

**Attitudes towards English Language Learning in Higher Education in Japan,
and the Place of English in Japanese Society**

Beverley Elsom Lafaye

Sanae Tsuda

Tokai Gakuen University

Tokai Gakuen University

Abstract

An advisory committee nominated by the late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi in 1999 made a proposal for the vision of the 21st century for Japan. It stressed the importance of enhancing communicative competence in English for the Japanese to survive in international competition and to be a good member of the international community. In the light of the work of the above committee, this study investigates attitudes to English among students in higher education in Japan. Empirical data have been drawn from a survey of over 500 Japanese university students. The results indicate that students in this limited study share some fundamentally similar ideas about English, including their perceptions of their English learning experience, to which they responded negatively, and their opinions about the usefulness of English, a question to which they responded overwhelmingly in the positive. The findings seem to open up some serious pedagogical questions, and the paper thus concludes with a discussion of these and language education and policy in Japan.

Introduction

In 1999, the late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi convened a working committee to discuss and draft a list of Japanese Goals in 21st Century (Wada et al, 2000). In discussing measures that should be taken to enhance universal literacy, one proposal was for a directive to “set the concrete objective of all citizens acquiring a working knowledge of English by the time they take their place in society as adults.” (Wada et al, 2000). A second proposal that emerged was the need for a future debate about the establishment of English as the second official language in Japan.

What precedes contrast starkly with the ambiance that many teachers of English at the university level in Japan witness in their classrooms. Here, observations suggest that there is a certain malaise in English education in Japan (Long & Russel, 1999). University students are unmotivated where English is concerned and this often translates into their sitting through classes with blank expressions on their faces or unconvincingly going through the motions, or even closing down (Keim et al, 1996:99). Students seem to make little progress and seem fed up with English and generally disappointed by their English learning experience.

As a result it was surmised that there might be something lacking in teachers approaches to language instruction, something amiss with the teaching materials available to teachers of English, and/ or something even more fundamental like a general failure in foreign language education in Japan.

With this as a backdrop, the present study set out to investigate:

- a) How the average Japanese student feels about English, that is, what s/he thinks of his/her learning experience and his/her own ability, and whether or not s/he actually perceives a need for English.
- b) Whether students are amenable to the idea of English as an official language.

Subjects

The subjects targeted were the total population of the newly-established Jinbun Gakubu (Humanities) Department of Tokaigakuen University, located in Nagoya. 82% of all first years and 69% of all second years completed the questionnaires. The subjects totaled 518, of which 287 were first year students and 231 were second year students. 36% of the subjects were male and 63 % were female. All students were studying one of the following three courses: Human Behavior, Language Communication, or International Culture.

Of the 518 students, 67 % has chosen to study English as a foreign language, 33 % Chinese, and of the 67 % who had chosen English, 9 % chose to study English intensively. There are no English majors at the university. Those choosing EFL were streamed according to a TOEFL ITP (Level 2 Pre-TOEFL) taken in their first week at university. 25 % of the students were considered to have a basic level, and 34 % to have an intermediate level. The average TOEFL score was 313 for first years, 346 for second years, and 367 for the intensive students. However, many students did not record their TOEFL scores, thus distorting the results. Actual averages were 332.29 for first years, 336 for second years.

The questionnaire was piloted with 69 subjects, well over the suggested 10% validating piloting. Subjects were all female, first and second year junior college students, the same age as the main body of subjects.

Method

Questionnaire-based data collection was preferred over others, being most easily administered and able to be duplicated for an unlimited number of subjects.

While not significantly different from interviews regarding the type of information that can be collected in this manner, questionnaires are much less time-consuming and efficient. Moreover, “questionnaires are used mostly to collect data on phenomena that are not easily observed, such as attitudes, motivation, and self-concepts” (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989:172). This method of data collection suited our purposes particularly well and might be expected to be more successful than interviewing, since anonymity is preserved. As such, students are more predisposed toward answering questions of a sensitive nature frankly. It was hoped that the questionnaire form of survey would help the Japanese students concerned to avoid the natural cultural propensity for ‘*tatemae*’ over ‘*honne*’ – to say what is expected in a particular situation rather than to disclose one’s own true thought.

The questionnaires were all to be distributed to the first years on the same day, avoiding the well-known problem of low response to questionnaires, and the authors distributed and collected the questionnaires themselves. The second year students’ questionnaires were collected by seminar teachers.

