| 6) Conduct "completely informed" training. | Explaining why the strategies are important, in what situation they can use the strategies, how they should apply the strategies. L1 was used for better interpretation of students, while L2 was used for the terms such as 'adjacency pairs'.<br>(Metacognitive strategy) |

| | |
|---|---|
| 7) Evaluate the strategy training. | ▪ Class discussion<br>(Students evaluate the instruction, helpfulness, and the use of the strategies. Students are given an opportunity for group discussion.)<br>·Evaluation questionnaire<br>(to give all students an opportunity to express what they think about the strategy training and strategy use. |
| 8) Revise the strategy training. | ▪Reflection on the questionnaire, teaching approaches, materials, and class discussion. |

Table 3 below summarizes the purposes, procedure, activities, and materials of each of the three lessons.

**Table 3:**

**Purposes and procedure of activities for three lessons**

| | **Purposes** | **Procedure/ Activities** |
|---|---|---|
| **Lesson 1: Types of Speech** | ▪ To make students aware of different types of spoken discourse in our daily life (from casual conversation to formal lectures and rituals). | **1**. Teacher explains and lists the types of speech. Students add examples they come up with.<br>**2**. Students are asked to recall the situation where they actually had a conversation with someone this morning and write them down.<br>**3**. Listening activity<br>Students listen to a CD of short conversations between two people and identify who the speakers are, where the conversation is taking place, and what the speakers are talking about.<br>▪**Material:**<br>Handout for '*Types of speech*'<br>ETS (1995).*TOEFL Practice Tests.* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Lesson 2: Adjacency Pairs** | ▪To make students aware of the mutual dependence of a pair of verbal utterances. | **1**. Teacher explains and lists the typical examples of adjacency pairs. Students are encouraged to give examples of paired conversation corresponding to those adjacency pairs.<br>**2.** Practice on handout<br>Students identify the patterns of adjacency pairs corresponding to the two-turn conversations presented in the handout.<br>**3.** Speaking practice<br>Students practice speaking in pairs, using these two-turn conversations as scripts, in order to confirm the meaning and the pair construction of each conversation.<br>▪ **Material:**<br>Handout for '*Adjacency pairs*'. |
| **Lesson 3: Conversation Implicature** | ▪To make students understand the speaker's primary intention, implication, and assumption hidden under the surface meaning.<br><br>▪To encourage students to use the knowledge of conversational implicature in their production of speech. | **1.** Teacher shows an example conversation adopted from Grice (1991), and asks students to think over what is implied in the second pair-part.<br>**2.** Practice in pairs:<br>Students do exercises on finding out the hidden intention, implication, and assumption of the second speaker in each conversation presented in handout.<br>**3.** Applying the knowledge to speech production:<br>Students try to produce utterances, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | considering the situation where they should answer indirectly to what are asked.<br>▪**Material:**<br>Handout for '*Conversation implicature'*. |

Conducting the series of strategy trainings to my students, I used their L1, Japanese, for the explanation of the form and purpose of the strategies, and this helped students to comprehend the strategies and draw on the use and patterns that are conventionalized in their L1.

*Data Collection Instruments*

Data for this research were collected through a post-TOEFL questionnaire, two mock-tests, class discussion, and an evaluation questionnaire. As the research focuses on the Listening Section Part A, descriptions and analysis for other sections in TOEFL ITP are not included in this paper.

*Post-TOEFL Questionnaire*

After the implementation of actual TOEFL ITP in the middle of June, this questionnaire was conducted to examine the results and reflections of students on the test. Students who expressed difficulty and disappointment with the test were asked to identify the factors that made the TOEFL Listening Part A so difficult for them and to choose <u>three items</u> from the choices presented in the questionnaire. At the same time, this questionnaire also functioned to determine the students' needs for planning strategy training. The choices included:

- *difficulty in understanding the choices*
- *unknown vocabulary*
- *talking speed of people in the recorded conversation*
- *test conditions*
- *lack of continuing power of a candidate*
- *lack of time in reading choices*
- *inexperience with listening tests*
- *perplexity in deciding correct answers*
- *I was under test-taking stress*

*Two Different Mock Tests*

I implemented two different mock tests in April and in November, each of them including entirely different exam questions taken from the TOEFL preparatory textbook (ALC, 2006) assigned by the school. Among four complete mock tests involved in the textbook in the same format as the actual TOEFL ITP, I used Test 1of the textbook for the mock test 1 in April, and Test 3 for the mock test 2 in November. The two mock tests were put into practice in the same format and time length. In both tests, Listening Section Part A included 30 full questions for the substantial data for my research. On the other hand, other sections were reduced to some extent because of the time limitation. Descriptions and analysis for them are not included since this paper focuses on the Listening Section Part A only. Outcomes were drawn by comparing the results of these two tests.

In the beginning of the course in April, I gave my class the first mock test for the purpose of capturing the students' current level of English proficiency. In addition, it seemed useful for beginners to become familiar with the test format of TOEFL ITP, though it was the shortened version. The second mock test was implemented in November, after three lessons employing strategies on conversational implicatures were carried out. The purpose of this test was to examine how these strategies helped students' understanding of the short conversations in the Listening Section Part A of the TOEFL-like mock test. Although not conducted in formal settings, these mock tests can provide essential data for my analysis because most of the students do not take the TOEFL twice during the course, and therefore, comparison of actual TOEFL scores is impossible.

