

Articles

***Yakudoku* EFL Instruction in Two Japanese High School Classrooms: An Exploratory Study**

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Despite so much being made of oral English instruction, some researchers suggest that English language instruction in Japanese high schools is still dominated by *yakudoku*, a non-oral approach to foreign language instruction. Little detailed, descriptive research on *yakudoku* instruction in classrooms is to be found, and the beliefs of teachers who use *yakudoku* seem not to be researched at all. This exploratory study seeks to remedy this. Two high school EFL classes were observed, and the teachers interviewed. Specific classroom behaviors of the teachers were analyzed and coded, and teachers' beliefs, as revealed through interviews, matched with their behaviors. It was found that in focusing on linguistic forms, teachers demanded conformity in students' work. It was also found that the students focused the bulk of their attention on the Japanese translations of the English text, rather than the English text itself. The study, while exploratory in nature, and thus flawed, creates a basis for further research into this little studied aspect of EFL instruction in Japanese high schools.

日本の高等学校における英語教育について、オーラル・イングリッシュの是非が活発に議論される一方、「授業形態の実情はまだまだ訳読中心である」と指摘する研究者は少ない。ところが、この最も典型的で一般的な授業方法とされる訳読授業を詳細に分析した研究は少なく、さらに訳読授業を展開する教師が、英語の授業方法・学習方法についてどのような考えを持ち合わせているのかについては、これまで研究対象にされなかったようである。本研究では、まず高等学校の2クラスの授業観察と教師へのインタビューを行い、教師の授業行動を分析し、カテゴリー化を行った。そして、インタビューを通して判明した教師の「授業方法・学習方法についての考え」と「授業行動」との関係を考察した。

結果、教師は英文と和訳文の表面的な一致を重要視し、従って言語的要素への関心が高いことが判明した。また同時に、生徒は英文そのものよりも和訳文に多くの注意を向けていることが判明した。本研究は仮説の検証を目的としたものではなく、訳読授業についての探索を行った研究であるが、今後期待される訳読授業研究への橋渡しとしての役割を果たすものと考えられる。

In spite of pendulum swings towards oral English instruction, some researchers suggest that English language instruction in high schools in Japan has largely been and still is dominated by *yakudoku*, a non-oral approach to foreign language instruction thought to be related to grammar/translation (Bryant, 1956; Henrichsen, 1989; Hino, 1988; Law, 1995). Hino, in speaking of high school and university English instruction, goes so far as to say "*Yakudoku* is 'the' method in the teaching of English in Japan" (1988, p. 46). Writing from a perspective of university teachers dealing with high school graduates educated in the *yakudoku* method, Bamford agrees: "Indeed, the tradition of using the 'grammar translation' method is . . . practically synonymous with English education in Japan" (1993, p. 64). A survey conducted by the Research Group for College English Teaching in Japan (cited in Hino, 1988, p. 46) reported that among its 1,012 Japanese university and high school teacher respondents nationwide, 70 to 80 percent used *yakudoku* in their EFL classes.

Despite its seeming prevalence in EFL education in Japan, little detailed, descriptive research on *yakudoku* English instruction in Japanese high school classrooms exists. Complaints and commentaries about its effects on second language reading, second language learning, and secondary and tertiary school curricula abound in the literature. But while these articles are relevant and cogent, they lack descriptive data taken from classrooms in which the methodology is used (Bamford, 1993; Bryant II, 1956; Henrichsen, 1989; Hildebrandt & Giles, 1980; Hino, 1988; Horibe, 1995; Januzzi, 1994; Law, 1994; Law, 1995; Mitsuo, 1996; Sheen, 1993).

The purpose of this research is to define *yakudoku*, and describe how it affects the EFL instruction of two Japanese high school teachers. Central to an understanding of EFL *yakudoku* education in Japan is an account of the instructional practices of Japanese high school English teachers, and the beliefs that fuel these practices. From there, future researchers can more easily postulate how *yakudoku* fits in with second language reading and second language acquisition theory. Therefore, as a first step, the research questions are:

1. What are the instructional practices of two "academic" high school teachers in their *yakudoku* EFL classrooms?
2. How can the beliefs these teachers hold towards *yakudoku* EFL education be characterized?

Yakudoku and Grammar/Translation

Yakudoku is often compared to the grammar/translation method of foreign language instruction, as in Hino: "the Grammar-Translation Method in the West, which grew out of the teaching of classical languages such as Latin and Greek, presents a close resemblance to the *Yakudoku* Method" (1988, p. 53). Henrichsen provides a similar definition, "Another Japanese language-teaching tradition that ran counter to the reforms . . . was a Japanese-style 'grammar translation' approach called *yakudoku*" (1989, p. 104).

The grammar/translation method, as described by Howatt (1984), developed in 19th century Europe through a collision of the older study of classical literary texts in higher education with the changing realities of a rapidly growing public secondary education movement for young people. Rather than longer classical literary texts learned through self-study, the grammar/translation method focused on grammar rules through explicit instruction and by using single written sentences to exemplify grammar structures thought essential to learn. The sentences also were used to provide opportunities for students to practice using the grammar structures in pedagogical, classroom-based exercises (Howatt, 1984, p. 132). This practice was achieved in many cases through having students translate the example sentences from the second language into the first language, and vice versa, hence the "translation" part of the method's name. The descriptions of Howatt (1984) and Kelly (1969) suggest that the mastery of the grammar rules was the focus of the method.

Concerning the relationship of *yakudoku* to grammar/translation, the consensus seems to be that while there are similarities, there are important differences. In this paper, two of the major differences will be discussed, as will be three areas of similarity. Hino (1988, p. 46) specifies the three-step process of *yakudoku*: First, the reader makes a word-by-word translation of the English text; next, the translation is reordered to match Japanese syntax; and finally, the string of translated words is recoded more finely into Japanese syntax. According to Hino, "the teacher's job in class is to explain the word-by-word translation technique, to provide a model translation, and to correct the student's translation" (p. 46). Contrast this with Howatt's portrayal of a grammar/translation method class: "Each new lesson had one or two new grammar rules, a short vocabulary list, and some practice examples to translate" (1984, p. 136). This suggests the first major difference between grammar/translation and *yakudoku*: In *yakudoku* the main focus seems to be on translating the foreign language text into Japanese. While grammar instruction may take place, it seems to be secondary.

