Communicative Competence and the Japanese Learner

Rod Ellis

While language teaching in Japanese high schools and colleges is currently embracing communicative approaches, elsewhere views about communicative competence and its application to language pedagogy are undergoing a re-evaluation. This paper seeks to re-examine the concept of communicative competence, distinguishing between "knowledge" of language and of its use and the ability to "control" this knowledge in actual communication. The paper also reviews research which has examined the acquisition of one aspect of communicative competence—sociolinguistic competence—by Japanese learners of English, concluding that many learners experience problems with this aspect. The paper ends with a discussion of the goals of language teaching in Japanese high schools, arguing that a minimal goal involving "knowledge" (as opposed to "control") of both grammatical and sociolinguistic competence is the only practical one. Such a goal may be best achieved through "consciousness-raising" activities rather than practice exercises.

【要旨】
　現在、日本の高校や大学の外国語教育では、コミュニカティブ・アプローチを熱心に取り入れようとしている。しかし、日本の外では、伝達能力に関する見解、及び、その能力を語学教育でいかに養成するかという応用面の双方について、既に評価の見直しが進められている。当論文では、(1)言語と言語使用に関する「知識」と(2)実際のコミュニケーションの場においてこの知識を「統御する能力」との違いを明らかにしつつ、まず、伝達能力という概念について再検討していく。次に、日本人英語学習者の伝達能力（特にその一面を担う「社会言語的能力」）の習得に関する調査について解説し、調査から導きだされた結論、即ち、多くの学習者がこの「社会言語的能力」に関連した問題に直面しているという結論を紹介する。最後に、日本の高校における語学教育のゴールとはいかなるべきものであるかを考察していく。著者は、文法及び社会言語的能力の双方に関する「知識」（「統御力」ではない）を柱とする極く控えめなゴールこそが現実的なゴールとして掲げられる唯一のものであり、そのゴールに至る最も有効な教室活動は、練習問題の繰り返しではなく、'CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING'「(言語) 意識の覚醒」を目指したものであろうと考える。

1. Introduction

The concept of communicative competence has had a major impact on language teaching, originating in the United States of America and Europe, and then spreading to all parts of the world, Japan included. It

has contributed to the reformulation of the aims and content of second language (L2) pedagogy. Prior to the seventies, the dominant methods (the grammar translation method, the audiolingual method, and the oral-situational method) emphasised the importance of formal linguistic knowledge, either as explicit rules or as habits that led to grammatically correct linguistic behaviour. The content of language courses based on these methods was stated primarily in terms of the structural rules which the learner had to master. It is true, of course, as Swan (1985) has pointed out, that these methods (particularly the oral-situational method) did not entirely neglect meaning, but the underlying assumption was that language learning was primarily about mastery of the formal—mainly grammatical—properties of a language. In contrast, the communicative approach to language teaching has given centrality to the way language is used to realize meaning. In this approach the focus is on what the learner needs to *say* or *do* with language rather than on what language is, and the content of language courses has been restated either in terms of categories of meaning (notions and functions) or in terms of the tasks which the learner is expected to perform in order to communicate in the target language.

It is probably true to say that we have now entered a period of review. This is evident in both theoretical discussions of the nature of communicative competence itself (see, for instance, papers published in *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1989) and in a reconsideration of the importance of formal grammar teaching, albeit with due attention to the way the code is used in communication (see, for instance, Rutherford's [1987] and Rutherford & Sharwood-Smith's [1988] arguments in favour of consciousness-raising). There have also been a number of thoughtful and provocative articles attacking communicative approaches (e.g., Swan, 1985). Thus, at a time, when Japan is beginning to embrace the communicative approach with increasing passion, doubts are being expressed elsewhere. The purpose of this article is threefold. First, I want to reexamine the nature of communicative competence. Although this construct is sufficiently well understood in general terms, it has proved extremely difficult to tie down in

precise terms. Second, I want to review some of the literature which has addressed how Japanese learners acquire communicative competence or, at least, one aspect of it—sociolinguistic competence. Third, I want to examine to what extent and in what ways an understanding of communicative competence should inform language pedagogy in Japan.