*Class Discussion*

I provided time for a 20 minute discussion in the classroom after the implementation of the second mock test. The class was divided into four groups, three groups of four members and one with five. One representative student was chosen in each group and was charged to integrate what they discussed among themselves, then presented the results in front of the class. The issues I proposed to them for the discussion were as follows:

1. Were the series of listening strategies applying the Types of Speech, Adjacency Pair, and Conversational Implicature interesting to you?
2. Do you think they were effective to understand short conversations in Part A of TOEFL Listening when you took the second mock test?

3. Do you think they were helpful for you to understand the structure and meaning of conversation in English?

4. Do you think they were useful for you to improve your English ability?

*Evaluation Questionnaire*

This questionnaire for affective evaluation was designed to supplement the findings of class discussion and conducted anonymously in order to get explicit numerical data for the strategy training, and to provide all the students with the opportunity to express their own feelings and opinions, which they might have not been able to present publicly in the class discussion. The contents of the questionnaire included nine statements as shown below and one open-ended question with blank space:

1. I could understand the strategies.
2. I enjoyed studying the strategies.
3. The strategies effectively helped me understand the conversations in the mock test.
4. The strategies effectively helped me answer the questions in the mock test.
5. The strategies are helpful for me to understand basic structure and meaning of English conversation.
6. The strategies help me think more carefully about how I express myself in English.
7. The strategies helped me improve my English listening ability.
8. The strategies helped me improve my speaking ability.
9. The strategies helped my improvement in overall English study.
10. Express your opinion about the lessons freely. (  )

The Likert Scale was used for questions 1 to 9 in order to elicit the extent of students' agreement with the questionnaire items, since Likert-type questionnaires are particularly effective in that they elicit information in a manner that permits quantification and comparison with other features of the same program (Henning, 1987). The measurement scale includes five choices: 1: Strongly agree, 2: Agree, 3: Undecided, 4: Disagree, and 5: Strongly disagree. Students were requested to circle the number coinciding with their reaction to each statement, from1 to 9. The last question encouraged them to state their own opinions.

**Results**

Data were collected and analyzed through a post-TOEFL questionnaire, two mock tests, class discussion, and evaluation questionnaire.

*Results from Post-TOEFL Questionnaire*

The results of the question asking to choose three biggest factors that made TOEFL Listening difficult are presented in Table 4. According to the Table, about 60% of students selected both *difficulty in understanding the choices* and *unknown vocabulary* as the most significant factors. *Talking speed of people in the recorded conversation* follows, selected by 53%. The reason concerning *test conditions* was selected by 33%, and 25% circled such factors as *lack of continuing power of a candidate* and *lack of time in reading choices.* Both the factors *inexperience with listening tests* and *perplexity in deciding correct answers* were checked by only a few students. There was nobody who thought he/she made mistakes *under stress,* and it is probably because the Institutional TOEFL is held at school, which is a familiar learning environment for students.

**Table 4:**

**Factors that made TOEFL Listening difficult and the proportion of students who selected each factor as one of the biggest three.**

| Factors | Percentage of students who selected the factor |
|---|---|
| ▪difficulty in understanding the choices | 60(%) |
| ▪ unknown vocabulary | 60 |
| ▪ talking speed of people in the recorded conversation | 53 |
| ▪ test conditions | 33 |
| ▪ lack of continuing power of a candidate | 25 |
| ▪ lack of time in reading choices | 25 |
| ▪ inexperience with listening tests | 6 |
| ▪ perplexity in deciding correct answers | 6 |
| ▪ I was under test-taking stress | 0 |

*Results from the Two Mock Tests*

Improvement of students was examined by comparing the results of two mock tests. Table 5 below shows the proportion of students who had higher or lower scores between the two mock tests. The results indicate that 23% of students could answer two more questions, about 30% could answer one more question, and 6% could answer four more questions in the second mock test than in the first one. However, no score change was seen in about 35 % of participants, and a one-point decrease was perceived in 6% of participants. To sum up, approximately 60 % of the students made progress at around 1.7 points on average, though the rest, 35%, made no progress and 6% achieved a lower score on the second test.

**Table 5:**

**Score changes in 30 questions between Mock Test 1 and Mock Test 2 and the proportion of students corresponding to the change**

| **Change of the number of correct answers between Mock test 1 and 2** | **Percentage of students** |
|---|---|
| Students whose score increased +4 | 6(%) |
| Students whose score increased +2 | 23(%) |
| Students whose score increased +1 | 30(%) |
| Students whose score decreased -1 | 6(%) |
| Students whose score was not changed | 35(%) |

*Findings from the Class Discussion*

Students' discussion was carried out after the implementation of the second mock test, aiming to investigate psychological aspects of students' reflection to the strategy training. These appeared to play a significant role in supplementing the results illustrated in the two mock tests. In a 20-minute class discussion, four student representatives integrated and presented the opinions of each group to the class. I asked them to discuss such issues as whether the series of listening strategies applying conversational analysis was interesting to them, whether the strategies effectively helped them understand short conversations in Part A of TOEFL-like Listening in the second mock test, whether they thought the strategies were helpful to understand the structure and meaning of English conversation, and whether they regarded the strategies useful to improve their English ability. The discussion was done in Japanese, their first language. I wrote down some important points of students' comments in

my field notes, since tape-recording was not allowed in the classroom. Below are the English translated comments of student representatives based on my field notes.