The second major difference is suggested by Law (1995, p. 215), who states that the purpose of *yakudoku* is to render the text into Japanese so that the content may be understood in Japanese. The commentary of one Japanese scholar, Ueda (cited in Hino, 1988), confirms Law's comments that the meaning and content of the English text is understood not in English, but in Japanese. Law comments, "English has tended to be perceived as a channel of one-way communication, that is, for the reception of Western ideas" (1995, p. 214). The second major difference between grammar/translation and *yakudoku*, then, is that in *yakudoku* written texts are studied for their content after being transformed into Japanese as part of a one-way exchange. In grammar/translation, there is a sense of two-way exchange, with students translating text from the L2 into the L1 and from the L1 into the L2.

Given these two differences, the picture forming here is that *yakudoku* instruction requires students to focus more on the Japanese translation of an English text rather than the English text itself. Law comments "the focus of attention is only initially on the codes of the foreign language; most of the productive energy of the method is directed towards the recoded Japanese version" (1995, p. 216).

Three similarities shared by *yakudoku* and grammar/translation will be discussed here. The first similarity is that both methodologies have been, and are, accompanied by examinations administered on a large scale to secondary students. In the case of British schoolchildren learning modern foreign languages in the 19th century, the universities created a system of public examinations which enabled high scorers to enter better tertiary educational institutions (Howatt, 1984). At present, Japanese high schools prepare 45% of their graduates for junior college, college, or university entrance exams, in which English is nearly always tested (Shimahara, cited in Brown & Yamashita, 1995a).

The second similarity between the methodologies is related to the tests described above. In both cases, there was, and continues to be, a powerful washback effect from the examinations onto secondary level language syllabuses and teaching methodology. Howatt states "though public examinations did not create the grammar-translation method, they fixed its priorities" (1984, p. 133). Effects of the exams on grammar/translation instructional practices of the time were an increasing emphasis on "meticulous standards of accuracy," and an unfortunate tendency to focus on exceptions to the rules of grammar (Howatt, 1984, pp. 134-136). Reform-minded educators of the time objected to this washback effect, and looked to the universities to initiate change to ameliorate the situation (Howatt, 1984, pp. 134-135).

The washback effect of Japanese university entrance exams on general high school curricula and teaching methodology is documented by Rohlen (1983, p. 108), "The criterion of efficiency in preparation, of meeting competition by gearing education to the [university] examinations, reaches deep into nearly every corner of high school education." Other scholars have focused on test washback on the high school EFL curricula and teaching methodology, such as Law (1994, 1995), and Reader (1986). Law, in particular, notes of *juken eigo* (examination English) "[it] exhibits a strong preference for lists of language items over discursive texts, for peripheral over core forms, and for linguistic knowledge over linguistic performance" (1995, p. 217). Washback from the university exams is not limited to high school students who want to enter universities—of the 55% of Japanese high school students who do not aspire to enter colleges or universities, Rohlen (1983) remarks: "one third of all Japanese students who attend vocational [high] schools must endure the same kind of instruction but without the sense of purpose or reward [of preparing for the university entrance exams]" (p. 247). As in the days of grammar/translation in Europe (Howatt, 1984), the distortions created in secondary education curricula and methodology by university entrance exams have their critics both social (Amano, 1990) and educational (Horio, 1988). Horio refers to the system as "our overheated examination system" (1988, p. 12).¹

The third similarity between *yakudoku* and grammar/translation is a focus on the written text, at the expense of oral/aural skills. In Howatt's words, "[in grammar/translation] spoken language was, at best, irrelevant" (1984, p. 135). Bryant II echoes these sentiments: "To learn to speak and understand English by this method [*yakudoku*] was still less feasible" (1956, p. 23).

One aspect of this is that teachers overwhelmingly use Japanese, not English, as the language of classroom instruction. The result is a tendency for native English speaking teachers in Japan to be assigned oral skills classes, where English is used for instruction. Japanese English teachers are assigned reading classes, where the use of English as the language of instruction is perhaps thought unnecessary. In noting this, Law (1995, p. 222) states: "it will be difficult to convince students that all [teachers] are engaged in the same enterprise, and that communication skills are not marginal aspects of language learning." A further possible effect of this lopsided assignment of teaching subjects is that Japanese EFL teachers who use *yakudoku* help perpetuate the myth, held by many Japanese EFL students, that reading English and *yakudoku* are the same thing (Hino, 1988, p. 47).

In conclusion, *yakudoku* can be characterized as a widely used text-based (non-oral) foreign language instructional methodology with some similarities to grammar/translation, but also with important differences. *Yakudoku* really seems to be more about the process of translating sentences of English text into Japanese, and understanding the text in Japanese, than about understanding English grammar through study of example English sentences. Finally, *yakudoku* is entwined with university entrance exams.

Teacher's Practices and Beliefs

Unfortunately, there is little detailed, descriptive research on Japanese EFL high school teachers' instructional practices with *yakudoku* and beliefs about these practices. This is not limited to EFL—according to Rohlen (1983, p. 241): “Descriptions of Japanese high school instruction apparently do not exist in Japanese education.” This seems odd, considering that “Their [the high schools'] administrative structures, schedules, textbooks, and curricular designs are largely generated by the same Ministry of Education formulas” (Rohlen, 1983, pp. 43-44). Japanese education is centrally controlled, and thus it is surely desirable to research classroom instruction to understand not only what is happening in classrooms, but also to generate alternatives.

Why are there not more descriptions of classroom instruction at the high school level? Rohlen (1983) notes certain tendencies of high school teachers' lecture design which may shed light on this question: “examples of . . . instructional independence are rare, not because senior teachers or administrators are breathing down the backs of teachers . . . but because most teachers design their lectures with only [university] entrance examinations in mind” (1983, p. 243). If Rohlen is correct, then it explains why high school instruction is not studied more—a consensus has been reached that places preparation for university entrance exams as the highest educational priority. What may be in place in high schools, then, is a whole set of unexamined, shared assumptions concerning what is “proper” classroom instruction. Clearly, more research is needed to confirm or disconfirm this disquieting idea.