Results and Findings

Having extracted results, we shall endeavor to bring our findings together through some cross analysis, and establish what pedagogical and social implications emerge from the study and what conclusions might be drawn.

Students’ Opinions of the Necessity of English

- The overwhelming majority of students thought English is necessary for travel (94%), for communicating with other nationalities (87%), for using internet/computers(85%), and for entertainment (67%).
- Almost half of the subjects (48%) answered that English would be important for their children and 37% maybe.
- 14 % would definitely push their children to study English hard; 36% might, 45% said that they did not know if they would or not.

Students’ Perceptions of Their Language Learning Experience

- 60% of the students first noticed English before the age of 12, 46 % of them at age 7 – 12, 14 % at age 0~6 (see Table 1).
- 71% of the students first noticed English through entertainment (34% music; 20 % films; 14 % TV; 3% cartoons).
- Nearly half of the students (48%) had studied English outside their formal learning environment. 60 % of these had studied it at cram schools, 17 % in private lessons.
- 56% of the students were most motivated in their English studies by exams, 17% because of the possibility of communicating with native speakers.

Table 1. You first noticed English at age

	0-3	4-6	7-12	13 and up	do not know
basic	2 (1%)	13(9%)	74(51%)	32(22%)	24(17%)
intermediate	3(1%)	30(15%)	85(42%)	45(22%)	39(19%)
intensive	1(2%)	11(19%)	32(55%)	10(17%)	4(7%)
Chinese	1(1%)	15(15%)	47(47%)	28(28%)	17(17%)
Total	7(1%)	69(13%)	238(46%)	115(22%)	84(16%)

Students' 'Visceral Reaction' to English

- More than 2/3 of students (70%) said they did not like learning English.
- 43 % of the students' present interest in English was strong (31%) or very strong(12%). 36% said their interest was weak (16%) or very weak (18%).
- 85% of the students were unhappy or very unhappy with their proficiency.
- 73% did not find people from other nationalities annoying, and almost 2/3 (63%) expressed that they would like to make friends with other nationalities.

Students' Attitudes toward the Usefulness of English

Table 2. Usefulness of English

	essential	very useful	useful	not very useful	useless
Travel	145 (29%)	158 (31%)	182 (36%)	16(3%)	4 (1%)
TV/Movies	26 (5%)	63 (12%)	261(52%)	126(25%)	29(6%)
Internet/computer use	80 (16%)	163(32%)	188(37%)	61 (12%)	15(3%)
communication	311(61%)	135(27%)	53(40%)	5(1%)	3(1%)

The majority of the students surveyed recognized the usefulness of English, and 75 % indicated that they envied or admired good speakers of English. 85% thought that it would or might be important for their children as well. Despite this, less than half of the students (43%) indicated an interest in their present study of English, and only 14 % of the students definitely planned to push their children to learn English, even though they themselves had been pushed, (if we consider that 56 % had studied English outside their formal learning environment: 61 % of these in cram schools). Already we see some contradictions: English is useful and will be important for the next generation, but the next generation will not be pushed. Why?

Table 3. Do you like English?

	like	dislike	Total
basic	48(34%)	93(66%)	141
intermediate	62(31%)	138(69%)	200

intensive	24(42%)	33(58%)	57
Chinese	25(23%)	83 (77%)	108
Total	159(31%)	347 (69%)	506

The next significant results, that the students are overwhelmingly dissatisfied with their English learning experience (69 % don't like English) and are unhappy (85%) about their proficiency, (corroborating Takeshita's 1999 study) may lead us to some tentative conclusions. It would appear that the social perception of the use of English is not fulfilled by the students' actual learning. Usually, this is attributed to the lack of motivation from the students, but that conclusion does not fit with results which show that 65% would like to make friends with people of other nationalities, and 87% of students recognize English as useful for doing so. Moreover, 94% answered 'no' to the question 'Do you find people of other nationalities annoying?' These responses suggest a positive attitude toward foreigners and communication with foreigners.

On the other hand, a significant number (47%) would have preferred to study another language at university (while only 17% would have been happier to study a different language at high school level – see Appendix I). Why should this be when they have spent 6 years studying it? Shouldn't they be beginning to feel the benefits of such an undertaking and so be motivated to pursue its study? One of the underlying reasons can be that studying English is perceived to pass exams, since results show that 56% of students were motivated by these. This immediate goal seems to detract from the social image of English as a useful means of communication, either socially or individually. For it is well-known that the kind of exams that students are faced with more linguistic gymnastics than English for communicative purposes, as illustrated by Honna and Takeshita (1998:12):

English tests given to high school students by colleges and universities contain a lot of awkward questions made to examine applicants' theoretical linguistic knowledge rather than practical communicative competence.