*Student Representatives' Comments*

Kumi: student representative of Group 1:

"We all agreed that TOEFL is really difficult, especially in the listening section. Toru mentioned that while listening, recorded conversations run through quickly like a stream of water and they were hard to follow. The strategies offered in the three lessons were interesting and we all enjoyed them. For instance, studying 'conversation in pairs' attracted my attention a lot, because I had never thought about the structure and function of a pair-relation in those conversations. Miwako agreed with me and said that, as she came to understand the basis of conversation more clearly than before, she thinks these strategies can help her interpret listening comprehension in TOEFL." (Kumi, interview, November 14, 2008).

Yoshiki: student representative of Group 2:

"The lessons offered were interesting and not similar to the other English lessons, since we were not forced to memorize the sentences and words, instead, we were asked to think over what we are doing and saying in daily life. It was comfortable for me" (Yoshiki, interview, November 14, 2008).

Rie: student representative from Group 3:

"Memorizing vocabulary is more important than thinking of people's intention and implication in TOEFL Listening." (Rie, interview, November 14, 2008).

Sota**:** student representative from Group 4:

"We could sit for the second mock test with less anxiety. I think this is because it was our second trial, and partly because we learned about conversational implicature, which allowed us to feel that we are prepared." (Sota, interview, November 14, 2008).

*Findings from the Evaluation Questionnaire*

This questionnaire provided important numerical data to substantiate the results of the class discussion. Personal feelings and opinions of the students were also expressed in the last

open-ended question. Phased analysis was done in three steps: numerical results from the questionnaire in a chart in Table 4; proportion of positive and negative answers in the integrated data from the questionnaire in a bar-graph in Figure 1; and more synthesized picture in the form of a pie chart in Figure 2.

First of all, Table 6 shows the students' reflection in terms of the number of answers to nine questions selected by students, applying the Likert-type five-point scale which included: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

**Table 6 : Results from the evaluation questionnaire**
**Statements and the proportion of students corresponding to the scales**

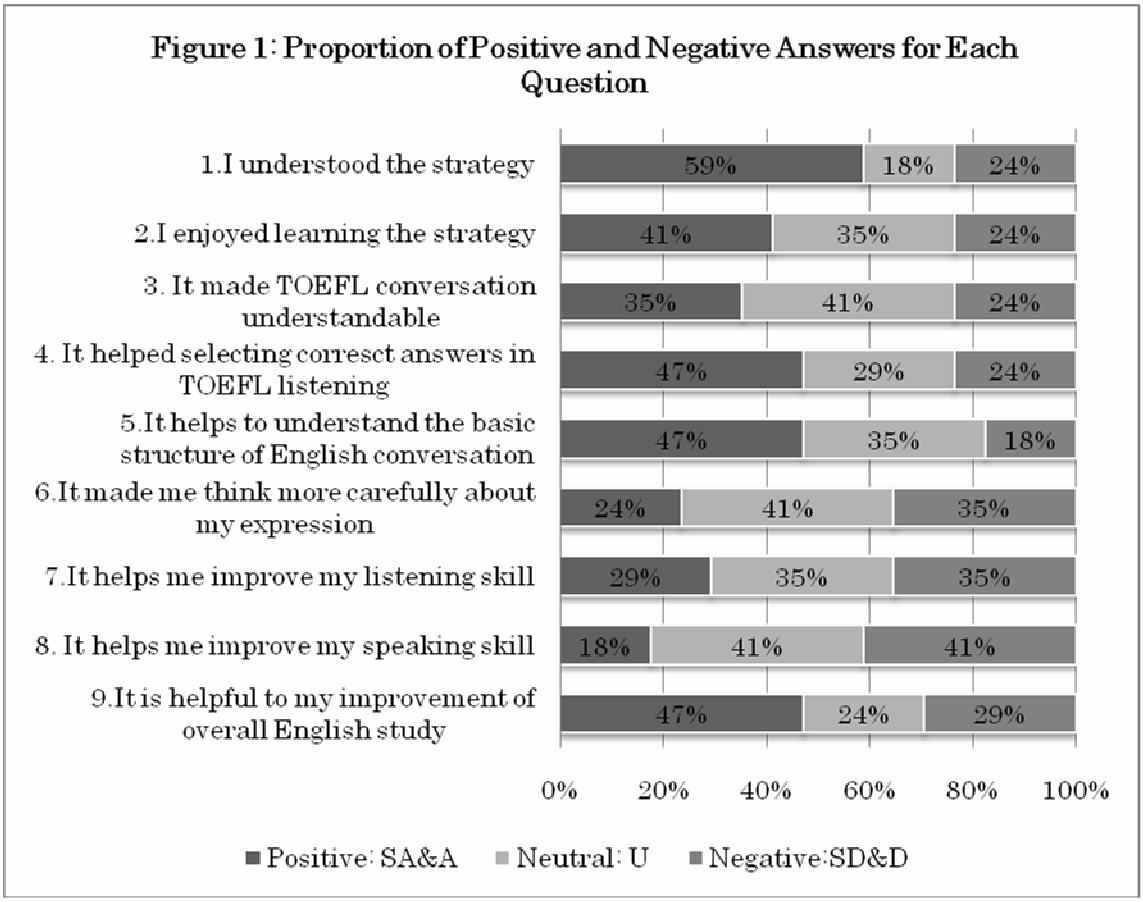
| Statements | Percentages of students | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **SA** | **A** | **U** | **D** | **SD** |
| 1. I could understand the strategies. | 11.7% | 47% | 17.6% | 23% | 0% |
| 2. I enjoyed studying the strategies. | 11.7% | 29.4% | 35.2% | 5.8% | 17.6% |
| 3. The strategies effectively helped me understand the conversations in the mock test. | 0% | 29.4% | 41.1% | 11.7% | 11.7% |
| 4. The strategies effectively helped me answer the questions in the mock test. | 5.8% | 41.1% | 23% | 11.7% | 11.7% |
| 5. The strategies are helpful for me to understand basic structure and meaning of English conversation. | 11.7% | 35.2% | 35.2% | 5.8% | 11.7% |
| 6. The strategies help me think more carefully about how I express myself in English. | 5.8% | 5.8% | 41.1% | 29.4% | 5.8% |
| 7. The strategies help me improve my English listening ability. | 5.8% | 23% | 35.2% | 5.8% | 5.8% |
| 8. The strategies help me improve my speaking ability. | 0% | 5.8% | 41.1% | 29.4% | 11.7% |
| 9. The strategies help my improvement in overall English study. | 11.7% | 35.2% | 23% | 11.7% | 5.8% |