With the advent of team teaching programs, such as the Japan Exchange and Teaching program (JET) begun in 1987 (Wada & Cominos, 1994), some research on secondary education classroom instruction has been done by those seeking to understand how JTEs (Japanese Teachers of English) and their foreign counterpart AETs (Assistant English Teachers) interact in the classroom to enhance students' learning.

One such researcher, Yukawa (1992, 1994), observed a Japanese high school English teacher's interactions with a British teacher in a reading class over a period of several months. Yukawa does not characterize this class as being a *yakudoku* class, although this is implied by the prevalence of translation activities in the class observed (63% of all routines conducted in the first month of the study). Yukawa found that at the beginning of the study, the Japanese teacher translated English text into Japanese, asked students for their translations, and explained grammar and word usage. In translating English for the students, the teacher would give "a bad example (direct translation) and then change it into a good one (better translation in natural Japanese)" (1994, p. 48). These class activities were conducted in Japanese. Later in the study, the Japanese teacher engaged in fewer translation activities and used English as the medium of instruction more frequently.

Finally, in writing generally of high school instruction, Rohlen (1983) states that "instruction almost entirely by lecture is a thoroughly entrenched pattern" (p. 245). The picture of high school English instructional practices emerging from these few sources is that of a teacher-centered, university entrance exam-oriented, text-based, translation-based *yakudoku* pedagogy, which is just beginning to be investigated.

What about Japanese high school *yakudoku* EFL teachers' beliefs? There is little previous research available to answer this elusive question, but what there is, is suggestive. One survey, described above, by the Research Group for College English Teaching in Japan (1983) focused on 1,012 college and university EFL teachers. Findings indicated that teachers in these environments tended to subscribe to one of three views of how to approach the learning of English as a foreign language. The first group (48.9% of respondents) felt that English is best learned through "intensive reading, translation, and appreciation of literary works." This group is best labeled the "English and American literature" group. The second group (37%) felt EFL study was best approached through English linguistics, hence the name the "English linguistics" group. The third group, labeled the "TEFL" group (20.8%) subscribed to the belief that EFL study is best approached through methodology current in the TEFL field (1983, pp. 263-264). While this survey did not focus on high school teachers, it did comment on the beliefs of university EFL teachers who run the teacher certification programs, from which 70,034 high school teacher candidates earned teaching certificates in 1989 (National Institute for Educational Research, 1989, p. 9). There is a possibility that high school teachers, coming from teacher certification programs variously imbued with the "literary view," the "linguistic view," and the

"TEFL view," also fall into one of these three categories, which will affect their beliefs about classroom instruction.

In characterizing high school EFL teachers' views of language learning, university entrance exams certainly can't be ignored. Rohlen (1983) quotes one Japanese high school EFL teacher: "I know I can't speak English, and your presence in school embarrasses me, but I study the fine points of English grammar, and this is more helpful to my students. They can use it on the exams" (p. 244). This statement suggests the centrality of this teacher's concerns about preparing students for exams. While there isn't widespread research on high school teachers' beliefs concerning their responsibility to students *vis-à-vis* entrance exams, there are many anecdotal hints. Yukawa (1994), for example, reports that "academic" high schools are reluctant to make use of AETs (Assistant English Teachers) to help students improve their oral skills because they are thought to be a "hindrance to students' preparation for [university] entrance examinations" (p. 56).

The Study

Method

Subjects: The subjects were two Japanese male EFL teachers in their mid-30s, Messrs. Suzuki and Honda (pseudonyms), employed in a public boys' high school outside Tokyo. The school is noted for its success in placing graduates in some of the top universities in Japan. Both teachers have taught in public high schools for approximately 14 years since earning their teaching certificates through English teaching licensure programs as undergraduates at their universities. In such a system, university students take extra Ministry of Education approved courses such as Educational Psychology and English Linguistics, and complete a two-week student teaching practicum at a junior or senior high school (National Institute for Educational Research, 1989). Mr. Suzuki gained his teaching certificate while getting a degree in French Literature; Mr. Honda gained his while getting a degree in English Literature. Both teachers are very proficient in English, and thus were interviewed in English. Both teachers were shown transcripts of their interviews to ensure their intended meanings had been accurately recorded.

In her initial contact with the school, the researcher, hoping to avoid having to observe the intensive, exam-specific preparation prevalent in the third year, specifically requested to be allowed to study second-year English classes. However, during this initial contact period, the head

teacher of the English department expressed the concern that as this was an “academic” school, that is, geared for students’ preparation for university exams, the researcher might not be able to see much of interest or “newness” in teachers’ classroom practices. Therefore, it is not known to what extent the classes observed were “typical” of high schools. It would be wrong to generalize findings or conclusions drawn from this study to other high schools.

Materials and Procedures: The research entailed: classroom observation, teacher interviews, and an examination of all relevant and available documents. The second-year English classes (English II) of Mr. Suzuki and Mr. Honda were observed in Autumn, 1996. Two of Mr. Suzuki’s classes, with the same students, were observed about a month apart. Due to time considerations, only one of Mr. Honda’s classes was observed. In addition, the classes were tape recorded. The tape recordings were reviewed by the researcher and a Japanese interpreter, and the field notes were transformed into more accurate transcriptions of the classroom activities. Both teachers were observed in fairly small, crowded classrooms which held approximately 40 desks and chairs arranged in rows.

The teachers participated in two sets of individual interviews. The first set took place immediately after the first classroom observations, and the second set after the second observation of Mr. Suzuki’s class. The teachers were told at the beginning of the first set of interviews that neither their names nor the name of their school would be published or discussed with anyone else besides the assistant to the researcher. The teachers were also given the option to withdraw from the interviews at any time. The teachers’ confidentiality agreement can be seen in Appendix A.

All available relevant materials were collected, including the class textbook, one worksheet used by Mr. Suzuki in class, seven textbooks assigned for students’ home reading, a course grammar syllabus, and a report on trends in university entrance exams put out by a commercial cram school.

Analyses: In this section, analyses of data arising from three aspects of the study will be discussed—the class observations, the collected materials (in particular, the textbook and home reading materials), and the teachers’ interviews.