2. On the Nature of Communicative Competence

Since Hymes's (1971) seminal article outlining the nature of communicative competence, there have been a number of attempts to model it. One of the best known and most frequently cited in discussions of language pedagogy and testing is that of Canale and Swain (1980), further developed in Canale (1983). This proposes four components of the knowledge system that comprises communicative competence:

1. *Grammatical competence*: knowledge of the language code—features and rules of language including vocabulary, word-formation, sentence-formation, pronunciation and spelling.
2. *Sociolinguistic competence*: knowledge of the rules for using language in different sociolinguistic contexts. This will depend upon various contextual factors such as the status of the participants and the purpose of the interaction. Sociolinguistic competence includes both knowledge of what is appropriate in meaning and what is appropriate in form.
3. *Discourse competence*: knowledge of the rules involved in the understanding and production of continuous text, spoken and written. Discourse competence is achieved through mastery of the devices required for cohesion (i.e., the way utterances are structurally linked) and coherence (i.e., the way utterances are functionally related).
4. *Strategic competence*: knowledge of the verbal and non-verbal strategies such as paraphrase and ostensive reference that are required to deal with communication breakdown or to enhance communicative effectiveness.

Canale and Swain argue that communicative competence should be restricted to the "underlying systems of knowledge" and should ex-

clude "ability to use" as this concerns "actual communication" or "performance." There are, however, theoretical objections to a two-way distinction between "communicative competence" and "communicative performance." As more recent discussions of the competence/ performance distinction have shown, a three-way distinction is, in fact, necessary. Taylor (1988), for example, distinguishes (a) competence (knowledge of), (b) proficiency (ability to use knowledge), and (c) actual performance. He goes on to point out that whereas in linguistics theoretical models have been premised on (a) (as in the case of Chomsky, 1965, for instance), in education the term "competence" has been generally held to include both knowledge and ability to use (as in the case of Hymes, 1971, for instance). Education (and language pedagogy is a branch of education) is concerned with the development of proficiency rather than competence, to use Taylor's term. A model that does not include "ability to use," therefore, is of restricted value to applied linguists interested in language pedagogy. If the goal of language instruction is to be "effective communication" (Paulston, 1975), the theoretical model that informs practice needs to specify both what kinds of knowledge the learner needs to master and what levels of ability need to be achieved.

Attempts to validate empirically the four separate components in Swain and Canale's model of communicative competence have not proved very successful. Harley et al. (1990) set out to demonstrate the independence of the four components by constructing a set of tests designed to provide independent measures of them. The tests were administered to 175 grade 6 early immersion students in francophone schools in Montreal, Canada. A confirmatory factor analysis of the scores obtained by these tests produced a two-factor solution (rather than the predicted four-factor solution), reflecting, in the eyes of the researchers, "a general language proficiency factor" and "a written method factor." In another study (Cummins et al., 1990), the same tests were administered to 191 Portuguese learners of English. Again, a factor analysis failed to produce four separate factors. However, these failures to establish the construct validity of the model need not

invalidate the framework as a basis for pedagogic proposals. D'Anglejan (1990) comments:

> It may be that whereas the model provides a useful conceptual framework for thinking about language and language teaching, hypothetical constructs such as sociolinguistic and discourse competence . . . cannot be operationalized, other than trivially, in ways that make them amenable to empirical validation. (p. 148)

Canale and Swain's model constitutes "a useful conceptual framework" for language pedagogy because it forces teachers to consider the different facets of L2 knowledge that need to be taught and encourages them to evaluate to what extent their teaching addresses them.

The model of communicative competence, which I now wish to advance, draws on Canale and use" dimension. The basic model is shown in Figure 1. The model conceives of communicative competence in terms of two general Swain's but reintroduces an "ability to use" dimension. The basic model is shown in Figure 1. The model conceives of communicative competence in terms of two general aspects of com-

Figure 1:
A model of communicative competence

Aspects of communication	Knowledge	Control
Linguistic formulaic rule-based	Unanalyzed	Controlled
Functional sociolinguistic discourse strategic	Analyzed	Automatic

munication—the linguistic and the functional, a distinction widely recognized in the literature. The linguistic aspect corresponds to Canale and Swain's "grammatical competence" and relates to whether an utterance can be considered "correct" with reference to norms of native

speaker usage. Linguistic competence entails both formulas and rules, the notion of "correctness" being applicable to both. Utterance 1 in Figure 2, a partially analyzed formula with the pattern "Subject + be +

Figure 2:
Examples of formulaic and rule-based utterances
that differ in correctness and appropriateness.