* (SA－strongly agree; A－agree; U－undecided; D－disagree; SD－strongly agree)

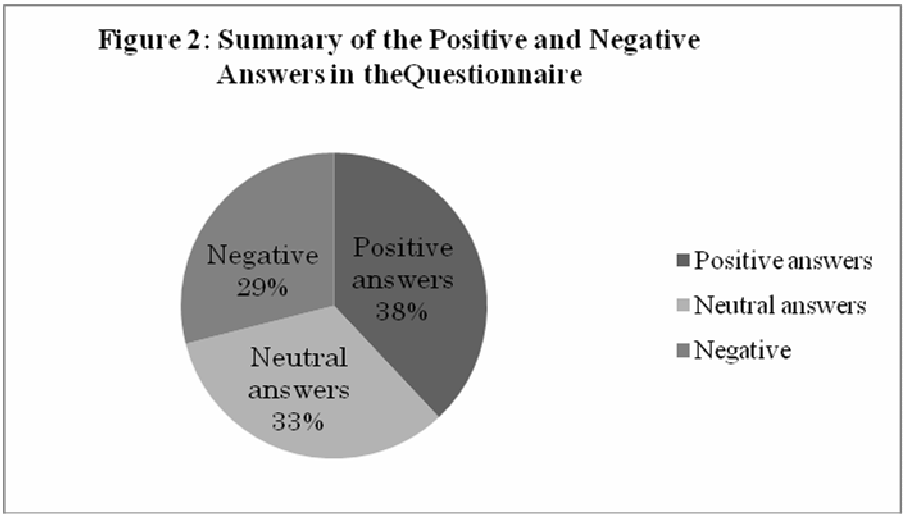
As for the last open-ended question, 10) *Express your opinion about the lessons freely,* some students made entries of their comments as follows:

"I learned a lot of things that I had not known before."
"I think the strategy taught in the lessons are useful for TOEFL listening."
"I enjoyed the lessons, particularly the pair-work for activities of pair-relation."
"The lessons were interesting, but I hope more study of vocabulary would be included."
"I could sit in the second mock test with relatively peaceful mind, because my anxiety was reduced because I had prepared in the prior lessons of conversation in TOEFL listening."
"TOEFL listening is really difficult for me."

Secondly, in order to grasp a clearer picture, the results are integrated into a bar-graph in Figure 1. In the graph, the number of answers for "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" are combined to form the category of "*Positive Answers*", while "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" are combined into "*Negative Answers*". The results in "Undecided" are displayed unchanged in "*Neutral*" in the bar graph. According to the bar graph, nearly 60% of the students indicated they understood the strategies and more than 40% of them were likely to have enjoyed the lessons. 35% of them answered that the strategies made the conversations in TOEFL more understandable, while 47%, nearly half of the students, thought that the strategies were helpful in not only selecting answers in the TOEFL test, but also understanding the basic structure of English conversation and improvement in overall English ability. On the other hand, regarding statements 6) *the strategies help me think more carefully about how I express myself in English*, 7) *they help me improve listening ability*, and 8) *they help me improve speaking ability*, the percentages of positive answers are low at 24%, 29%, and 18% respectively, with the negative answers relatively high at 35% for statements 6 and 7, and 41% for No.8.