After the classroom observation, field notes and tape recordings were integrated into more complete transcripts. Perusal of the transcripts focused on two aspects of classroom activity: 1) basic descriptions, in terms of classroom instruction, of what the teachers did, or called upon

students to do; and 2) the textual focus of an activity. A focus on basic descriptions of what teachers did, and what they asked students to do, is appropriate, given that this study purports to describe teachers' instructional practices in the classroom.

"Textual focus" refers to which text—the English text or the Japanese translation of the English text—the teachers and students focused on during an activity. Both Hino (1988) and Law (1994, 1995) have asserted that in *yakudoku* classrooms, much of the students' attention is focused not on the English text but on the Japanese translation of the text. An analysis of this aspect of the data may shed light on this issue. Other aspects of activities and interactions in the classroom such as the physical positioning of teachers and students, turn taking, or functional uses of teachers' questions were considered to be outside the scope of this study.

The unit of observation in this study is the "activity." Various definitions for "activity" (also "procedures," and "practices") exist in the literature. Shavelson and Stern (in Nunan, 1989) present the simplest definition, "the things the learners and teacher will be doing in the lesson" (p. 47). Larsen-Freeman (1986), and Richards and Rodgers (1986) stress the notion that classroom activities are behaviors that arise from teachers' principles and assumptions about learning, teaching, learners, teachers, and language. Breen (in Nunan, 1989) completes the picture by recognizing that activities follow "a specified working procedure" (p. 6). Given these various definitions, the definition of "activity" for this study is: An activity is an event taking place within a classroom, and is bounded by the following five elements: a classroom activity is (1) *behavioral*—the activity calls for actions done in a classroom by students and/or the teacher; (2) *teacher initiated*; (3) *procedural*—in the teacher's and students' minds, the activity has a beginning, a middle, and an end; (4) *purposeful*—the activity is done in the context of a goal; and (5) *based on the teacher's principles*.

Of particular interest is the notion that a classroom activity is *procedural*. It is this quality that gives "activity" the feeling of being a unitary event, and thus something that can be counted while looking at observational data. Because most of the activities in the *yakudoku* classes used as a starting point phrases and sentences in the English text, many of the activities appeared short and repetitive. For example, during a *translation comprehension check* activity (see below), the teacher would call on one student, ask him for his Japanese translation of a phrase or sentence in the text, and then often move directly into a related but functionally different activity (*grammar instruction* or *translation instruction*) by correcting and commenting on some aspect of the student's translation. Thus the teacher's work with the one student could be counted

as one or more activities. The effect was of one or more activity types being recycled again and again, each time with a different student. Some activities which were not so directly based on a text were much longer and less repetitive, such as the listening dictation quiz, where the teacher played a tape with sentences from the text while students wrote the sentences down. The entire five or six minute period in which this was done was counted as one activity.

Definitions for the activities that were observed are given below, along with abbreviated samples from the class observation transcripts. The definitions have been categorized into two general types, activities which seemed to focus on the English text, and those which seemed to focus on the Japanese translation of the English text.

English Text Focus Activities

Content instruction: In a lecture, the teacher gave the students background information, or provided commentary on the “logic” of the author. This seemed to arise from the teacher’s perception that students needed more information to understand the text.

Example: Teacher draws diagram of brain and spinal cord on the blackboard, explaining Lou Gehrig’s disease in Japanese, and saying ‘brain’ and ‘spinal cord’ in English.

English sentence location check: The teacher checked students’ ability to find and say the appropriate English word or phrase from the text in response to written English comprehension questions. It also seemed to function to transmit the answer approved by the teacher to the rest of the class.

Example: Teacher questions a student in English, “What kind of person does the word ‘hero’ apply to?” Student answers with an English word from the text.

Grammar instruction: In a short lecture, the teacher used specialized grammatical terms and wrote the structure on the board. This seemed to be triggered by the teacher’s perception, based on a student’s spoken Japanese translation, that the student had misunderstood the grammar of the English text.

Example: Teacher says in Japanese “Let’s find the indirect object in the English text. ‘Us’ is the object but the indirect object is in three parts: ‘high example,’ ‘purpose,’ and ‘a dream.’”

Tape/text listening: The teacher played a tape narrated by a native English speaker, and the students listened while reading along in the text.

Listening dictation quiz: The teacher repeatedly played a tape with the text spoken by a native English speaker while the students write the sentences down on a worksheet. The text used in the activity had been taught in a previous lesson.

Pronunciation: The choral repetition of translated words.

Example: Teacher reads words from the textbook out loud and students repeat chorally: *kekyosuru oyosuru, apply, apply, futsu no, ordinary, ordinary, enjiru jikosuru, perform, perform, superiority, superiority, ority, ority, riority, riority, periority, periority, superiority, superiority*

Japanese to English quiz: The teacher read aloud several Japanese sentences and asked the students to write down the equivalent English sentences from a text which had been previously studied. This activity seemed to allow the teachers to monitor students' preparation for the class.

Example: Teacher read three sentences in Japanese and students were to write the English translations as they appeared in the English text which they had translated for the lesson. One student asks, "How many English words are allowed for number 1?" The teacher says "Seven." When the quiz is over, students check their answers in their textbooks.

Japanese Translation Focus Activities

Translation comprehension check: The teacher asked a single student to provide the Japanese translation of an English sentence or phrase in the text. The teacher would often then evaluate and correct the student's translation and move into one of the other sequences, such as a *grammar instruction* activity. This activity seemed to function as a check on the comprehension of the student called on, and to transmit the translation approved by the teacher to the rest of the students in the class.

Example: Teacher tells student to read his translation of the following: *that particularly in Europe and North America the young now refuse to admire anyone.* Student reads his Japanese translation aloud and the teacher comments, giving the "proper" Japanese translation, which the students write down.

Translation instruction: In a lecture, the teacher commented on "correct" ways to translate, giving examples. This activity often occurred after a *translation comprehension checking activity*, when, based on a student's Japanese translation, the teacher perceived the student had used inappropriate Japanese in the translation.

