

# Shared Identities: Our Interweaving Threads

## Implementing curriculum change: A “bottom-up” approach

Tanya M. McCarthy

*Kanda University of International Studies*

### Reference data

McCarthy, T. M. (2009). Implementing curriculum change: A “bottom-up” approach. In A. M. Stoke (Ed.), JALT2008 Conference Proceedings. Tokyo: JALT.

Research suggests that despite attempts by the Ministry of Education to promote a more communicative style of teaching in classrooms across Japan, instigating curricular innovations generally remains difficult due to top-down policies designed without clear guidelines. This paper describes a successful curriculum innovation carried out in a junior high school from 2005 to 2007 where the Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) incorporated a communicative approach within the traditional grammar-structured system. Success was seen as a direct result of collaboration between the ALT, the learners and the Japanese teachers of English (JTEs). As the top-down approach to curriculum development, where the main stakeholders were presented with one-size-fits-all materials, was seen as ineffective in bringing about educational reform, a bottom-up approach was taken to raise awareness of different teaching methodologies and to encourage classroom observation and collaboration. The paper concludes that successful curriculum reform is possible if teachers are made aware of their power as change agents.

日本では、文部科学省がコミュニケーション型な言語教授法を広く推進しているにもかかわらず、特にトップダウンという従来のやり方では、扇動的なカリキュラム改革は概して困難であるということが調査によってわかっている。本論文では、2005年から2007年にかけて、従来の文法中心の教授法に、外国語指導助手 (ALT) がコミュニケーション型なアプローチを導入した日本の中学校でのカリキュラム改革の成功例を取り上げている。成功の要因は、ALTと日本人の英語教師、そして生徒がより協調関係を強めたということにあった。従来のトップダウン方式のカリキュラム開発では、現場の教師は一般的な教材を使用することが求められ、これらは教育改革をする際に有効な手段とはなっていないことから、多種多様な教授法に対する認識を高めるため、また授業視察の機会やコラボレーションの機会を促進するため、ボトムアップの方式が採用された。本論文は、教師が自らが改革の主体者であることへの認識を高めることによって、カリキュラム改革が成功に導かれることを示唆するものである。

The increase in team-teaching across Japan, mainly through the JET program introduced in 1987, was intended to improve learners’ communicative competence through authentic English and increased interaction with native English teachers in the classroom. However, without clear guidelines on how to achieve these objectives, Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) tended to retain the



old and familiar, tried and tested methodology, and many problems were encountered when JTEs were partnered with inexperienced or untrained Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). At the junior high school (JHS) in which this research was conducted, little had changed in the way of training and the ALT remained largely underutilized. This paper describes a successful curriculum innovation carried out from 2005 to 2007 where the ALT incorporated a communicative approach within the traditional grammar-structured system. Success was seen as a direct result of collaboration between the ALT, the learners and the JTEs.

### *Working context*

This study was conducted at a public JHS in Aichi prefecture with the entire student body of approximately 200 students along with the school’s four English teachers—three JTEs directly responsible for each of the grades one to three and myself, the ALT. As the ALT, my teaching context was limited to providing oral instruction alongside the JTEs in one of the three English classes students attended each week. The primary goal of the English department was to prepare students for senior high school (SHS) entrance exams, which concentrated on testing lexical and grammatical knowledge rather than the use of English. With regard to team-teaching classes, the English department’s goal was for students to develop a higher level of fluency. This goal was challenging to meet, as team-teaching basically constituted the ALT being tape-recorder, test-grader, and homework-checker. In addition, during examination time, the ALT was excused from teaching classes, as the JTEs believed that test preparation was of greater priority. This led the researcher

to question not only the role of the ALT, but the teaching practices at the school, the effectiveness of the curriculum in developing learners with the ability to communicate at the level required by the English Department, and finally the expectations the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) had for JHS students upon graduation.