Finally, all the results are integrated in a pie chart in Figure 2 for the purpose of capturing the overall tendency of what my students feel about the new strategies they learned for the first time. The pie chart shows that about 38 percent of the students strongly agreed or agreed with the statements asking about the effectiveness of the strategies applying components of conversational analysis, and approximately 29% of them are in a neutral position, though 33% expressed a negative attitude towards these strategies. These results indicate that nearly 40 percent of the whole class members positively accepted the introduction of new strategies I proposed.




**Discussion**

The goal of this research paper was to examine whether or not the strategy training applying conversational analysis to the listening comprehension in TOEFL is feasible for high school students, whether or not the strategies can help them understand speaker intention in conversations in the TOEFL Listening Section, and whether or not the understanding of speaker intention will contribute to choosing the correct answers in the TOEFL Listening Section. The results indicate that the feasibility of the training was mostly evidenced. As for the helpfulness of the strategies, though the students were likely to understand and become able to use the strategies to some degree, it was not fully shown if they actually used the strategies in the real testing environment of the TOEFL.

Through the strategy training I offered, many of the students were likely to become familiar with the strategies I proposed and understand them to some degree. In fact, they were able to respond to the practice questions presented in lesson-handouts largely correctly. Particularly in the last lesson introducing conversational implicature, many of them could produce their own indirect answers under the specific situations using the strategies. For instance, according to my field notes, some of the publicly presented answers included: "*I'm sorry. I don't have my purse now*" and "*I have to buy an expensive book for the class.*"(indirect refusal to lend some money); "*You look beautiful when you are dressed in bright colors*"(indirect opinion suggesting that dark colored dress does not suit the person well). They used not only conventional, typical refusal patterns such as *I'm sorry*, but also less-conventional implicature for refusal such as *I don't have my purse now* and *I have to buy an expensive book for the class*, seemingly expressing their opinions in a less-conventional, indirect way.

The results from two mock tests, class discussion, and the evaluation questionnaire reported on in this paper have produced interesting data and indicated important points to discuss regarding the feasibility and effectiveness of the strategies applying conversational analysis. Overall, it was found that most of the students understood the strategies and many of them enjoyed studying through the training, according to the class discussion and the results of the evaluation questionnaire. Noticeably, some stated in the free space in the evaluation questionnaire that their exam anxiety was reduced because of the lessons. This might be because their negative task-expectation (cognitive component of anxiety) and the feelings of uneasiness (emotional component) (Eysenck, 1979 cited in Arnold, 2000) were reduced through the instruction previously given. Nearly half of the students think the strategies are helpful in determining the correct choices in TOEFL listening comprehension and understanding the basic structure of English discourse, and only a few students regard them as ineffective. All of these factors might contribute to heightening the proportion of respondents who think the strategies were helpful in their improvement of overall English. It is noteworthy that about 33 percents of the candidates positively accepted (understood and enjoyed learning the strategies, admitted the strategies as helpful for them to interpret the conversation in TOEFL, and thought they help their improvement in English study) the new strategies I introduced, judging from my analysis of the questionnaire and the students' comments. Students might have been unfamiliar with the terms and concepts of conversational implicature and adjacency pairs, since these items are seldom taught in high school English courses, particularly in listening classes. I suppose this is why the new strategies drew attention and interests of the students.

On the other hand, as the pie chart in Figure 2 shows, the proportion of negative answers against the strategies is still big. Many students think the strategies are not so helpful to improve their listening and speaking skills and do not let them think more carefully when expressing themselves in English. It seems these results are derived from the students' beliefs that repeated listening is more important than analyzing the text and that unknown vocabulary makes listening difficult to understand, as shown in the student's comments in the results of the evaluation questionnaire.

As for the achievements, there was a moderate increase from mock test 1 to mock test 2. However, any concrete evidence was not found to justify that this progress is solely the result of the strategy training I offered as any number of factors could have contributed to the results, such as the possibility that other abilities, such as vocabulary and grammar which had

been taught in class continuously, might have mixed in, and repeated listening and test format experience might have contributed to their improvement.

Some constraints became apparent throughout the course of the research. One main constraint was that of methodology. It was impossible to divide the class into two groups for an experiment because of the school policy, which requires teachers to teach all students equally. This limitation prevented me from explicitly proving the effectiveness of the strategies in listening comprehension to a test group only, for example.

Another constraint was the impossibility of comparing the scores of actual TOEFL tests, since most of the students take TOEFL only once during the course, according to the school's minimum course requirement. This constraint was, however, compensated by the implementation of two mock tests, which presented explicit numerical data to some degree.

Another constraint was that recording was not allowed in the classroom. Instead of tape-recording, I wrote down some important student comments in my field notes during the class-discussion.

Finally, reflecting on the group discussion, it seems to have some shortcomings in spite of providing students with a good opportunity to think over and discuss learning strategies. It is not unlikely to happen that comments of all the members of group might not be presented and that all the reports of student representatives might not be faithful representations of the group discussion but the results of their threatening to the good image of a teacher. The class size was not so big and I walked around from group to group during the discussion, which enabled me to listen only partially to what they actually said. However, the evaluation questionnaire was conducted anonymously to provide all the students with opportunities to express themselves and to gain more explicit data for the research.