The latter and the rationale on which it is based must in some measure be responsible for both the contradictions students display in their responses and their unhappiness. They study hard for 6 years but do not feel any tangible communicative results. However, this is by no means the whole picture.

Students' Preference for the Kind of English to Learn

Turning to the questionnaire survey on the kind of English they are aiming for, native speaker's English, educated non-native speaker's English or international English (lingua franca), 26% chose the native speaker's model, 25% the non-native speaker's model, and 46% chose English as the lingua franca. However, when students were asked with whom they are likely to use English to speak, 370 students (71%) responded that they would most likely use English to communicate with native

speakers and only 134 students (26%) said they would use it with people whose first language is not English. Students do not therefore seem to foresee opportunities of using English when going to Asian countries or other parts of the world, nor do they envision any occasions to talk with foreign residents in Japan. They do not yet see English as a language offering wide-ranging communicative potential despite, there being no doubt, that English is a very useful tool.

Students' Attitudes toward Language Policies

With regard to language policies, students were asked if English should be taught as a required subject in Japan. Although it is stated in the guideline of the Ministry of Education and Science that a foreign language is required at junior and senior high school levels, almost all junior and senior high schools offer only English as the option. Exceptionally, a small number of private schools give options of French, German, Chinese or Korean as foreign languages in addition to English.

Table 4 shows that more than half of the students think that English should be taught as a compulsory subject in Japan. This can be considered as a natural result of the present situation of Japan given that English is widely used as a universal language.

Table 4. English should be the compulsory first language taught in Japan

	Strongly agree	agree	cannot say either	disagree	strongly disagree
Basic	20(14%)	60(41%)	46(32%)	13(9%)	5(3%)
Intermediate	29 (14%)	83 (40%)	71 (35%)	12 (6%)	7(3%)
Intensive	13 (22%)	20 (34%)	18 (31%)	5 (9%)	2 (3%)
Chinese	12 (11%)	51 (46%)	40 (36%)	2 (2%)	3 (3%)
Total	74 (14%)	214(41%)	175 (34%)	32 (6%)	17 (3%)

Table 5 shows the students' response to the question of ideal starting age of English instruction.

Table 5. English should be taught in Japan from

	age 6	age 10	age 12	age 15	not at all	other
basic	73 (50%)	30(21%)	23 (16%)	2 (1%)	4(3%)	12(8%)
intermediate	89 (43%)	50(24%)	32 (16%)	5 (2%)	7(3%)	17(8%)
intensive	22 (38%)	8(14%)	12 (21%)	2 (3%)	1(2%)	11(19%)
Chinese	47 (43%)	27(25%)	12 (11%)	3 (3%)	6(5%)	13(12%)
Total	231(45%)	115(22%)	79(15%)	12(2%)	14(3%)	41(19%)

The table shows that the majority (67%) of the students think that English should be taught at the elementary school level. In the comment columns provided in the last question, a number of students expressed it should be introduced at kindergarten or

even earlier.

Students' responses to the English as a second official language question are shown in Table 6. Nearly half (45%) of the students did not know if it is good to introduce English as a second official language.

Table 6. English should be introduced as an official language in Japan.

	Strongly agree	agree	cannot say either	disagree	strongly disagree	Total
Basic	8 (6%)	46(32%)	67 (46%)	9 (13%)	5 (3%)	145
Intermediate	19 (9%)	61(30%)	89 (44%)	22 (11%)	11 (5%)	202*
Intensive	6 (10%)	16 (28%)	25 (43%)	8 (14%)	3(5%)	58
Chinese	4(4%)	33(28%)	51 (43%)	12 (11%)	8 (7%)	108**
Total	37 (7%)	156 (30%)	232 (45%)	61(12%)	27 (5%)	513***

*no response 3 **no response 2 *** no response 5

Discussion

Pedagogical Implications

There is no doubt that Japanese society is changing rapidly with many economic demographic and social changes, manifesting themselves with a move towards individualism among young Japanese. For example, there are increasing numbers of pupils refusing to go to school, increasing numbers of so-called 'freeters' – people who want to work part-time with the freedom and flexibility that offers, instead of joining a company, and increasing numbers of young people willing to study, work or even move abroad permanently, or work for foreign companies in Japan. This individualization brings with it new demands on education and the decreasing birth rate puts students in a more powerful situation in which they can have their needs listened to.