### *Research proposals*

The Ministry-approved textbook and teacher’s manual were considered to be the curriculum at the JHS, which the JTEs followed precisely. However, there was a clear mismatch between the teaching practices, which continued to be done mainly in the *yakudoku* (or grammar-translation) style and the goal of the English department to produce competent language speakers. Moreover, as the one-size-fits-all textbook basically focused on preparing learners for rigid entrance examinations, this made it difficult to “cultivate Japanese with English abilities” (MEXT, 2003). As the teaching methods used in the institution were not meeting the set goals, a bottom-up negotiation of the present curriculum was seen as prudent for students to gain more success in oral communication. The following proposals were thus made to the English Department by the ALT:

1. Using more communicative activities to promote fluency and motivate students.
2. Doing group presentations at the end of each term to encourage students to speak more and strengthen relationships.

3. Using the group presentations and communicative activities as an official part of student assessment.
4. Using 20-40% English instruction in *all* classes (that is, classes with and *without* the ALT).

These proposals aimed to raise awareness of the inefficiencies in the present curriculum in creating language learners who were capable of producing more than simple utterances by the time they entered SHS.

### Curriculum change in research literature

Much of the literature presents curriculum change as a complex process requiring careful and thorough planning, sufficient time to complete changes, and a strong degree of teacher involvement as change agents in the decision-making process to ensure successful innovation (see Stenhouse, 1975; Olson, 1980; Kelly, 1982; Rudduck, 1991; Blenkin, Edwards, & Kelly, 1992; Fullan, 2001, etc.). As educational systems generally mandate change from the top, this can leave teachers feeling powerless to implement changes to improve individual working situations. Therefore, in order to have more ownership of the curriculum, teachers and administrators need to find a way to co-exist with centrally initiated ideas. In the Japanese context, the huge void between policy-making and classroom execution in a heavily top-down approach seemed to leave little space for change. However, after careful examination of the JHS curriculum guidelines, there was one particular area where teachers found they could make changes without going against the mandate of MEXT, and that was in the teaching methodology. That is, as long

as the English department covered the set grammar points to fulfill requirements for entry into SHS, teachers were free to negotiate, adjust or implement bottom-up changes into the curriculum. Fortunately, there was already a degree of collaboration at the JHS, which according to Burns (1999) is “a powerful way of facilitating school curriculum renewal and ensuring that teachers retain great ownership of curriculum implementation” (p. 209). Proposed changes therefore focused on adopting a new style of teaching, which promoted function over form.

### *The “bottom-up” approach*

Some arguments made against a bottom-up approach are that changes are slow and teachers may feel that changing the curriculum is not part of their role as a teacher. However, taking a bottom-up approach was justified as promoting changes at the grass-roots level gave more consideration to the needs of learners, and decisions made about curriculum development encouraged teacher professional growth (see Bolstad, 2004). Instigating change from the bottom-up was also intended to alleviate problems linked to top-down decisions such as creating a mismatch between the beliefs and attitudes of teachers and the ideas of curriculum developers (Kennedy & Edwards, 2001, p. 11) or discouraging “ownership” (p. 40).

Kennedy and Edwards describe incremental, continuous and discontinuous change as points on a continuum, with incremental and discontinuous change representing the extreme polarities of improvement at one end and change as shift at the other. Ideally, a bottom-up approach introduced incrementally and continuously involving those

most closely involved with the change—the stakeholders and implementers—would encourage reflection, foster conditions for collaborative teaching and ensure ownership of curriculum implementation.

(State of continuous change before a stage of discontinuity)

Behavioral change

**Continuous Change**

**Incremental change**

Change as improvement

(Making improvements along the way)

**Discontinuous Change**

Change as shift

(Radical break with former practices and behavior)

**Figure 1: Cline of change**

Proposed changes to the curriculum were incremental as opposed to a more radical discontinuous change to increase chances of successful implementation. However, Beale (2002) reminds us that in the process of designing change, “it is important to avoid imposing a foreign teaching method, without consideration of the existing cultural characteristics and constraints within which it must be applied” (p. 27). It was hoped that the introduction of more communicative methods (see Table 1) into the curriculum would create a more balanced approach and would find acceptance with the JTEs.