**Conclusion**

Students' difficulty of understanding the short conversations and choosing a correct answer for each conversation in the TOEFL Listening led me to design and implement three lessons on the elements of conversational analysis, namely, types of speech, principles of adjacency pairs and conversational implicature. Scores were compared between two mock tests, and the data were collected from class discussion and a questionnaire. A moderate score improvement was noticed between the two mock tests, but sufficient evidence could not be drawn to prove that this progress was the sole result of the strategy training I offered. Returning to the purpose of this research, it can be said that feasibility of the strategy training

applying conversational analysis to listening comprehension was demonstrated, though the effectiveness of the strategies was not fully justified. Further research should be conducted on two groups, a control and test group, practicing the listening with or without the strategy training, and preferably over a longer period of time. Such enhancements should provide more clarified data. Furthermore, it is crucial in my future project to investigate cognitive processes - how students actually learn and become able to utilize the strategies in appropriate situations.

Overall, it seems that the instructions applying conversational analysis obviously aroused interest of and enhanced the motivation of many students in the study of TOEFL listening. These approaches can be taken into a wide range of EFL classes and may function better when carried out together with teaching vocabulary and grammar. Although the study of listening to spoken discourse has concentrated on repeated listenings with little analysis of the scripts, I would propose more analysis of conversation and listening comprehension in Japanese secondary school learning. It is important that discourse analysis be subjected not only to the scrutiny of applied linguistics but also in light of standardized testing and practical materials and classroom activities.

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Citation

Roloff, J. (2009). [Review of the book *Reason to write: Strategies for success in academic writing (intermediate)*]. *Accents Asia* [Online], 3 (2),57-59. Available: http://www.accentsasia.org/3-2/roloff.pdf

# Cohen, R.F., & Miller, J.L. (2003). *Reason to Write: Strategies for Success in Academic Writing (Intermediate)*. London: Oxford University Press.

A Book Review by Jennie Roloff, Kanda University of International Studies

Academic writing in English is a challenge for all writers, but much more so for second language learners in an EFL context. Students need to grasp a wide variety of elements to manipulate, convince or inform their readership. The clearer the path through this "forest" the better off is the learner. *Reason to Write: Strategies for Success in Academic Writing* endeavors to do just that - guide students through the process of constructing academic papers.

The text has ten units covering eight academic essay types as well as two writing skills - writing about graphs and statistics and literature analysis. The text generally follows a process approach, but does not ignore the product. Each unit is divided into five sections, opening with Freewriting on a topic related to the unit's final assignment. The remaining sections are: Reading for Writing, Prewriting Activities, Structured Writing Focus, and Additional Writing Opportunities.

The authors firmly believe that "in order to develop as a writer, one must be a reader" (Cohen & Miller, pg. v), so the sample texts in Reading to Write are rich and varied in terms of genre, though all American in origin. This input gives students the content needed for analysis in the Prewriting section which is designed to deepen students' viewpoints on whatever the topic may be. From there, Structured Writing Focus directs students' attention to the lexical tools (grammar points, phrases, certain verb tenses, etc.) that make an effective essay. All of this scaffolding is designed to help students realize that "all their work in previous sections has prepared them for [the] central writing assignment" (ibid) in Structured Writing Focus. The final section, Additional Writing Opportunities, is intended to encourage students to continue writing after the assignment is done because the authors believe that, only with practice, can writing ability truly flourish.

The authors pulled from a variety of teaching methodologies in constructing the units. Writing is viewed as a social endeavor and as such the book puts collaborative learning techniques to good use. Peer feedback is quite prominent in the drafting exercises and is meant to supplement, but not replace teacher feedback. Also, the Prewriting section includes discussions of unit themes designed to encourage intellectually stimulating conversation and deepen critical thinking skills communicatively.

I used this text with university sophomores to relative success. Each unit took 2-3 weeks (4-6 classes), but if all the practice exercises were done, it would take possibly another week. On its own, it is best suited to high intermediate students. While stronger students felt some exercises were redundant, some weaker students struggled with the content of the model texts. Their cultural irrelevance often "turned off" students with lower motivation. The repetitive exercises did prove to be a valuable asset later, often being done in response to class-wide errors. Most students did say it was a great resource outside of class.

Overall, it is a solid classroom resource with many strengths. The exercises are easily adaptable and grammar used with greater frequency can be substituted with little difficulty. This book's layout and design make it easy to follow and there is a good balance of print, colored shading and white space on each page that is visually appealing but not overwhelming.

The only strong criticism I have is that the text appears better suited to a university level ESL context in the United States than an EFL one elsewhere. The reading samples are culturally relevant to the U.S. and draw on American history, social identities, newspapers, businesses and even the legal system. While useful for students heading abroad or already living there, these examples are too distant and irrelevant to my Japanese students. Frustrating at times, with a little extra research, more relevant examples can be used (e.g. comparing two Japanese businesses and their practices, rather than American). The exercises easily adapt to fit substitute material. Furthermore, all having been written by native speakers, the gap between the samples and what students are expected to produce is, at times, a bit too large for a Japanese university classroom, especially students with lower motivation.