Institutions need to recognize and respond positively to this new situation. Some institutions are already doing so, by putting in place new and more flexible curricula which are better designed to fulfill the needs of the students. But, the present study shows that some more fundamental changes may be required.

The emphasis on native speakers and their cultures has not helped students of English to create a realistic goal in their language studies and they have been repeatedly disappointed during a striving for so-called 'perfection'. "Given an Anglophile goal as their guiding light, Japanese students of English cannot accept their limited proficiency as natural and good enough for communication". (Honma, 1998:119) Yet, one can only be "a native speaker of one language" (Cook, 1999:197), the one you learn from birth. It is therefore useless to strive to emulate native speakers. Moreover, perfectionism actually prevents or stymies proficiency improvement. It can only reinforce the negative image of one's achievements, as shown in the present study. And Honma has much more to say about how ingrained Japanese people are with the idea that only the anglophile model will do (Honma, 1998).

An interesting example of a more pragmatic policy towards language teaching is illustrated by the Korean approach, as reported in Yoshikawa (2000). Korea systematically favors the learner's culture over the cultures of the natives whose language is the target.

Yoshikawa describes how Korea, being concerned about the possibility of so-called 'foreign cultural invasion' chooses to use textbook examples that rest on Korean society and values rather than those of target language culture. The Korean interest in the foreign culture is very heavily linguistically based. Japan might usefully learn from this. While average TOEFL scores in the 1970s were 20 points higher in Japan, in 1997 Korean TOEFL examinee results were 24 points higher than their Japanese counterparts. Between 1980 and 1994 the Korean government increased English teaching hours for pupils at junior high schools and English classes were established at the elementary level (1982), whereas in Japan contact hours were decreased and were elective. The above factors will no doubt have contributed to the change in TOEFL score differentials. A government commitment to increasing contact hours and to introducing English language learning as early in a child's life as possible is instrumental in helping citizens achieve "a working knowledge of English by the time they take their place in society as adults" (Wada et al:24) The Japanese government's 2003 directive which will make English language education available to all elementary school pupils is seen as positive in the light of the above observations. It has also been made obvious from the results of the present study that the earlier people are exposed to a language, the more positively they view it. This was illustrated in the responses of students who have chosen to study English intensively at Tokai Gakuen University. 21 % of the intensive students noticed English by age 6 and almost half of them liked learning, compared to 70% of intermediate students who dislike learning English. Motivation would appear to play a role here also.

Results from this survey show that students want to learn practical English that will allow them to function in different contexts and that will facilitate their communication with many different nationalities, hence their penchant towards an international variety. This implies that new curricula will have to be designed taking into account these needs for the students who are not satisfied with the situation as it stands.

One solution may be to include more non-native models. Teachers in the huge AET program, for example, that brings young, predominantly American and British, graduates to Japanese junior high and high school needs to reflect the fact that these two sets of native speakers – inner circle group – are not the norm. Moreover, the employment of young and inexperienced teachers, who are convinced of a 'cultural superiority', can be damaging to learners. This is an issue that needs addressing. Teaching materials should also include different varieties of English. This would: a) allow students to become aware of different varieties and b) become reassured that they do not have to aspire to one particular unrealistic native-speaker's model.

Students should not be allowed to “see L2 learning as a battle that they are fated never to win” (Cook, 1999:204) as their disenchantment stems largely from this.

Again after Cook (1999:204), the goal should be for students to be satisfied at whatever stage they decide to stop their studies. They should have something to take away at each stage.

Language Policies

Japan has been switching its attitudes towards English between an Anglophile era and anti English era in a 40 to 50 year cycle for the past 130 years (Otani, 1997a; 1997b). During World War II, a famous novelist Kikuchi Kan suddenly turned nationalistic and renounced European values and English languages. After the War, another famous novelist Shiga Naoya proposed that Japan should abolish Japanese and start using English, a language suited to catching up with the technology and civilization of the western world. Otani (1997a; 1997b) claims that both attitudes lack a sense of balance, and states that it is necessary for the Japanese to have a sound attitude towards other nations by studying, in addition to English, other languages, whether they are African, Asian or other European languages. He explains his proposal as a triangulation of looking at languages with critical analysis of language policy of Japan, and gives a broader perspective to the issue of English teaching. While Otani (1997a; 1997b) stresses the importance of English education in Japan, he cautions that it is important not to forget the significance of other languages and cultures.