**Methodology**

**Data collection**

Several different types of qualitative data were collected, including surveys with the JTEs followed by semi-structured interviews, a teaching journal and participant observation. A

**Table 1. Aspects of traditional and communicative approaches**

Traditional Approach	Communicative Methods
Focus on accuracy	Focus on fluency
Grammar-based teaching	Critical thinking encouraged
Teacher-centered	Learner-centered
Teacher authority	Teacher-pupil equality
Teacher independent	Team-teaching approach
Focus on the group as a whole	Focus on pairs/small groups

qualitative approach was taken to understand JTE attitudes towards classes. Quantitative data were collected through a needs analysis questionnaire completed by the student body to assess mainly students’ feelings towards lessons, teaching style and proposed changes. Both qualitative and quantitative data provided input for continued discussion with JTEs about implementing curriculum change.

**Creating the conditions for successful change**

In order to create the conditions for successful innovations, four areas had to be examined in closer detail: the curriculum, the practicality of the innovation, JTEs’ acceptance of the changes and finally, the relevance of the innovations to students.

**Analysis of the curriculum**

First, a discussion between the JTEs and the ALT identified the strengths and weaknesses in the existing curriculum

(see Appendix 1) and of the teaching methodology (see Appendix 2). This would ensure that there was a clear understanding of the proposed changes, thereby creating conditions for successful implementation. Ideally, through collaboration, it was expected that the English department would collectively arrive at a solution that best met the needs of the students. Fortunately, there was already a degree of collaboration at the JHS, as all teachers were required to observe another teacher’s classes once a week, throughout the year. “Observation,” according to Burns (1999), is “a powerful way of facilitating school curriculum renewal and ensuring that teachers retain great ownership of curriculum implementation” (p. 209).

### *Practicality of innovation*

The ALT, as a native speaker of English, provided a great resource to the JHS. The most practical aspect of the innovations highlighted in discussions was that proposed changes would make greater use of the ALT with regard to conducting oral tests and providing original teaching materials that matched the needs of the students. With the responsibility of change resting on the ALT, there would be no additional work for the other teachers, and students would take on more responsibility for their learning. Other points raised were:

- Teachers would not need additional training.
- The teaching methodology would be up to date with current trends and the expectations of MEXT regarding its plan to “cultivate Japanese with English abilities.”
- Group work would strengthen relationships between students and create a friendly classroom atmosphere.

- Using more English in the classroom would allow students to see the language as a tool for communication and not just a subject.

### *Acceptability: Assessing teacher readiness for change*

The role of teachers as the main stakeholders in educational reform is usually a key factor in discussions by curriculum developers and researchers. Clandinin and Connelly (as cited in Wang & Cheng, 2005) envision that “the teacher is an integral part of the curriculum constructed and enacted in classrooms.” Fullan (1998) believes that for sustainable change to occur each teacher must aim to become an agent of change and develop a “personal vision” of how best to “stimulate students to be continuous learners.” A questionnaire was therefore conducted in a semi-structured interview style with the JTEs to assess their readiness for change (see Appendix 2). Based on comments made by the JTEs with regard to their teaching beliefs, goals for students, personal changes they wished to see implemented into the existing curriculum and attitudes towards proposed changes, the original proposals went through some major changes that eventually satisfied all parties. The final step before implementation was to make the students part of the change process.

### *Assessing learner needs*

As the goal of the teachers was to help students reach their full potential, it was agreed that a needs assessment was necessary. With permission from administration, a needs analysis questionnaire was designed with substantial input

from the first and third year JTEs. It was then translated into the students’ L1 and distributed to all students in order to “find out attitudes...to current practices, discover what works, what does not work and how current practices can be justified (or not)” (White, 1988, p. 153). Out of 198 administered questionnaires, 177 were returned (rr = 89%). The results of the student needs analysis were submitted to the English department and the administrative body in the form of a report with a note that any discrepancies found may have been due to meanings of questions being lost in translation. The student questionnaire not only helped teachers understand students’ attitude to classes, but also became empirical evidence to support innovation should external evaluators ask for accountability.