Utterance	Context
1. You are a pain in the stomach.	An office worker has just been asked by a superior to retype a letter. He takes the letter to do as requested, but wishes to mildly remonstrate with his superior.
2. You are a stomach pain.	
3. I have another appointment.	A young woman has been asked out for a meal by her regular boyfriend, but cannot go and so has to refuse the invitation.
4. I am having another appointment.	
5. Is that rubbish? You can throw it over there.	An office worker sees her boss holding a screwed up piece of paper which he wants to throw away. She indicates a cardboard box of waste material on the other side of the room.
6. Lubbis? Here put.	

a pain in the stomach" and utterance 3, a rule-constructed sentence, are well-formed, even though both can be considered inappropriate in the contexts in which they were used. In contrast, utterances 2 and 4 are linguistically incorrect as well as being inappropriate, while 6 is incorrect but, arguably, appropriate.

The functional aspect of the model includes sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic knowledge; it relates to whether an utterance can be considered appropriate with reference to the social, discoursal, and strategic norms of the target culture. Utterances 1 through 4 are inappropriate because they violate the rules of politeness to be found in

native speaker English use. In contrast, utterances 5 and 6 can be considered appropriate. These examples suggest that linguistic and functional competence are, in part at least, independent. Thus, as has often been noted, the attainment of a high level of linguistic competence is no guarantee that effective communication will be achieved. It was, of course, precisely this observation that motivated the move away from grammar-centred to function-centred language teaching in the seventies and eighties.

The model also distinguishes *knowledge* of these linguistic and functional aspects of communication from *control* of this knowledge. These terms, which have been taken from Bialystok and Sharwood-Smith (1985), correspond to Hymes' distinction between "knowledge" and "ability to use" and Taylor's distinction between "competence" and "proficiency." A learner may "know" a grammatical or sociolinguistic rule but may not be able to "control" this knowledge under certain conditions of language use. Knowledge and control, therefore, constitute separate aspects of competence.

Drawing on previous work by Bialystok (e.g., Bialystok, 1982), knowledge can be differentiated according to how "analyzed" it is. At one level it can be completely unanalyzed, in which case it is likely to exist in the form of implicit knowledge (i.e., knowledge of which the holder has no conscious awareness). Unanalyzed linguistic knowledge takes the form of formulaic chunks—the routines such as "I don't know" and patterns such as "Can I have a ____?" Unanalyzed functional knowledge consists of the intuitive understanding of what counts as appropriate language behaviour—knowing, for instance, that the refusal of an invitation in English normally requires the expression of regret and the provision of a reason. At another level knowledge can be fully analyzed. Analyzed linguistic knowledge consists of productive rules of word and sentence formation, that is, rules which can be used to process totally novel utterances. Analyzed functional knowledge consists of some conscious, explicit representation of the rules of speaking. As Wolfson (1983) points out, most language users do not possess a conscious knowledge of these rules, although they will usually be able to judge accurately what constitutes appropriate and

inappropriate behaviour. The analyzed-unanalyzed distinction comprises a continuum. That is, knowledge can be represented in the mind of a language user with varying degrees of analycity.

Control can also be differentiated—in this case according to how automatic it is. Both linguistic and functional knowledge can be accessed in a wide variety of situations with ease and rapidity, as is the case with native speakers, or it can be accessed slowly and with considerable difficulty, as is the case with many language learners. The extent of the learner's control over her knowledge governs the degree of fluency evidenced in actual communication. As with analycity, automaticity is viewed as a continuum.