Takao Suzuki repeatedly expresses similar viewpoints that it is necessary for Japan to know more about non-European countries and languages, such as Middle Eastern countries to which Japan owes a great amount of fossil fuel supply (Suzuki 1987, 1999). He also proposes that Japanese students can gain confidence in acquiring a language by studying a non-European language such as Korean, for example, because it is more easily learned. He also points out that the Japanese have always aspired for a model of civilization and a model of language. For instance, China was a political and academic model for Japan for more than a thousand years, and after the Meiji era, it was Britain before the War and the U.S.A. after it. According to Suzuki, Japan is one of the very few nations that have experienced neither language deprivation nor colonization, and the people have therefore never been forced to interact with a mass of non-Japanese people within Japan. Foreign languages have always been studied indirectly through books or other media. He explains that the Japanese passive attitude towards foreign language has never changed even in the present day when direct negotiations and expressions in English are indispensable in international and in intra-national communication.

Having such opinions in mind, we asked the students if they would have preferred to study another language other than English at high school level and other than English or Chinese at college level. 22 % of the students expressed their wish to study other languages at high school level and 55 % at college level. Among those

students, 70 % for high school and 87 % for college said they would like to study European languages such as French, German or Italian. 22% of high school and 8% of college students would prefer to study another Asian language other than Chinese, which is already offered to them. 2~3% of high school and college students would like to study African languages such as Arabic or Swahili.

We can see that the students are more interested in European languages and cultures, which have been the languages predominantly taught as second foreign languages in Japanese universities. Undoubtedly English, as an international language, is preferable, but it is also important to give opportunities for high school and college students to study other languages, and to give more preference to Asian countries as Otani (1997a; 1997b) and Suzuki (1999) suggest. It may not always be possible for a single institution to offer several languages, and it is therefore necessary to find ways to offer such courses by making use of programs offered through the media, intensive summer programs overseas or in Japan, or by devising a system for exchanging foreign language credits among institutions within a specific geographical area where students can take the languages of their choice.

English teaching is being introduced at elementary schools in 2002 as a part of international understanding education in general education hours, which consists of education in information, environment, and welfare/health in addition to international understanding. In most private elementary schools, English teaching has already been introduced, and it is being introduced to public schools following this guideline.

Matsukawa (2000) explores why English was not introduced as an independent subject at elementary school in the 1996 proposal, and she attributes this to the difficulty of adding another subject to elementary schools which are currently facing the need to reduce the amount of teaching to suit a 5-day week curriculum. She draws attention to the difficulty of reaching an agreement on the goals and the methods of teaching elementary school pupils. In spite of these factors, she thinks it is important to introduce it as an independent subject not as an option of general education in order to develop a good curriculum for English teaching. In her opinion, there are two ways to realize English as an independent subject: one is to concentrate on fostering students' competence of English skills and another is to use English to enhance students' awareness of living in a global community. She also points out the difficulty of hiring competent English teachers to teach in elementary schools. If the Japanese government is serious about English teaching at elementary schools, it should seriously consider the problems that Matsukawa describes, and start teacher education and curriculum development as soon as possible.

As mentioned above, there was a heated discussion concerning English as a second official language in Japan after the proposal was publicized in 1999. Although the proposal contained other important issues, this issue attracted enormous Japanese media attention, and a number of newspaper articles for and against the proposal were published and readers responded actively.

In this study, nearly half of the students cannot say whether they agree or

disagree with the proposal that English should be introduced as an official language, and 32% to 39% of the students think that it is a good idea. 16 % to 19 % of the students are against the proposal. In the free answer section of the questionnaire, a number of the students who agree with the proposal believe that and the Japanese people will benefit from it as English is an international language, and that they will be better understood by the rest of the world by making English an official language. Those who are against it express their concern that the Japanese language might lose its particular characteristics if English is introduced as an official language. Many students think that it is unrealistic to even talk about it, because most Japanese can do without English in most situations as long as they stay in Japan and the majority of the population does not have a level of English that can be used for international or intra-national communication. Many of the students say they understand the importance of English as an international language, but they do not think it is necessary to make it an official language.