A similar study conducted by Koizumi and Kai at a public JHS in 1990 (as cited in Norris-Holt, 2002) concluded that “over the three-year period that students are in JHS their positive attitudes towards the study of English decline.” It was therefore a welcome result that third year students scored quite high in how important English was to them (see Appendix 3, Question 1). I felt this was due to the teaching approach they had been exposed to in their three years, a combination of the traditional approach with a more communicative teaching style. This combination of traditional and communicative methodologies along with a concentration on group work proved successful in sustaining motivation. In all year groups there was a positive response for more group work (Question 16) and students showed an interest in doing more communication games and role-play (Question 24). Regarding implementation of oral testing as part of assessment, this was not well received by the students

(Question 34). However a decision was made to trial this innovation at the end of the term without including it in student evaluation. This was explained to the students so as not to create unnecessary anxiety in the examinations. Oral testing was then to be examined to see if it contributed to increased motivation and an improvement in speaking skills. If successful, it would be implemented in the new term as part of student assessment.

## Results

### *The new curriculum in action*

Due to extensive input from all parties involved—the stakeholders—there was a strong sense of ownership and this created the conditions necessary for successful change. As a result, the original proposals were re-examined and changes made (see Table 2).

Immediate changes were made in all classes, the most important being in assessed group presentations, speaking tests and JTEs’ embrace of a different teaching methodology.

### *Group presentations*

Through trial and error, the group presentation had been evolving over the two years with the third year students. In order to demonstrate to the first and second year JTEs the benefits of this innovation in the hope that they would adopt it, they were made part of the process. By the end of the second year, the ALT had a central role in preparing students for presentations, with all communication being done in English. The second year JTE participated through classroom observation and as translator when necessary,

**Table 2: Changes made to original proposals**

Original proposals	Changes made
1. Implementing new techniques into current teaching methodology: Using more communicative activities to promote fluency and motivate students.	1. Implementing new techniques into current teaching methodology: Using more communicative activities, in particular, role-play in lessons to promote fluency and motivate students.
2. Doing group presentations at the end of each term to encourage students to speak more and strengthen relationships.	2. Doing group presentations or short interview tests at the end of each term to motivate students to speak more and strengthen relationships. Interview tests to be included as part of final assessment if there is a positive reaction to this innovation.
3. Using these group presentations and communicative activities as an official part of student assessment.	
4. Using 20-40% English instruction in all classes (that is, classes with and without the AET).	3. Using 20-60% English instruction in all classes (that is, in classes with and without the AET).

and the first year JTE participated through the viewing and judging of recorded performances.

*Considering a change in oral assessment*

Incremental changes were made in the second year class with the introduction of a short interview test. Like other newly created activities, the interview covered the textbook material. The first year JTE participated in this innovation by helping lower level learners prepare for the test. Following the first trial, which proved rather unsuccessful, students were asked to give feedback. The main response was that they did not understand the purpose behind this sudden “surprise” test and they were worried about failing. White (1998) advises that in language curriculum development, “make sure everyone knows (and agrees on) where they are going and why” (p. 153). After the purpose of the test was explained as a means of reviewing learned grammar structures and promoting fluency, students expressed

a willingness to try again. Following a very successful second trial test, the first year JTE decided to implement the innovation into her class. Her goal, which she explained to her students, was not only to review grammar points but more importantly, to encourage communication at natural speed with the ALT.

*Considering a different teaching methodology*

At the beginning of this curriculum innovation, the grammar-translation approach was the most dominant methodology. One year into the research, classrooms had become more student-centered and communicative activities complemented textbook materials. The most significant changes were seen with the first year JTE whose teaching approach was strictly to always “teach to the test.” Having experienced a more communicative classroom, she was encouraged to make other changes. By the end of the second year, there were no more sentence-to-sentence translations



of the dialog typical of earlier classes. Students continued to study the necessary grammar structures; however, the main goal for students became *how* to use grammar points in a more authentic manner.