At the level of theory, this model of communicative competence is not without its problems. Widdowson (1989) observes that the inclusion of a control dimension results in consideration of all sorts of slippery variables—motivation, the temporary physical and affective states of the learner, and her personal attitudes and familiarity with the discourse topic, to name but a few. It raises doubts as to whether the model can be tested empirically. For instance, how can we distinguish in actual performance a lack of knowledge of a particular feature from a failure to use it due to insufficient control? If a learner says "You are a stomach pain" is this because she does not know the form of the correct formula or because she cannot access it under the prevailing conditions of language use?

However, as I have already argued, these problems are of less significance if the purpose of the model is to provide a basis for discussing language pedagogy rather than the establishment of a research agenda. The model serves as a basis for articulating a number of questions of central importance to language pedagogy. I conclude this section with some of these questions:
1. What aspects of communication should a language programme address—linguistic, functional or both?
2. To what extent do learners need to develop analyzed knowledge? How can this be best achieved?

3. To what extent is it necessary and possible to develop the learners' control of their knowledge in the classroom?

I will return to these questions in the final section of this paper, after first examining how sociolinguistic competence is acquired by Japanese learners of English.

3. The Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Competence by Japanese Learners

There has been relatively little research into the acquisition of communicative competence by second language learners. However, one aspect of communicative competence which has attracted considerable attention is sociolinguistic competence or, more specifically, the competence required to perform specific speech acts in socially appropriate ways. Studies of L2 learners have set out to show how specific speech acts are performed by L2 learners with different L1 backgrounds and also to provide data with which to test theoretical positions. The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (cf. Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989), for example, was an ambitious project set up to examine cross-cultural and intralingual variation in two speech acts— requests and apologies. It has investigated a number of languages (American English, Australian English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, and Hebrew) and has provided a rich source of data on cross-cultural pragmatics as well as developing a well-tested methodology, involving the use of discourse completion tests. It should be noted, however, that the CCSARP, like other, smaller scale studies, is cross-sectional in design, involving collection of data from learners at a single point in time. As a result, it informs more about L2 pragmatic *use* than about how the *ability* to realise speech acts in communication is acquired over time.

My focus here is on some of the research which has studied the sociolinguistic competence of Japanese learners. This has followed a similar track to the studies referred to above—that is, the work has focussed on particular speech acts and has been predominantly cross-sectional in design. The available information is, therefore, limited and

offers no more than a partial picture of how Japanese learners acquire communicative competence in English. I shall address two questions: (a) To what extent do Japanese learners succeed in acquiring sociolinguistic competence in English? and (b) What factors can explain the results that have been obtained to date?

There prevails a strong stereotypical view of the communicative style of Japanese speakers of L2 English, supported by general observation or anecdotal evidence. Barnlund (1984) used questionnaires to elicit the views that Japanese hold regarding such issues as interpersonal relationships. He reports that they emphasised the need to keep a conversation "pleasant" by behaving smoothly and avoiding disagreement. Loveday (1982) notes that native English speakers often find the Japanese distant and cool and suggests that this is because the Japanese avoid talking about their personal feelings. He suggests that the western style of conducting conversations as a kind of "logical game" involving continuous negative and positive judgements differs markedly from the Japanese preference for conversations that stress intuitive understanding and mutuality of feeling in social interaction. Hill claims that the Japanese talk less than native English speakers and are less likely to engage in "small talk." Both Loveday and Hill (1990) claim that Japanese avoid direct, plain statements in favour of more suggestive, indirect comments in their L1 and in English. Hill suggests that this may be why the Japanese sometimes appear secretive or vague to a westerner. In one respect, though, the Japanese are reputed to be more forthcoming than native English speakers. LoCastro (1987) notes the common use of various verbal and non-verbal backchannelling devices (e.g., nodding and "*so desu*") in L1 Japanese conversations. She reports that Japanese often feel uncomfortable when speaking English because they are unable to use the appropriate *aizuchi*.