One of the strongest proponents wishing to make English an official language of Japan is journalist Yoichi Funabashi, who was one of the members of the Prime Minister's Commission in 1999. Currently being a columnist for Asahi Newspaper, a leading Japanese newspaper in Japan, he is writing about international issues while traveling around the world. In 2000, Funabashi wrote a book on English as an official language issue (Funabashi, 2000) to explain his position as a proponent of this. He says that it is more than a matter of language policy but an important strategy if Japan is to become a member of the global community. He explains that international communication and dialog will become more and more important in the 21st century. He points out that Japan has not been able to explain its position in the past, partly because of a lack of sensitivity to what is going on in the world and an inability to participate in discussion with other countries. He also points out that English literacy for Japanese will make international cooperation easier among Asian countries.

Masao Kunihiro, a former English simultaneous interpreter and diet member, compiled *Is it True that English is Going to Be an Official Language*, a book on English as an official language issue, containing interviews of seven noted persons. The first interviewee Yoichi Funabashi foresees Japan as a more multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation in the 21st century and believes that it is important to employ English as an official language in addition to Japanese. The second interviewee Shuichi Kato, a writer, critic and professor who once taught at Columbia University, Yale University and the University of British Columbia, flatly says that it is not necessary to make it an official language because Japanese is spoken by the majority of Japan's people. Gregory Clark, president of Tama University, says that once they realize that it is necessary for them to learn, the Japanese people will be able to acquire English proficiency without using 'a magic wand' to have English as an official language. Prince Takamadonomiya, the third son of the present Emperor's uncle Mikasanomiya, expresses his concern about government spending on publication and translation of official documents if English is introduced as an

official language. He says that it is more important for the Japanese to concentrate their energy on their specialties rather than unanimously trying to acquire English. Though those discussants have different opinions towards the issue of English as an official language, they agree that the leaders of the Japanese government and business world need to have much higher English proficiency to lead the country.

It is important to stress that Japanese speakers will interact with their neighboring countries in English whether it is used as a second language or a foreign language. As Honna (2000) repeatedly claims English is now 'an Asian language'. In his article entitled *Colonized Asia is Colonizing English*, Funabashi (2000) also points out that English is used in Asia extensively and intra-nationally and he criticizes Japan for lagging behind in its language policy and its level of English competence.

Conclusion

Language teaching in Japan is changing and is going to change further, both at high school and university level. The Government, curriculum developers, and of course teachers must come to see English education in a fundamentally different way. Students are showing us how.

Following Takeshita's study of students attitudes in 1999, the results of the present paper offer a further small step forward toward a better understanding of Japanese student attitudes to English and English learning. Without any knowledge of these attitudes, institutions of learning will be unable to help their students to develop their language potential, and the government will not easily achieve its linguistic ambitions for its citizens.

The results of the questionnaires show that the majority of the students think that English should be a required subject in secondary schools. Many students also think that it should be introduced to elementary schools. Although one third of the students agree with the idea that English should be an official language of Japan, a half of them are not quite sure. Many of them think that they are most likely to use it to communicate with native speakers. There are several such contradictions in the questionnaire results, the most pertinent one being that they say their interest in English is strong but are unhappy with their proficiency and do not like studying it.

In addition to considering these questionnaire results, we followed up with current discussions about English as a required subject, its introduction to elementary school, and English as an official language. The discussions stress the importance of the role that English plays in the world, and voice concern that the Japanese people are generally not satisfied with the English teaching in Japan. English is a very useful tool which every individual can use in his or her own way, and much can be done by taking the attitudes and awareness of the learners of English into consideration.

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Appendix I.

Some Significant Results

Students' Opinions of the Necessity of English

Question 24: the overwhelming majority of students think English is necessary for travel (94%), for communicating with other nationalities, (87%) for using internet/computers, (85%) , and for entertainment, (67%).

Question 23: Almost half of the subjects (48%) answered that English would be important for their children and 37% maybe.

Question 22: 14% would definitely push their children to study English hard: 36% might, 45% wrote that they did not know if they would or not.

Question 8:47% agreed English should be the compulsory second language, 35% agreed, 12% strongly, but 30% did not know.

Question 9: a third agreed (27%) or strongly agreed (6%) that English should be the second official language in Japan but 39% could not say.

Students' perceptions of their Language Learning Experience

Question 11: Almost 60% of students first noticed English between the age of 4 and 12, 46% of students at age 7-12, 14% at age 0-6.

Question 10: 71% of students had first noticed English through entertainment (34% music;20% films;14% TV; 3% cartoons).

Question 6a: Almost half of the students (56%) had studied English outside their formal learning environment. 61% of these had studied it at cram schools, 16% in private lessons.

Question 1a/2a: Though 17% have preferred to study another language than English at high school, almost half of the students (47%) would have preferred to study another language at university.