### Discussion

Results of this study showed that teachers could be very effective as change agents in initiating curriculum change, and that change need not go against the national curriculum. Changes observed at the JHS as a result of this study are summarized below:

- There was an increased awareness at the local level with regard to the latest TEFL developments and theories, which led to teachers’ professional growth.
- Collaboration by the entire English department created an environment where teachers could learn from each other. This was instrumental in creating successful curriculum change. Teachers no longer worked as individuals but as a team with a common goal.
- Teachers became aware of their role as change agents should they wish to be part of future educational reform.
- Teachers fully understood MEXT’s requirements for JHS and there was greater accountability for their chosen teaching methodology.
- Teachers as reflective practitioners were forced “to challenge... espoused personal beliefs about teaching” (Bartlett, 1990, p. 213).

### Conclusion

Changes implemented were small-scale, but they proved very effective in raising awareness of shortcomings in the curriculum, and making teachers aware of their power as change agents. Most importantly, the innovations were very practical and did not require any “radical reorganization of classroom procedures” (White, 1988, p. 141). With a continuation of the system of classroom observation and collaboration, it ensured that changes would remain a formative rather than a summative event. In conclusion, the researcher felt that where small changes at the local level could eventually lead to bigger developments and have wider implications, the centrally initiated top-down policies would remain right there—at the top.

**Tanya M. McCarthy** has worked in the field of EFL in Japan for 6 years, from elementary school to tertiary institutions. Currently, she is working as a learning advisor in the self-access centre at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) in Chiba. Her research interests include project-based learning, learner autonomy, advising, self-access, and action research.

### References

- Bartlett, L. (1990). Teacher development through reflective teaching. In J. C. Richards & D. Nunan (Eds.), *Second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Beale, J. (2002). EFL in Japan: Whose English is it anyway? *Babel* 37(2), 26-28.



- PAC7 at JALT2008: Shared Identities
- Blenkin, G. M., Edwards, G., & Kelly, A. V. (1992). *Change and the curriculum*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bolstad, R. (2004). *School-based curriculum development: Principles, processes and practices*. Wellington: New Zealand Council of Educational Research.
- Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative action research for English language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carless, D. R. (2001). A case study of curriculum implementation in Hong Kong. In D. R. Hall & A. Hewings (Eds.), *Innovation in English language teaching: A reader* (pp. 263-274). London: Routledge.
- Fullan, M. G. (1998). *Educational reform as continuous improvement*. [Online] Available <[www.michaelfullan.ca/Articles\\_98-99/11\\_98.htm](http://www.michaelfullan.ca/Articles_98-99/11_98.htm)>
- Fullan, M. G. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change* (3rd ed.). New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Kelly, A. V. (1982). *The curriculum: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). London: Harper & Row.
- Kennedy, C., & Edwards, C. J. (2001). *ELT management*. Birmingham: Centre for English Language Studies, University of Birmingham.
- Kikuchi, K. (2005). Student and teacher perceptions of learning needs: A cross analysis. *Shiken: JALT Testing & Evaluation SIG Newsletter* 9(2), 8-20.
- MEXT (2003). *Regarding the establishment of an action plan to cultivate "Japanese with English abilities."* [Online] Available <[www.mext.go.jp/english/topics/03072801.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/english/topics/03072801.htm)>
- Norris-Holt, J. (2002). An investigation of Japanese high school students' attitudes towards the study of English. *SLLT* 2. [Online] Available <<http://www.usq.edu.au/users/sonjb/sllt/2/Norris-Holt02.htm>>
- Olson, J. K. (1980). Teacher constructs and curriculum change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 12(1), 1-11.
- Rudduck, J. (1991). *Innovation and change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Stenhouse, L. (1975). *An introduction to curriculum research and development*. London: Heinemann.
- Wang, H., & Cheng, L. (2005). The impact of curriculum innovation on the cultures of teaching. *Asian EFL Journal*. 7(4) Article 1 [Online] Available <[www.asian-efl-journal.com/December\\_05\\_hw&lc.php](http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/December_05_hw&lc.php)>
- White, R. V. (1988). *The ELT curriculum: Design, innovation and management*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Appendix 1