The commonly held view that the Japanese are hyper-polite is also part of the stereotypical view. The tendency to translate ritualistic politeness formulae into English can be seen as evidence for this. A number of anecdotes testify to the importance that the Japanese attach to indirectness as as a politeness strategy. Takahashi and Beebe (1987),

for instance, quote Prime Minister Sato's indirect response (*"Zensho shimasu"*—"I'll take care of it") to President Nixon's request that the Japanese government agree to voluntary restrictions on the export of textiles to the United States. Further anecdotes testify to Japanese sensitivity to status relationships. Loveday quotes Doi's (1977) account of how he was unable to thank his American superior for a favour because he felt that it implied too great an equality and so ended up apologizing to him instead.

There is a general consensus that these kinds of stereotypical behaviors create problems when Japanese are communicating in English. There also seems to be an underlying assumption that Japanese learners of English experience special difficulty in acquiring the "rules of speaking" found in English. There is no empirical evidence, however, that the Japanese experience pragmatic failure to a greater extent than other L2 learners.

There is probably some truth in these stereotypical views of the Japanese, as Clancy (1990) demonstrates in an account of how mother-child interaction imparts the appropriate cultural "rules of speaking" to Japanese children. However, there are also dangers, as stereotypes do not take account of the variation in communicative behavior that results from contextual factors. Wolfson (1983; 1989) has repeatedly argued that it is not possible to rely on the native speaker's intuitive understanding of communicative behaviour, as so many of the underlying rules of speaking lie beneath the threshold of consciousness. Only careful, empirical studies will reveal the true nature of a speech community's rules.

In data collected by means of a discourse completion test, Beebe and Takahashi (1989) found that advanced Japanese ESL learners often did not conform to stereotype. They found that they were sometimes more direct than American English speakers and that this was true in both situations where a higher-status person was addressing a lower-status person and in situations where a lower-status person was talking to a higher-status person. The Americans were more likely to down-tone

their disagreements by beginning with a positive statement, by expressing gratitude, by adding positive remarks, by personalizing exchanges, and by being less formulaic. They also often volunteered to talk further. The Japanese were more likely to give explicit criticisms. However, in naturally occurring data, Beebe and Takahashi did find greater evidence of indirectness in the Japanese preference for using questions to hint at disagreement. Also, when giving embarrassing information, Japanese learners preferred to hint at the source of the embarrassment rather than to state it directly, and in cases where a lower-status speaker was addressing a higher-status speaker were more likely to opt for silence. This study, then, lends some support to the stereotypical view of Japanese speakers of English, but it is clear that there are times when they behave in ways that do not conform with the stereotype.

There is plenty of evidence of differences in the way Japanese learners and English native speakers typically perform speech acts in English. Tanaka (1988) found differences in the way Japanese and Australian students made requests in English. The Japanese learners tended to use negative politeness strategies (e.g., "If you don't mind, . . ."), whereas the Australian native speakers did not; and vice-versa, they failed to use them where the Australians used them (e.g., indirect request structures such as "I was wondering if . . ."). The Japanese failed to use politeness strategies employed by the native speakers (e.g., the use of first names). They were often less explicit, especially in giving reasons for the request, and were not adept at shifting the level of formality to take account of their addressee. In general, the Japanese learners tended to use more formal expressions than the native speakers.

Pragmatic error in the way Japanese learners give invitations in English has also been documented. Fukushima and Iwata (1985) asked 10 female Japanese learners in an advanced English class to invite a friend and then a teacher to a dinner party, instructing them to request that the invitee came on time and dressed appropriately. The learners were much more abrupt in the invitations to the teacher in comparison with native speakers of English. For example, they opened immediately

with the invitation (e.g., "Would you come to a party at seven p.m. next Friday?"), whereas the native speakers began with an "opener" and also made greater efforts to minimize the imposition (e.g., "I'm having a dinner party next Friday. I wonder if you would like to come if you have time?"). The learners were also too direct in the way they mentioned the need to be punctual (e.g., "Please come on time.") and the importance of dressing appropriately (e.g., "Please don't wear jeans."). Fukushima and Iwata come to the same conclusion as Tanaka—namely, that the Japanese learners they studied lacked the necessary English politeness strategies.

Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) report on the differences between Japanese ESL learners' and Americans' refusals in English. They found differences in the order of the formulas used to express refusals, the frequency with which specific semantic formulas were used, and the content of the formulas. In general, the Japanese were more inclined to differentiate their refusals according to whether they were addressing a higher or lower status person, whereas the Americans differentiated according to how well they knew the addressee (i.e., the level of familiarity). The Japanese were also less specific when giving excuses (e.g., "I have a previous engagement") and they tended to sound more formal in tone. For example, the Japanese would often refer to a general principle or make a philosophical statement (e.g., "I never yield to temptation"), whereas the Americans did not engage in such behavior.

In a somewhat different study, Graham (1990) compared the behaviour of American and Japanese businessmen in role-played marketing negotiations. He found a number of differences. American businessmen prized honest information from their opponents; Japanese businessmen placed less store on information and their opponent's credibility and even found the Americans' openness discomforting. For the Japanese the important thing was to "protect a relationship" ("*amae*"). They would often use silence as a strategy for achieving this. Interestingly, though, the Japanese sought consistently higher profit solutions when making an initial offer during a negotiation. Graham also notes

that the Japanese adjusted their behavior to a greater extent than the Americans in cross-cultural negotiations—they modulated such behaviors as facial gazing, smiling, and the use of persuasive tactics to approximate more closely the Americans' communicative style.

What then are the major differences? Great care must be exercised in arriving at generalizations, for, as we have seen, stereotypes are not always accurate. Also, it should be noted that most of the studies referred to above made use of elicited rather than naturally-occurring data, and thus we cannot be sure that the linguistic behavior which the Japanese learners demonstrated in discourse completion tests or role plays corresponds to the their behavior in real communicative situations. The following picture which seems to emerge from the literature review must be treated with circumspection, therefore.

In comparison to native speakers of English (Australian and American), the Japanese:

1. are less verbal, more inclined to use silence in intercultural interactions;
2. are inclined to use more back-channelling devices;
3. can be more direct in some situations, in particular those where a lower-status person is being addressed, and less direct in others;
4. may lack the politeness strategies needed to successfully perform face-threatening speech acts such as invitations and requests;
5. are less explicit in giving reasons for their verbal behavior;
6. tend to be more formal;
7. tend to give recognition to status relationships between speakers rather than to the level of familiarity.

Clearly, this is a very incomplete picture and doubtlessly there will be occasions when these general characteristics will not be observed.

We also need to know how Japanese learners develop sociolinguistic competence over time. Unfortunately, there have been very few studies which have investigated variation in communicative performance longitudinally.

Takahashi and Beebe (1987) compare the refusals performed by EFL and ESL Japanese learners at two stages of proficiency. The EFL learners were students majoring in English at a university in Japan, while the ESL learners were students at Queens College in New York. Differences in proficiency were equated with differences in the number of years they had studied or been exposed to English. Takahashi and Beebe hypothesised that the level of cultural transfer (i.e., the presence of Japanese communicative characteristics in their use of English) would be more evident in the more proficient learners. Although this hypothesis seems to be counter-intuitive, Takahashi and Beebe argue convincingly that lower level learners will lack the linguistic resources in the L2 to encode socioculturally appropriate Japanese patterns and will resort instead to a simplification strategy. In contrast, the higher level learners will have acquired the means to make sociocultural transfer possible. The results for the ESL learners support the hypothesis; the more proficient displayed more frequent use of native language patterns and, in particular, the high level of formality in tone and content found in Japanese refusals (e.g., "I am very delighted and honoured to be asked to attend the party, but . . ."). However, the results for the EFL learners failed to support the hypothesis, there being no difference in the refusals of the undergraduates and graduates. Takahashi and Beebe suggest that "pragmatic competence is not significantly affected by just a few years' difference in school in the EFL context" (p. 149), an important point to which we will return later.

The only truly longitudinal investigation of a Japanese learner's acquisition of sociolinguistic competence is Schmidt's (1983) study of a Japanese painter, Wes. Schmidt studied Wes for 7 years, first in Japan and later in Hawaii. The latter years saw "steadily increasing demands on Wes's ability to communicate in English" as a result of increasing contact with native speakers of the language—the ideal environment for the development of sociolinguistic competence. Schmidt reports on Wes' use of directives during the latter years and comments: "By the end of the observation period, gross errors in the performance of directives had largely been eliminated" (p. 154). However, his direc-

tives were still far from native-like, continuing to display some Japanese patterns as well as idiosyncratic features. Wes found it difficult to adjust his speech act performance to take account of the addressee, and it was sometimes still necessary for an interlocutor to rely on the nonverbal context in order to interpret his meaning. Schmidt's study shows that even in an ESL context the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence can be a very gradual process.