Question 19: 56% of students were most motivated in their English studies by exams, 17% because of the possibility it would give them of communicating with native speakers.

Students' 'Visceral Reaction' to English

Question 15: More than 2/3 of students (70%) said they did not like learning English.

Question 12: 43% of student' present interest in English was strong (31%) or very strong(12%). 365 said their interest was weak (18%) or very weak (18%).

Question 14: 85% of students were unhappy or very unhappy with their proficiency.

Question 21: 73% envied (40%) or admired (33%) good speakers of English.

Question 18/17: The vast majority of the students (94%) did not find people from other nationalities annoying, and almost 2/3 (63%) expressed that they would like to make friends with people from other nationalities.

Appendix II. Sample Questionnaire

What Do You Think of English?

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what opinions you have about English. The results of questionnaire will be published, but your personal information will not be publicized.

Sanae Tsuda and Beverley Elsom Lafaye
The Faculty of Humanities, Tokaigakuen Univerisity

About yourself: please check appropriate items.

- 1) Year: a. First year b. Second year
- 2) Sex: a. Male b. Female
- 3) Languages chosen: a. English b. Chinese
- 4) If you are studying English now, which class do you belong?
 Basic First year ①~④, Second year 21~24
 Intermediate First year ⑤~⑩, Second year 25~28
 Intensive English First year ⑪~⑫, Second year 29~30

5) What was your TOEFL ITP Score? ()

Please answer questions 1~25 by choosing only one answer which is closest to your response. When it is necessary, please fill in your comments in ().

1-a. Would you have preferred to study another language at Tokai?

yes ⇒ please proceed to 1-b.

no ⇒ please proceed to 2-a.

1-b. If you answered yes, which language would you have chosen?

European: e.g. French, German, Spanish, etc.

Asian: e.g. Korean, Thai, etc.

African: e.g. Swahili, Arabic, etc.

2-a. Would you have preferred to study another language at high school?

Yes ⇒ please proceed to 2-b.

no ⇒ please proceed to 3.

2-b. If you answered yes, which language would you have chosen?

a. European: e.g. French, German, Spanish, etc.

b. Asian: e.g. Korean, Thai, etc.

c. African: e.g. Swahili, Arabic, etc.

3. Which variety of English (see note) would you like to learn?

- the native (textbook) English variety now being taught
- educated non-native English (ex. Yuki Kudo, the Japanese teachers of English of this university)
- International English*—lingua franca

*International English is not identified with specific variety/nationality.

4. Have you ever talked with another Asian (in English)? a. yes b. no

5. Can you notice when English is not standard British/US English?

a. yes b. no

- 6-a. Have you studied English outside junior/senior high school or university?
a. Yes ⇒ please proceed to 6-b.
b. No ⇒ please proceed to 7.
- 6-b. If you answered 'yes', where did you study English?
a. Kindergarten b. Elementary school c. Language school
d. Private lesson e. Study abroad/ Home stay g. other ()
7. English should be taught in Japan.
a. from age 6 b. from age 10 c. from age 12
d. from age 15 e. not at all g. other ()
8. English should be the compulsory first language taught in Japan.
a. Strongly agree b. agree c. cannot say either d. disagree
e. strongly disagree
9. English should be introduced as an official language* in Japan.
* A private committee assigned by the late Prime Minister made a proposal "A Vision for 21st century Japan" in January, 2000 that "we must make every effort to make English as a working language for the Japanese. In the future, we may have to consider a possibility of making English as an official language of Japan."
a. Strongly agree b. agree c. cannot say either d. disagree
e. strongly disagree
10. You first noticed English in life through
a. television b. films c. cartoons d. music e. books
f. katakana English g. family member h. friends i. Other ()
11. You first noticed English through at age
a. 0-3 b. 4-6 c. 7-12 d. 13 and up e. do not know
12. Your present interest in English is
a. very strong b. strong c. cannot say either d. weak e. nil
- 13-a. Are you studying English now? a. yes ⇒ please proceed to 13-b.
b. no ⇒ please proceed to 14.
- 13-b. You are learning English (to)
a. pass exams b. speak with native speakers of English c. travel d. go to
graduate school e. because everybody does f. don't know g. other
()
14. Regarding your English proficiency you feel:
a. very happy b. happy c. cannot say either d. unhappy e. very unhappy
15. Do you like learning English? a. yes b. no
16. Would you like to travel abroad? a. yes b. no
17. Would you like to make friends with people from other countries?
a. yes b. no
18. Do people from other countries annoy you? a. yes b. no
19. In your experience of English learning at school you were most motivated by
a. exams b. teachers c. textbooks d. the possibility of communicating
with native speakers or other natives e. to do the same as everyone else