Curriculum strengths and weaknesses

PAC7 at JALT2008: Shared Identities

Item	Weaknesses	Strengths
Textbook Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students don't learn how to use grammar in a communicative way.</li> <li>Sometimes there are too many grammar points covered in the same unit, which do not complement each other. This confuses students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Textbook provides grammar students need to satisfy MEXT requirements.</li> <li>Grammar points are repeated and built upon throughout the units across years 1 to 3.</li> </ul>
Oral Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The four skills are not covered equally. Speaking skills are not weighted as importantly as the other skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The four skills are practiced throughout the textbook.</li> <li>Students can learn what they need to know for entrance tests without being distracted by speaking activities, which is not part of high school entrance tests or the Eiken test.</li> </ul>
Teaching Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of grammar-translation approach is a bit rigid.</li> <li>Communicative language teaching is not promoted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students and teachers are accustomed to this style of teaching.</li> </ul>
Learner needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current textbook does not cater to different learning styles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students have to do the textbook. Learner needs analysis unnecessary.</li> </ul>
Language Authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students do not understand the ALT's English because of overuse of the CD.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear CD in American accent makes listening easy.</li> <li>Students become familiar with CD recording.</li> </ul>
Textbook topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dialogs are unreal and do not promote authentic or real-life conversation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics divided into separate units. This allows teachers to go back and forth throughout the text to suit the occasion.</li> </ul>
Fluency vs. Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students have little freedom to explore language usage and learn how to communicate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tests focus on accuracy and it is more important for students to pass tests.</li> </ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group projects require new materials to be designed that have more relevance to student life.</li> <li>Using another methodology means designing new lessons and creating new materials, which takes a long time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher's manual already has a suggested time per unit.</li> <li>There are extra materials in the student workbook.</li> <li>There are additional tests online.</li> </ul>

Item	Weaknesses	Strengths
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers providing answers to students does not encourage student autonomy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are accustomed to a teacher-fronted classroom.</li> </ul>
Role of Teacher and Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The textbook focuses more on teacher instruction and less on student-centered activities, which leads to a high teacher-talk time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear-cut student and teacher role.</li> </ul>
Assessment procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students leave school unable to conduct basic conversation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are assessed based on what they need to pass tests.</li> </ul>

### Appendix 2

#### *Survey conducted with Japanese Teachers of English regarding attitude towards teaching practices and proposed changes to the curriculum.*

\* Note: 1<sup>st</sup> = grade 1 teacher; 2<sup>nd</sup> = grade 2 teacher; 3<sup>rd</sup> = grade 3 teacher; ALT=Assistant Language Teacher

- (a) Please tell me your views on the current school curriculum:

**Not at all** 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 **Definitely**

No.	Statement	1st	2nd	3rd
1	I know the junior high school’s curriculum very well.	2	3	4
2	I know how the curriculum is decided.	2	1	4
3	I am happy with the present curriculum.	3	3	3
4	I am free to make any changes to the curriculum.	4	1	5
5	I have explained to students what I expect them to achieve by the end of the year.	1	5	5

- Regarding conversational ability, what are your own expectations for your students at the end of the school year?

1st	I have no plans for them now.
2nd	I want my students to pass the third grade Eiken speaking test.
3rd	I would like them to be able to do basic communication in English. After studying with the ALT, I hope they don’t hesitate to talk with foreigners and that they remember that it’s okay to make mistakes. That’s the best way to learn.

2. What teaching methodology do you currently employ in the classroom?

Communicative      Grammar-based      Other

1st	A combination. With the ALT, more communication classes. By myself, grammar classes.
2nd	Both- Communicative classes are more important for me but I have to teach grammar.
3rd	Both: I use a more communicative approach in classes with the ALT because I want to emphasize speaking and listening. When I teach alone, I need to teach a balance of the four skills.

3. Do you think students are satisfied with the methodology used?

**Not at all** 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 **Definitely**

1st	4
2nd	2- I have to work harder.
3rd	4

4. Do you feel the textbook satisfies the requirements needed for JHS students to achieve oral proficiency?

Yes      No

1st	Yes
2nd	Yes
3rd	Somewhat. The students do better when we do group projects.