Example: Line from text being discussed in class: They are the giants, the out-of-ordinary figures whose superiority fills our hearts with admiration and awe;

Teacher asks student to give his Japanese translation of 'awe'; student answers *iket*. Teacher says "*iket* is the first definition in the English/Japanese dictionary but it is bookish and very formal." Teacher instructs student to translate it into easy Japanese.

The three lesson transcripts were analyzed according to the classroom activities defined above by two raters, one of whom was the researcher. The two sets of ratings resulting from each of the three transcripts were correlated to estimate inter-rater reliability.

The collected student reading materials were analyzed descriptively. A 500 word segment from each book (the initial line of the extract was randomly selected) was entered into a word processing program (Nisus Writer 4.14, Paragon Concepts, 1988) and checked on the program's Flesch readability scale for estimated reading difficulty. The teachers' interviews were analyzed for evidence of teachers' beliefs concerning their instructional practices.

Results

Results concerning the first research question, "What are the instructional practices of two "academic" high school teachers in their *yakudoku* EFL classrooms?" can be found below. From the classroom observations and teacher interviews, eight salient features of classroom instruction were noted. First, it seems clear that translation is at the heart of the teachers' classroom instruction. Table 1 indicates the results of the classroom observation analysis in terms of the frequency of various classroom activities and their textual focus (English text, or Japanese translated version of the English text).

The last two activity categories in the table, which involve translation and are focused on the Japanese translation of an English text, account for a large chunk of total activities observed. Mr. Suzuki based his instruction on translation in 19 (53%) of his sequences in this first class, and 7 (57%) in his second. Mr. Honda used translation in 24 (69%) of his sequences. Underscoring these estimates is the fact that inter-rater reliability for the first transcript was 99%; the second, 97%; and for the third, 98%, indicating a relatively high level of agreement between the raters. That translation plays such a large part confirms Yukawa's (1992, 1994) description of high school EFL classroom instruction.

Table 1: Sequence Frequencies During Classroom Observations

	Class: Date: Text being studied: Section:	Suzuki's Class September 27 "No More Heroes?" lines 67-76	Suzuki's Class October 30 "Stephen Hawking" lines 40-72	Honda's Class September 27 "No More Heroes?" lines 1-27
English Text Focus Activities				
Content instruction		5	2	1
English sentence location check		2	0	0
Grammar instruction		6	4	7
Tape/text listening		3	0	0
Listening dictation quiz		0	1	0
Pronunciation		1	0	2
Japanese to English quiz		0	0	1
Japanese Translation Focus Activities				
Translation comprehension check		15	6	14
Translation instruction		4	1	10
Total Activities		36	14	35
Percent Translation Activities		53%	57%	69%
Interrater Reliability		99%	97%	98%

In interviews, both teachers reported telling students to translate entire units (approximately 700 words of text) in the textbook on a regular basis. This was to be done as homework and preparation for the next class. According to the teachers, students are told to rewrite the English text on the left hand side of their notebooks and write their Japanese translations on the right hand side. Both teachers reported checking the notebooks periodically to ensure students have completed the homework.

During classes observed, the teachers asked individual students to read their Japanese translation for a phrase or a sentence. The teachers would then evaluate the student's translation. If, judging from the translation, the teachers sensed the student had misunderstood the English text, or if the student's translation was written in ungrammatical or stilted Japanese (or "queer Japanese" as Mr. Suzuki put it), the teachers then would move into a grammar instruction sequence, a content sequence, or a translation instruction sequence that would help clear up the student's misunderstanding.

Thus the translation comprehension check sequences seemed to function in two ways—first, teachers could gauge students' comprehension of the English text via their Japanese translations, and second, teachers

Table 2: "Home Reader" Descriptions

Title	Genre	Length	Difficulty	Format
<i>I, Robot</i> (Asimov, 1993)	Science Fiction	85 pages of text	Flesch: 82 (U.S. Grade 8)	Entirely in English with 3 pages of inference, sentence combining, opinion activities
<i>The Year of Sharing</i> (Gilbert, 1994)	Science Fiction	40 pages of text	Flesch: 94 (U.S. Grade 5)	Entirely in English with 2 pages of sentence order, inference, opin- ion activities
<i>The Man From Paris</i> (Thornley, 1970)	Mystery Thriller	46 pages of text	Flesch: 100 (U.S. Grade 4)	English with one page plot synopsis in Japanese, 21 pages of grammar, vocabulary, and back- ground notes in Japanese
<i>The Young King and Other Stories</i> (Wilde, 1987)	Short Stories	57 pages of text	Flesch: 97 (U.S. Grade 6)	English with one page introduc- tion in Japanese, 24 pages of grammar and vocabulary notes in Japanese
<i>For and Against</i> (Alexander, 1968)	Short Essays	61 pages of text	Flesch: 56 (U.S. Grade 11)	30 English essays with 2 page Japa- nese introduction, 19 pages of grammar, vocabulary, and back- ground notes in Japanese
<i>The Crisis of Modern Man</i> (Milward, 1983)	Short Essays	64 pages of text	Flesch: 68 (U.S. Grade 12)	9 English essays with 19 pages of grammar, vocabulary, and back- ground notes in Japanese
<i>Charlie Chaplin</i> (Milward, 1980)	Biography	60 pages of text	Flesch: 73 (U.S. Grade 9)	2 pages of maps, 1 page synopsis in Japanese, 20 photographs, 19 pages of grammar, vocabulary, and background notes in Japanese

Note: Flesch readability scores are given above as "Flesch."

could convey the "correct" and accepted Japanese translation of the text. The translation instruction sequences appeared to the researcher more as lessons in Japanese than in English. On one hand, these sequences served to help teachers focus students' attention on grammatical differences between English and Japanese. On the other hand, the teachers focused on helping students to think about and create meaningful Japanese, rather than meaningful English.

One last feature pertaining to translation was the teachers reported that students are asked to translate seven textbooks, assigned as "home readers," in the course of an academic year. The seven "home readers" vary in genre, length, difficulty, and format.