- g. other ()
20. You think Japanese people are likely to use English to communicate with
a. native speakers of English b. people whose first language is not English (e.g. people from Middle Eastern or Asian countries)
21. Your feeling about people who can speak English well
a. respect b. envy c. indifference d. scorn e. other ()
22. You will make your children study English hard
a. definitely b. maybe c. cannot say either d. probably not e. definitely no
23. You think English will be important for your children
a. definitely b. maybe c. cannot say either d. probably not e. definitely no
24. On a scale of 1-5, classify the usefulness to you of English for
5 essential 4 very useful 3 useful 2 not very useful 1 useless
- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Travel | 5-----4-----3-----2-----1 |
| TV/movies | 5-----4-----3-----2-----1 |
| internet/computer use | 5-----4-----3-----2-----1 |
| communication with people from other countries | 5-----4-----3-----2-----1 |
25. On a scale of 1-5, rate the following idea:
“Honestly speaking, I don’t believe English will ever be useful in my life”
a. strongly agree b. agree c. disagree d. strongly disagree e. don’t know

Free questions

1. If you answered ‘yes’ to 1-a, please explain why you want to study other languages.
2. Please explain why you are for or against the idea of English becoming an official language of Japan
3. Do you like English? Please comment on why you do or do not like English.
What has been your most positive experience of learning English?
What has been your most negative experience of learning English?
What kind of classes would you be interested in taking to study English?
Without thinking too deeply about it, say what 3 key words come to your mind when you hear the word ‘English’?
Thank you for your cooperation.

I found a job in Japan despite average Japanese skills. Firstly, unlike countries with English as a first language, most courses are taught in Japanese, making any skills you earn in university hard to transfer to other countries. Secondly, as I mentioned, although it might seem like a generalization, most companies in Japan teach fresh grad employees from zero, and most of the things they learn in uni isn't transferable to their job. Continue Reading. 11. Many schools offer international education in English for the comfort of children arriving from all over the world. There is no one regime of education pattern which is followed in these schools. You can find the Montessori approach, the Cambridge curriculum, the IB diploma for higher grades, and the CBSE pattern. These institutes teach non-Japanese speakers the Japanese language. In most courses of study at higher education institutions in Japan, the classes are conducted in Japanese. To follow along with school classes, Japanese language abilities of around Japanese Language Proficiency Test levels N1 or N2 are required. This is equal to around 600 to 900 or more hours of study. It depends on the environment and individual effort, but even with concentrated study in Japan it requires around one to two years to reach this level. 1. Types and number of schools. There are also courses in which you can learn... This paper aims to assess Japanese English learners' attitudes towards their own pronunciation and the influence of studying abroad on their attitudes as focusing on a fact that many diverse types of English accents exist around the world. This study investigated the attitudes of 161 Japanese university students in a Japanese university towards their English pronunciation through a self-evaluation questionnaire. The participants were separated into four groups: non-study abroad, short-term, middle-term, and long-term study abroad. The results demonstrated the negative perception to their own pronunciation. Historical Attitudes Towards European Languages. Japanese people often tell Westerners living in Japan that they have an inferiority complex towards Western culture. Perhaps this stems from the historical circumstances of early contact--during the Meiji era, when Japan's elite were struggling to modernize the country and assimilate Western technology, much as they had with the Chinese hundreds of years before. Somewhere between junior high and high school a great many Japanese develop a taste for the cosmopolitan sounds and images that foreign music and movies provide. In addition to those students who study English as a foreign language in Japan, there has been an increasing number of Japanese living abroad. Bilingual behaviour, attitudes, identity and vitality: some data from Japanese speakers in London, UK. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, Vol. 30, Issue. 4, p. 327. Changes in English Language Education in Japan. Online at <http://ilc2.doshisha.ac.jp/users/kkitaolibrary/article/wca.htm>, accessed 6 March 2004. Kitta, H. 1989. English in foreign language education policy in Japan: toward the twenty-first century, *World Englishes* 14 (1): 13-25. Kokugo Shingikai 2000. *Kokusai Shakai ni okeru Nihongo no Arikata* (The Ideal State of Japanese in International Society), online at http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/12/kokugo/toushin/001217.htm, accessed 4 March 2004.