We need to know to what extent and in what ways sociolinguistic competence develops in Japanese learners. Takahashi and Beebe's study suggests that in an EFL context (i.e., within Japan) there is not much development at all. In an ESL context, on the other hand, development does take place. However, the nature of this development is not yet clear. Whereas Takahashi and Beebe find evidence of greater native language interference in more proficient learners, Schmidt reports less. These findings need not be viewed as contradictory, however. As Takahashi and Beebe suggest, development may follow a U-shaped pattern, with learners first showing increased transfer as they acquire the linguistic resources to encode native-like patterns and later less as they become aware of the sociolinguistic norms of the target language. It is possible, however, as Wes demonstrated, for a learner to develop sociolinguistic awareness without any marked improvement in linguistic resources. Thus, whereas some ESL learners (perhaps those in academic settings) may focus primarily on the development of linguistic competence, others (perhaps those in naturalistic settings) may neglect linguistic competence in favour of other aspects of communicative competence such as sociolinguistic competence.

This speculation serves as an introduction to a discussion of the causal factors involved in the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence by Japanese learners. Clearly, a central factor is sociocultural transfer. All the studies referred to above highlight this as a major explanatory variable. Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) argue that transfer is likely to occur in the performance of speech acts that call for "delicate interpersonal negotiation" (p. 68) as learners seek to mitigate or avoid face-threatening behavior in ways they understand best. Furthermore,

transfer may not disappear simply as a function of linguistic development. Indeed, in the case of some learners, it may temporarily increase.

Transfer is not the only factor involved, however. As we have already noted, a key variable is the learner's level of linguistic proficiency. Tanaka (1988) notes that her Japanese subjects experienced difficulty in shifting the level of formality to suit the addressee because they lacked the necessary linguistic competence. Some aspects of sociolinguistic competence, therefore, may be acquired simply as a product of developing the necessary linguistic means. Thus although linguistic competence is not *sufficient* to guarantee the development of sociolinguistic knowledge, it is probably *necessary*.

Further factors are the learners' attitudes and beliefs about both speakers of the target language and the nature of the target language itself. Japanese learners who form stereotypes of English speaking people as "direct" and "plain speaking" may not be sensitive to the devices they use to display politeness. Some Japanese learners, then, may overgeneralize their sociocultural perceptions of target language speakers and, as a result, fail to take note of the ways in which politeness is encoded in English. This may explain why Japanese learners make insufficient use of indirect request formulas (Tanaka, 1988).

Japanese learners may also fail to develop sociolinguistic competence because they are not taught it and have no opportunity—unless they visit an English speaking country—to acquire it naturally. The failure to attend to sociolinguistic features of language use is a general feature of many educational systems. Allen et al. (1990), for instance, comment on the limited functional range of input in French immersion classrooms in Canada. The learners had no chance to discover the sociolinguistic rules that relate to the use of even simple features such as the *tu/vous* distinction. In the case of EFL teaching in Japan, whether at the school level or the college/university level, the lacuna is likely to be even more striking, given the importance currently attached to grammar in public examinations and the widespread use of Japanese as the language of classroom communication.

Finally, we need to ask whether learners are in fact always targeted on native speaker sociolinguistic norms. The learner may adopt one of two basic roles—that of "language learner" and that of "language user" (cf. Lennon, 1989)—and may even alternate between them within a single interaction. The language behavior that occurs when the learner is in the "learner role" may be very different from that which occurs in the "user" role. Pragmatic failure may occur, not because the learner does not possess the sociolinguistic competence to behave appropriately, but because her attention is directed elsewhere—at improving her linguistic competence, for instance. Also, learners may sometimes see interactional advantages in playing the "learner." Rampton (1987) suggests that the ESL learners in his study deliberately employed primitive interlanguage forms (e.g., "Me no . . .") as a means of mitigating face-threatening acts such as boasting and refusals. We cannot assume that the Japanese learners in the studies reported above did not also try to exploit their "learner" status for sociolinguistic purposes.