The second feature of teachers' instruction concerns the English texts themselves. This researcher believes the texts the students were being asked to process were quite difficult for them, not only linguistically but also in terms of unfamiliar content. This can be seen in Table 1 above when looking particularly at the content instruction and grammar instruction activities. During the class observations, the teachers spent a lot of time and effort ensuring that students understood the text. This could indicate that the text was beyond the students' abilities in more ways than one, and that the teachers sensed this. An analysis of the textbook appears in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis of English Texts Used During Classroom Observations

Text used for Suzuki's and Honda's September 27 classes: " No more heroes?" (Kenan, 1995) Length: Approximately 600 words Flesch Readability Estimate: 55 (U.S. Grade Level: 15)
Text used for Suzuki's October 30 class: " Stephen Hawking" (Ferguson, 1995) Length: Approximately 900 words Flesch Readability Estimate: 63 (U.S. Grade Level: 12)

It seems clear from the Flesch readability estimates that the texts are linguistically difficult, perhaps beyond what non-native readers of English can be expected to do after 4 1/2 years of formal EFL instruction. What is more, readability estimates do not account for difficulties students may have with unfamiliar content. In "No More Heroes?" the focus is on historical figures from the U.S. and Europe. In "Stephen Hawking," a rare medical condition, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, is discussed. Both present content perhaps unfamiliar even to native English readers. Extracts from both readers appear in Appendix B.

Third, the classes were found to strongly resemble intensive reading classes. The English text was considered literally word for word, with additional attention in teacher lectures paid to sentence structure and, occasionally, paragraph structure. The few listening sequences observed involved students listening to a tape while reading along in the textbook or completing a dictation task. There were also a few pronunciation sequences.

Fourth, the language of instruction for both teachers was observed to be overwhelmingly Japanese. Only during pronunciation sequences, noted above, was English spoken by the teachers. In these cases, single

words were spoken, which students had to repeat. This was the extent of the treatment of English in the oral/aural mode.

Fifth, the students never actually produced any English. As noted above, any productive work was completed outside class, when students translated the English text into Japanese. One exception, a quiz given by Mr. Honda, involved orally reading out to the students three Japanese translations of English sentences taken from the textbook and then having the students write the English translations. The English sentences had to be exactly the same as those in the textbook, which students were to have memorized.

The sixth feature noted from classroom observation was that both teachers demanded conformity in what students produced. During translation comprehension check activities, no discussion of the students' translations took place—they were simply “right” or “wrong,” with the teacher demonstrating and conveying the “right” translation for students to write. Students did not have a chance to consider or to argue for the meaning they had gathered from the English text, even if through their Japanese translations.

Seventh, if it is not already abundantly clear, the classes observed were strongly teacher-centered. The teachers determined the pace and focus of the lessons. Both teachers seemed to work hard to actively engage the students in trying to comprehend the English text. This was done through questions directed at individual students, and through lectures designed to have personal relevance to the students.

For instance, to explain a metaphor in the text, Mr. Suzuki noted that rain was falling outdoors. When learning that only a few students had brought their umbrellas, he said, “Now aren't you sad, just like the ‘sad sky’ mentioned in the text?” Mr. Honda engaged students by asking a student a question and then giving the student hints when he appeared to have trouble (which was often). The result was an intense, exciting interchange in which sometimes the students were able to give the answer Mr. Honda wanted, and sometimes not. This strong desire to engage students in this teacher-centered way was also reflected in the teachers' interviews. Both teachers reported trying to inspire students to think deeply about what the texts meant and to consider the author's point of view.

The eighth feature noted from classroom observations and interviews concerns student assessment. This is closely related to the observation that the classes are strongly teacher-centered, as the classroom assessment appears to function as a form of teacher control. Students are tested often, and conformity in their answers is required. The first type of assessment comes in the form of daily quizzes. To do well, students need to memorize portions of the English text. The teachers both re-

ported giving students hints about which sentences to memorize in a previous class. If students do poorly on three quizzes in a row, they are expected to have a conference with the teacher, who will give them another test. Both teachers stated in the interview, however, that these quizzes do not count towards the students' grades.

A second type of assessment *does* count towards the students' grades—these are the 11 “terminal tests” that students have to take in an academic year. The teachers stated that the tests are based on the “home readers,” and contain 30-40 translation and multiple choice items. According to one of the curriculum documents, students took a test in 1995 based on three chapters of the “home reader” *The Young King and Other Stories* (Wilde, 1987). Another “home reader” text chapter was listed on the same testing schedule for a later test with the Chinese characters for “memorize” next to it (*Charlie Chaplin*, Milward, 1980).

To answer the second research question, “How can the beliefs these teachers hold towards *yakudoku* EFL education be characterized?” it will be necessary to analyze the teachers' beliefs in relation to their instructional practices as observed and reported above.

Instructional Practice #1: *The teachers base their classroom instruction on the translation of English text into Japanese.* Both teachers report ambivalent feelings about the use of translation as a method of instruction. Mr. Honda felt that translation is the easiest way to learn a new language because it takes away the need for the teacher to make laborious explanations of new grammar and vocabulary. Mr. Suzuki believed that translation helps students prepare for university entrance exams. He also believed that by memorizing English sentences, and translating them, students can best learn English.

Translation serves positive pedagogical purposes, according to both teachers. Mr. Suzuki stated that with translation it is easy to tell which students understand the English text, and which do not, just by listening to their translations. He also believed that low level students can use it to understand English, and that students of any level can get satisfaction from knowing that “they've translated so many lines of English today.” Mr. Honda added that learning through translation helps students learn Japanese. On this topic, Mr. Suzuki states that although Japanese students can read Japanese, they do not really understand it. Hence, students can learn their own language through translating a foreign text into Japanese.

Both teachers had negative feelings about translation as well. Mr. Suzuki feels that asking students to translate “robs them of pleasure,” and that they cannot get a feel for the “exciting story” of a text if they have to translate it. Mr. Suzuki wants students to mentally process En-

glish texts in English but feels they probably do not because they have to translate. Finally, as reported above, Mr. Honda feels that translation keeps students from developing their aural/oral skills.

Concerning the "home readers" Mr. Suzuki stated that some were easier than others, and that was desirable. He maintained that with the easier ones students could develop their ability to read fluently. This is somewhat contradicted by the fact that students are still required to translate each book in its entirety. This may point to translation being mistaken for reading (Hino, 1988), or it may indicate that translation has great pedagogical value in that the teachers can ensure that students have "read" the book.