5. Would you like to include more conversational classes into the curriculum?

Yes      No

1st	Yes
2nd	Yes
3rd	Depends: Because of senior high school entrance tests there's no time. If there were no entrance tests it's great.

6. Please answer the following statements about your teaching and assessment of students:

**Not at all** 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 **Definitely**

No.	Statement	1st	2nd	3rd
1	I aim for all my classes to be oral-communication based.	3	3	4
2	I feel more comfortable if my classes are teacher-fronted.	2	2	2
3	I aim to make the lesson more learner-centered.	4	4	5
4	I try to use fun activities in lessons.	4	4	5
5	I try to let the students discover answers on their own without help from the teacher.	3	3	2
6	I use as many group work activities in class as possible to encourage student interaction.	3	4	5
7	I try to interact with students on an individual basis during class.	3	5	3
8	I base my teaching on sound methodological grounding.	1	4	5
9	I am confident with the methodology I use.	3	3	4
10	I always follow the prescribed textbook.	4	4	4

No.	Statement	1st	2nd	3rd
11	I design my own lesson plans.	4	3	4
12	I am happy with the outcome of my lessons and feel little need to alter them.	2	4	3
13	I believe translation exercises are the best way for students’ to improve English proficiency.	5	2	2
14	I have asked my students how they wish to study.	4	3	4
15	I aim to create activities, which both the students and I have pre-negotiated.	1	2	4
16	Final tests at the end of the term motivate students.	5	2	3*
17	I prefer smaller tests during the year rather than a big test at the end of the year.	5	2	3*
18	I teach test-taking skills to students.	4	4	4
19	Class participation is a part of the grading process.	2	4	4
20	I use the 4 skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking when assessing students	5	4	5

\* 16 Tests encourage strong students but it’s really hard for weaker students.

\* 17 I think both are necessary at this level. They need a lot of practice for entrance tests.

7. Are there any changes that you would like to implement in the classroom that you feel would help improve the learners’ language proficiency?

1st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would like to use the textbook less and encourage language skills more.</li> <li>• I would like to bring more real items into class.</li> <li>• I think the classes are over-grammatical now so I need more attention to fluency.</li> </ul>
2nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If possible, I would like an English room to motivate students. I would like to use more music in the classroom and also use the Internet to write e-mails or letters.</li> </ul>
3rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I wish all classes were balanced equally between boys and girls.</li> <li>• Classes over 25 students are hard to teach so I wish classes could be smaller than normal.</li> <li>• I would like to do more group projects in class. I try to do a project at the end of each term. I would like all grades to do the same as I think students are encouraged to speak more, it motivates them to work together and with teachers, they learn how to use their imagination and the classroom atmosphere becomes so friendly. I always reward winning groups and I like when students evaluate their friends. They learn many skills.</li> </ul>

8. How feasible do you think it would be to implement the following?

**No way! Too difficult** 1 2 3 4 5 **Sounds great!**

No.	Proposed Changes	1st	2nd	3rd
1	Having students make group presentations at the end of each term using original creations.	5	2	5
2	Using group projects/presentations as an official means of assessing students' oral skills.	1	3	4
3	Using more communicative activities in class	5	5	4
4	Using 20-40% English instruction in all lessons.	2	5	5

Comments on proposed changes

1st	1. Sounds great! But we don't have much time... 2. I assess students during communication activities in class and make notes about their pronunciation and conversation skills. 3. If time is available I would love to do more. 4. This is not possible with 1st year students. Right now I use about 10% but if I try really hard, maybe I can go to about 20%.
2nd	1. It would be too difficult to control students. Group activity is hard. 2. I already use class participation and group work in evaluations. With group work, stronger students do most of the work and the weaker students talk about other things and don't study English. Classroom management is difficult. I would prefer to do interview tests. 3. I think this is a great idea. It's easy to check student's English ability and see improvements during the year. 4. I think using 50% is achievable. This is what I really want.
3rd	1. As I said before, it's necessary for students to encourage participation, motivation and speaking without caring about mistakes. 2. I already use group work to evaluate students. It's 25% of their grade. 3. It's a good idea for the other teachers. I think we have enough activities with the presentations. 4. I will try to do 40%. Some teachers believe in only English but I think it's too difficult.