With no modifications or additional materials, this textbook would fall short of addressing some of the needs and interests of Japanese university students. However in the

appropriate context (ESL in the U.S.), or in the hands of a motivated teacher eager to adapt, it is a very good learning resource, both inside and outside of class.

Citation

Moreau, R. (2009). [Review of the book *Northstar 1: reading and writing*]. *Accents Asia* [Online], 3 (2), 60-61. Available: http://www.accentsasia.org/3-2/moreau.pdf

# John Beaumont (2009). *NorthStar 1: Reading and Writing*. White Plains, NY: Longman

A Book Review by Robert Moreau, Teachers College Columbia University, Tokyo

The second edition of *NorthStar 1: Reading and Writing* is part of a colorful, well sequenced series of five textbooks clearly aimed, through its choice of topics and visuals, at ESL students in the senior high school to university range. The first 3 volumes of the 5-textbook series have reading passages based on authentic materials while the final 2 books use only authentic materials, giving the students an ultimate goal of being able to work with real world genres proficiently.

*NorthStar 1* includes a clearly defined set of teaching principles, an explanation of the parts of a typical thematic unit as well as an easy to follow scope and sequence chart. A teacher's manual is also available for the text with teaching suggestions and assessment tools for each unit in the book. *NorthStar 1* also includes a grammar reference chart, which matches the grammar content of the book to Azar's *Basic English Grammar* and Longman's *Focus on Grammar Level 1*.

Each of the ten units of *NorthStar 1* presents a topic that should be engaging for the target learner age group. Themes include school uniforms, famous people, groups helping teens in urban centers and issues facing young athletes, among others. These themed units are divided into 3 main areas of focus, an introduction, reading and writing sections.

These color-coded sections provide both mechanical skills tasks and activities that encourage critical thinking. *NorthStar 1* aims to reinforce basic reading and writing skills such as skimming, scanning and grammar use as well as providing practice with sentence structure and proper paragraph formats.

Beyond purely mechanical activities, the text encourages the use of skills that will be valuable to students during their academic career. Forming opinions, integrating ideas from

two different texts, exploring pre-writing and editing skills are a few of the important skill areas addressed in the text. Throughout the book a multimodal exploration of each theme's vocabulary gives the students a chance to learn and contextualize the words in a variety of activities. This gives the students a means to practice new vocabulary beyond the two readings presented in each unit.

A true strength of *NorthStar 1* is its focus on genre-based pedagogy which, according to Hyland (2003) allows students to "develop as readers and writers who can examine, initiate, and respond to the many rhetorical situations they will confront in school, in work, and in their social and cultural lives" (Hyland, 2003, p. 248). In each unit two readings usually of different genres are provided. The readings usually represent two different viewpoints about the topic. For example, in the chapter dealing with school uniforms the first reading is a letter from the principal dealing with the school's rationale for introducing a uniform and the second reading is a student response to the principal's letter. After reading these points of view, students can examine for and against arguments, engage in a role-play situation as well as write an opinion letter about clothing at school.

Group and pair work, such as the role-play example noted above, is incorporated into each of the three main sections of each unit and is definitely another strength of this textbook. Brown (2001) points out that group work such as this not only generates interactive language in the class but also promotes a positive affective climate in the classroom and fosters learner responsibility and autonomy.

One criticism that could be made against *NorthStar 1* it is that a great deal of its content is North American-focused. Instructors in a non-American context such as Japan may need to make a special effort to try to link the topics to the students in their particular environment. The alternative writing and research topics presented in the text are a good place to start for teachers to build a bridge between the textbook and their students.

Overall, *NorthStar 1* has a lot to offer. There are opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking, to explore a variety of genres, and to reinforce their basic skills in reading and writing. Whether a teacher is looking for a book to use in a stand-alone reading/writing class or is considering an expanded series of materials for an English program incorporating all four skills, the *NorthStar* series definitely delivers a variety of options worth looking into.

Citation

Glasgow, G. (2009). [Review of the book *Language and politics. In A. Davies & K. Mitchell (Eds.) Edinburgh textbooks in applied Linguistics*]. *Accents Asia* [Online], 3 (2), 62-65. Available: http://www.accentsasia.org/3-2/glasgow.pdf

# John E. Joseph (2006). Language and Politics. In Alan Davies and Keith Mitchell (Eds.) *Edinburgh Textbooks in Applied Linguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

A Book Review by Gregory P. Glasgow, University of Queensland, Australia

Lakoff's (1990) assertion that language is politics and its "power governs how people talk" (cited in Ferrari, 2007, p. 603), and that the "analysis of language from this point of view is … today, more than ever…a survival skill" (p. 603), is a compelling one – and one that is soundly corroborated by John E. Joseph's volume in the Edinburgh Textbook in Applied Linguistics Series, *Language and Politics*. From the beginning to the conclusion, Joseph captures his reading audience with his coverage of an area that he forewarns may be too wide to handle by some, however still an area well worth exploration and empirical study. Linguists, students of applied linguistics and TESOL as well those interested in communication in general will have a lot to benefit from reading this volume in the Edinburgh series, since it is one of the few instances where such a topic has been covered in such a thorough yet accessible way.