Instructional Practice #2: *Teachers use textbooks that are probably difficult for students both linguistically and in terms of unfamiliar content.* We should begin here with what the teachers thought constituted a "good textbook." Both agreed textbooks had to be attuned to students' interests, and should be vehicles for teaching specific grammar structures and vocabulary. A strong belief shared by the teachers was the idea that a textbook should have readings in it that were "logical," and that posed questions within the text to which there were definite answers that students could find. In particular they complained about one of the readings in which a rhetorical question (with no clear answer) was posed. They also strongly believe that culture should be transmitted to students through the texts, and that they wished there were more materials in English about Asian countries, rather than the standard U.S./European fare. Finally, Mr. Suzuki commented that for students reading new content was like a window on the world. He felt one of the main purposes of reading in English was to "get content," such as philosophy, science, and historical trends. What comes through here is the teachers' desire that the text "educate" students in many ways, not just help them learn English.

Mr. Suzuki felt that reading easy texts is sometimes good for students, and that they will not need to translate in such cases. However, he felt that easy texts do not pose enough of a "challenge" for students, and without being challenged they will not progress. Both teachers voiced the belief that their students were nowhere near ready to "succeed" with the university entrance exams that they would have to take 18 months in the future, despite the difficulty of their current textbook. Thus, the teachers seem to have dual goals—to educate the students about the world, and to help them pass university entrance exams. In their opinion, these dual goals add up to difficult texts.

Both teachers reported to be profoundly concerned that the study of English texts would also better students' minds and improve their ability to think "logically." Both teachers saw this as something that would last

students a lifetime. Both teachers also saw students' ability to understand the author's message as a function of reading ability. This is to say that students with low ability could probably translate adequately but not really understand the "deep message" of the text.

Instructional Practice #3: *The classes resemble intensive reading classes.* Both teachers expressed the belief that students should be prepared for university entrance exams. This means, in Mr. Honda's words, that students should be able to process English passages "quickly and correctly." He said they should also be able to answer multiple choice comprehension and grammar questions about the passage. Mr. Suzuki commented that students need to learn sentence patterns and vocabulary in order to do well on the exams.

Another belief reported by the teachers that seemingly underpins this practice has to do with what Mr. Suzuki called the "logic" of the author (Mr. Honda termed it "English logic"). Both teachers firmly feel that this "logic" is very helpful for students to understand English passages. Mr. Honda went so far as to say that if students are guided carefully through the first paragraph of a text, then they will understand the rest of the text. He said he also tried to help students find the "one main idea" he believed exists in each paragraph in English texts by helping students identify different grammatical elements in each sentence, and then looking at the paragraph as a whole.

Instructional Practice #4: *The language of classroom instruction is Japanese.* Neither teacher expressed beliefs underpinning this practice. Mr. Honda commented, however, that one of the weak points of *yakudoku* is that students do not learn to "speak or listen in English." Several times during the class observation Mr. Honda told the researcher that at several times he felt "shy" that a native speaker of English (the researcher) was in the room.

Instructional Practice #5: *Teachers don't ask students to produce English.* In the context of an exception—quizzes in which students do write out English sentences, Mr. Honda believed students should write out full sentences in English, as he believed this helps students learn English vocabulary. Mr. Honda commented further that for students to create their own English sentences would be too difficult, but he believed that if given a model to follow, students could copy that.

Instructional Practice #6: *The teachers demand conformity in students' translations and quiz answers.* Both teachers felt that learning a foreign language involves a lot of memorization. Mr. Suzuki commented that for students to sufficiently prepare for the daily quiz they had to memorize their translations and answers to questions he posed in an earlier class.

In the October 30 class, after the students had made their first attempt at a listening dictation, he told them that if they memorized English sentences, they could write out the sentences correctly even if they did not completely hear what was on the tape. Mr. Honda commented from a different standpoint—he felt that for students to pass university entrance exams, they have to read English passages “correctly and quickly.”

Instructional Practice #7: *Classes are teacher-centered*. Neither teacher directly commented on this phenomenon. However, they did express points of view that explain it. First, both teachers believe their classes of 40+ students are too large. It could be that, in the interests of classroom management, teachers feel they should maintain strict control. Second, both teachers felt strongly that they operate under time pressure, and that the curriculum is very full. They felt it is important to get through large amounts of text in class, and that with classes that meet only three times a week, they do not have the time they would like to cover the texts more thoroughly.

Instructional Practice #8: *Students are assessed often*. Mr. Suzuki and Mr. Honda reported somewhat different reasons for doing this. Mr. Suzuki felt that the quizzes were purely motivational, and without them, students would not translate the textbook. Mr. Honda used the daily tests as a way to get students to write out full sentences in English, which he felt was beneficial to students' learning. Both teachers mentioned using the daily tests to monitor whether or not students were keeping up. Concerning the 11 “terminal” tests based on the home readers, the researcher feels that the teachers' comments above concerning the need for English to be “challenging” have bearing on this practice. Mr. Suzuki said he can tell from the students' scores whether or not they've translated their home readers.

Discussion

In this section, four points will be discussed.

First, the results of this study generally confirm earlier characterizations of *yakudoku*. Translation was found to be at the heart of these *yakudoku* classrooms, which accords with the findings of Hino (1988), Law (1995), and Yukawa (1992, 1994). There were substantial amounts of explicit grammar instruction, but this was nearly always in the context of translating English text into Japanese. In striving to create good Japanese translations, the teachers created classes that resembled Japanese language classes more than English classes, a tendency noted by Law (1995). *Yakudoku* was found to resemble intensive reading classes

with a strong focus on the written text. Oral/aural skills were not developed, confirming previous characterizations of *yakudoku* (Henrichsen, 1989; Hino, 1988; Law, 1995).