\* Adapted from a survey conducted by Keita Kikuchi at Nihon University

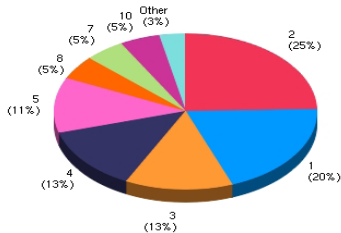
### Appendix 3

#### Partial results of student needs analysis

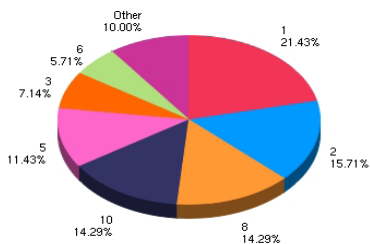
1. How important is English to you?

1= Very important 10= Not important

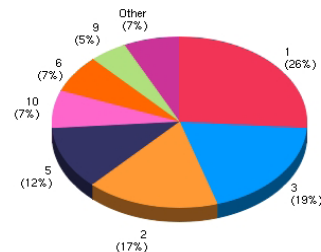
YEAR 1



YEAR 2



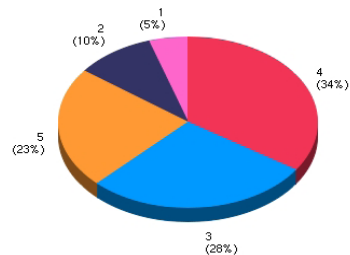
YEAR 3



16. I learn best in small groups.

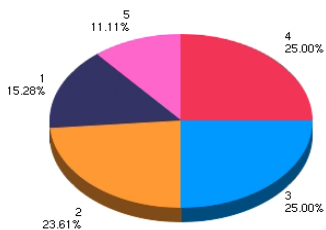
I disagree strongly 1...2...3...4...5 I agree strongly

YEAR 1

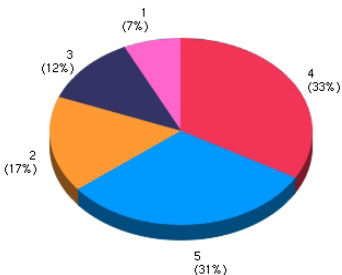




**YEAR 2**



**YEAR 3**



24. If you would like to do more speaking activities in class, what other kinds of learning tasks would you like the teacher to use in class to help you improve your speaking skills?

**YEAR 1**

Value	Percent %
Games	43%
Role Play	22%
Speech Contest Practice	12%
Songs	11%
Interview Tests	9%
Computer	3%

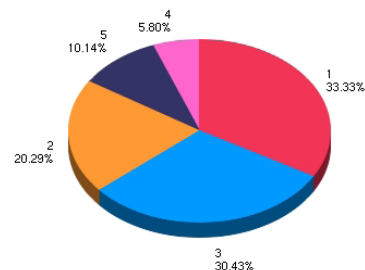
**YEAR 2**

Value	Percent %
Games	43%
Songs	24%
Role Play	22%
Speech Contest Practice	6%
Interview Tests	3%
Computer	2%

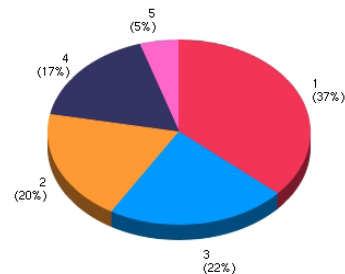
**YEAR 3**

Value	Percent %
Games	47%
Role Play	30%
Songs	12%
Speech Contest Practice	7%
Interview Tests	4%

**YEAR 2**



**YEAR 3**



34 I would like to have speaking tests as part of my assessment.

**I disagree strongly 1....2...3...4....5 I agree strongly**

**YEAR 1**