*Language and Politics* is comprised of seven chapters in total, with the first two providing an overview of the national and social contexts that permeate the political nature of the use of language. In "Overview: How politics permeates language (and vice versa)", he initially provides the reader with the consideration made by a past philosopher that "all animals are political, but some are more political than others" (p. 1). But, at the same time he qualifies this statement by stating that some may disagree with it, with "disagreement being a necessary precondition for politics" (ibid). This sentence sets the tone for the rest of the book, as Joseph avoids communicating his thoughts in absolutes; he encourages the reader to engage with his nuanced viewpoints of issues that are discussed. In the second chapter, "Language and nation", the notion that nationality is constructed through language, and that

divisions are created between varieties of English is explored. Also touched is the control of variation and the clash between constructions of what is and is not a language. One in particular is his reference to the *Ausabu* criterion for dialect recognition created by Nazi member and German scholar Heinz Kloss, in which he states that the status of a new dialect will become secure with the acceptance of a critical mass of the elite, but "even that acceptance is a matter of persuasion and rhetoric, and is not dissociable from the political status of language" (p. 39).

The next two chapters, "The Social politics of language choice and linguistic correctness" (Chapter 3), and "Politics embedded in language" (Chapter 4), touch upon themes that involve individual choices with respect to language. The key point that Chapter 3 advances is that the "choice of which language to speak, and how to speak it – in the standard way, in a way marked for region, social class, educational level generation, etc. – positions me vis-à-vis my interlocutors, whether I intend to do so or not" (p. 43). This fact is "masked by strong cultural forces" (ibid), and may have important implications in today's debate in EFL contexts about teaching World Englishes versus standard forms. Joseph illustrates the social politics of choice and correctness in language with examples such as countries that construct themselves discursively as "monolingual", like Japan. He declares such constructions as a "figment of the imagination" (p. 45), citing Patten (2003), who states that countries with foreign language teachers and foreign military personnel (like Japan and Korea) cannot possibly be monolingual, not to mention the fact that these countries have indigenous and ethnic communities. Chapter 4 expands on how politics is embedded in language through an initial discussion of key thinkers in modern linguistics such as Saussure and Voloshinov, who differ in their conceptualizations of language as what binds people together (Saussure) and what keeps them apart (Volshinov), the latter being what Joseph states as what 'social' has come to mean in sociolinguistics these days. After exploring issues such as the concept of face, deferential address, and how language embeds gender relations, Joseph finishes the chapter by suggesting that we cannot take politics embedded in language at face value – it can be interpretable in many ways.

The manner in which language may surprise, offend and manipulate its users is addressed in the following chapters "Taboo language and its restriction" (Chapter 5) and "Rhetoric, propaganda and interpretation" (Chapter 6). Joseph takes a nuanced position about taboo language, recognizing its power to "break taboos" and to bond people together. Joseph finds that taboo words "may gradually become conventionalized" (p. 87), which seems to

suggest as Battistella (2005) did that "we need to ask, case by case, what is really offensive, [and] what is appropriate verbal license" (p. 100). He provides information – which seems to be probably a bit lengthy, but still interesting – about how swearing evolved through the 16th through to the 19th centuries, followed by the tensions caused by hate speech in today's language. In Joseph's discussion of rhetoric and interpretation in Chapter 6, he does not deny the need to study how words work through rhetoric is as important for those "in favor of plain speaking" (p. 112) as well as "those who want to bend language to their own advantage" (ibid). After his discussions of rhetoric with mention of viewpoints of thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, Sapir and Whorf, he introduces the reader to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and its current efforts to capture "the dynamic nature of both power relations and text production by uncovering the hegemonic structures within texts" (p. 127). Joseph cautions the reader by recognizing that the receiver of a text is not just a passive recipient in the interpretation of rhetoric, but that there will always be oppositional voices who rail against propaganda, with such resistance being "fundamental to human nature" (p. 134).

In the Conclusion, "Power, hegemony and choices", Joseph contends that agency in language use exists, and that it may depend to some extent on the circumstances that people are in or the circumstances that they seek to improve for themselves. The key point that ends the book is that there are many new questions to be raised about language and its political dimension as we move ahead into the 21st century, especially when considering the extent to which language and politics has evolved.

What I found compelling about this volume is the nature in which Joseph grapples with a topic seemingly larger than life and proceeds with a discussion that heightens awareness to how politics and language intersect in various contexts. Perhaps Joseph is not telling readers familiar in this area anything that is particularly new; however, he succeeds in capturing the essence of how language is political for those unfamiliar with the areas covered. The issues central to this book become critical for teachers as we consider the best way to teach about aspects of language beyond issues of structure and form. We need be also cognizant about the way that we represent languages ourselves, which may transmit to our students. Although the book has a tendency to employ complex terminology at times, the compact nature of it makes it a useful reference tool, and it would supplement readings for any TESOL teacher education or applied linguistics program well.

Overall, *Language and Politics* is an enjoyable book to read. For teachers interested in a deeper understanding of the political dimension of language in various aspects of social

life, it provides a very thorough and helpful overview. For anyone interested in this area, it would make a wonderful library addition.

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