Second, *yakudoku* is really about teacher control. Students were required to translate at nearly every juncture, and their translations were checked, and controlled, by the teachers in and out of class. Even with "home readers" that one teacher felt students could read without translating, the students were required to translate. The researcher believes that in this context, *yakudoku* is pedagogy that affords teachers powerful control over students' language learning activities. When students translate, they create written proof of their having processed the assigned text. And when students reveal their translations in class, the translations are, in a sense, "edited" by teachers so that the other students receive the "correct" version. Pedagogical issues aside, there remains the question of how this sort of language processing affects the students' foreign language reading ability and acquisition. This is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

Third, there is washback on *yakudoku* from university entrance exams. University entrance examinations were found to have a pervasive influence on teachers' *yakudoku* practices. In interviews, both teachers reported that in choosing what aspects of English to focus on in class, they considered what grammar structures or sentence patterns might appear on future exams. At one point, the researcher was given a report published by a commercial cram school that summarized the features of recent entrance exams.

This focus on the entrance exams can also be seen in the strongly teacher-centered classrooms, and teachers' insistence on conformity in students' answers. Mr. Honda stated in an interview that to do well on the exams, students had to be able to read English passages "quickly and correctly." Perhaps he felt that if students are to pass these important exams, they should become accustomed to making their answers "count" by being correct. Generally, these results confirm Law (1994, 1995), Reader (1986), and Rohlen (1983). The overall purpose of these *yakudoku* EFL classes does seem to be university exam preparation.

But what doesn't make sense is that most university exams don't actually require students to translate, which is what *yakudoku* is all about. Surveys of private and public university exams in recent years indicate that English reading passages with comprehension questions, and not translation tasks, comprise the greatest number of test items (Brown & Yamashita, 1995; Law, 1994). The answer to this may be that *yakudoku* has a pedagogical life of its own. It fulfills something deeper

in Japanese society than helping students develop second language ability to pass the English section of entrance exams. Perhaps traits that *yakudoku* is thought to develop in students, such as mental discipline (Hino, 1988), are seen as helping to build students' characters.

Fourth, the "English and American literature" paradigm has a strong influence on teachers' instruction. As noted earlier, the Research Group for College English Teaching in Japan (1983, pp. 263-264) found that respondents to their nationwide survey of university teachers subscribed to one of three paradigms for EFL education. The largest group felt that intensive reading, translation, and appreciation of literary works were the elements of a good foreign language program. It was clear that both Mr. Honda and Mr. Suzuki upheld this paradigm. That they were acting out of their own educational experiences through their high school instruction is evident.

There are many shortcomings in this study. Fortunately, these shortcomings point to possible avenues of future research. The most glaring shortcoming is the small number of classroom observations. To really understand what teachers are doing with *yakudoku* and what they believe about it, a longer-term project with longitudinal observations in a variety of schools is needed. Developing such a long-term relationship with Japanese high school teachers could be a stumbling block, however. As helpful and friendly as the teachers in this study were at the outset, it was clear after a certain point that they really didn't have the time or the desire to construct a long-term research relationship.

Also, because of linguistic difficulties, the researcher has not completed a thorough literature search of Japanese-language sources on *yakudoku*. Any in-depth treatment of *yakudoku* would require a strong grounding in Japanese perspectives on this apparently prevalent language learning pedagogy.

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Note

1. For research and commentary in English specific to the nature of the English sections on Japanese university entrance exams, and its effects on students and EFL curricula, see Berwick & Ross, 1989; Brown & Yamashita, 1995a; Brown & Yamashita, 1995b; Buck, 1988; Januzzi, 1994; Kimura & Visgatis, 1996; Law, 1994; Law, 1995; and Reader, 1986; also see Brown & Yamashita, 1995b for numerous references to contributions on these issues made by scholars in Japanese.

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Appendix A: Confidentiality Agreement with Teachers

Date: October 4, 1996

School: XXXXX High School, XXXXX, XXXXX

The following message and the questions below were given to the teachers a week prior to the interview. They affirmed they understood the message. The teachers' responses are marked in green ink, and later comments by the researcher in red.

I'd like to interview you for about 40 minutes about the English II class I observed. Your name, your students' names, and the name of your school will be completely confidential. No one but myself and the interpreter will listen to this audiotape. Please answer the questions as best you can. If there are any questions you cannot understand, please just say so. You can end this interview at any time if you feel you can't continue.

Appendix B: Extracts from Class Textbook

"No more heroes?" Kenan, 1995, Lines 1-27:

The word hero can be confusing, for it has several meanings. It is often applied to ordinary people who happen to perform an act of great courage—a fireman who saves someone from a burning house at the risk of his own life, for example. Then the principal character of a play, a novel, or a film is known as the hero of the story, even if he is not particularly brave. But the heroes and heroines that we are going to consider now constitute a third group. They are the giants, the out-of-ordinary figures whose superiority fills our hearts with admiration and awe; the men and women who gave us a high example to follow, a purpose in life, or sometimes just a dream, because they represent the person that we would like to be.

Many articles have appeared in recent years, claiming that there are no more heroes in the Western world. The authors say that, particularly in Europe and North America, the young now refuse to admire anyone; that we are living in a world too well informed, too curious and critical for hero worship. The press, books, and television keep showing us the faults of the public figures who could become today's stars, until we lose faith and start looking for defects in any person who seems worthy of respect. In a neighbor or statesman, we try to discover the weaknesses, failures, or ugly motives that are surely hiding behind his noblest actions.

"Stephen Hawking," Ferguson, 1995, Lines 40-64:

During his third year at Oxford Hawking had been getting clumsy. He'd fallen once or twice for no apparent reason. The following autumn, at Cambridge, he had trouble tying his shoes and sometimes had difficulty talking.

Shortly after this twenty-first birthday in January 1963, Hawking found him-

self not back at Cambridge for the Lent term but in a hospital for tests. After two weeks they released him, telling him vaguely that what he had wasn't a "typical case" and that it wasn't multiple sclerosis. The doctors suggested he go back to Cambridge and get on with his work. "I gathered," Hawking remembers, "that they expected it to continue to get worse, and that there was nothing they could do, except give me vitamins. I could see that they didn't expect them to have much effect. I didn't feel like asking for details, because they were so obviously bad."

Hawking had contracted a rare disease for which there is no known cure, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, known in America as Lou Gehrig's disease. It breaks down the nerve cells in the spinal cord and brain that control voluntary muscle activity. The first symptoms are usually weakness and twitching of the hands, and perhaps unclear speech and difficulty in swallowing.