4. Teaching Communicative Competence in Japan

We have now considered what is meant by the term "communicative competence" and we have established that Japanese learners frequently experience difficulty (although not necessarily any more so than other L2 learners) with at least one aspect of communicative competence— the knowledge and ability needed to use English in socially appropriate ways. We turn finally to consider language teaching in Japan.

It is by no means obvious that communicative competence rather than linguistic competence should be the goal of language instruction in Japan, at least not where school learners are concerned. It has been argued that learners already know how to communicate as a result of having acquired their mother tongue and that all they require of instruction is access to the linguistic tools needed to realise this communicative ability in an L2. Swan (1985), for instance, argues that "the communicative theory" of meaning and use, insofar as it makes sense, is largely irrelevant to foreign language teaching. Swan is

probably right to dismiss Candlin's (1981) proposal that learners be taught the strategies needed to negotiate meaning (what Canale and Swain call strategic competence) and right to ridicule pretentious exercises directed at teaching communication strategies. However, his blanket dismissal of "communicative theory" is surely wrong where sociolinguistic competence is involved. The learner needs to learn not only what is appropriate in form (e.g., how to realise a compliment in English) but also what is appropriate in meaning (i.e., when to give a compliment, to whom, and in what kind of setting). It is precisely because the "rules of speaking" to be found in the learner's L1 differ from those in the L2 that there is a need to teach them. The problem of the "incompetent school learner"—that is, the learner who leaves school with knowledge about the language but with little or no idea of how to use this knowledge in communication—is a very real one in Japan, where English instruction is often carried out in Japanese and is focussed on imparting declarative facts about the language. As we saw in the previous section, Japanese speakers of English experience considerable difficulty in performing speech acts in socially appropriate ways.

However, there are other grounds for arguing that the acquisition of linguistic knowledge is an adequate goal of language instruction. Most learners of English in Japan will never have to communicate in English. English will remain a "school subject" and never be needed as a tool for communication. Furthermore, this argument continues, those learners who do subsequently, on leaving school, need to use English for purposes of communication will rapidly learn to "activate" their linguistic knowledge simply as a result of experiencing opportunities for the real use of English. In other words, the acquisition process is viewed as taking part in two broad stages. In the first stage (which takes place in school) the learner adopts the "learner role" and studies English formally, acquiring knowledge mainly about the language. In terms of the model of communicative competence described earlier, instruction is directed at the acquisition of largely explicit linguistic knowledge. In the second stage, which not everyone will experience, learners switch

to the "user role" by trying to use the knowledge they have acquired in communication. In other words, learners discover how to perform specific speech acts in appropriate ways and also develop control over their linguistic resources so that they can use them fluently.

It would be wrong to conclude from this line of argument, however, that the first stage should focus exclusively on linguistic knowledge. The teaching about sociolinguistic meaning (i.e., those rules of speaking that differ from Japanese) would also be compatible with an approach that gave emphasis to the "learner," as opposed to "user," role. The "learner" role involves an emphasis on the development of "knowledge," and this includes sociolinguistic as well as linguistic information. The "user" role emphasises "control"—the ability to use "knowledge" (linguistic and functional) in a variety of authentic communicative tasks.

A minimal goal of language education in Japan, then, would consist of knowledge (as opposed to control) of both linguistic form and sociolinguistic rules of use. It will be recalled from Figure 1 that linguistic knowledge was seen as consisting of both formulas and rules. Currently, the emphasis on language teaching has been placed on the teaching of linguistic rules. Widdowson (1989), however, argues that formulas constitute a substantial part of the native speaker's linguistic competence and that more attention should be given to them in language instruction. Formulas are, in fact, closely linked to the performance of specific speech acts. Thus simple requests for goods can be performed by means of the pattern "Can I have a ___?" and compliments by "That's a lovely ___," etc. A functional approach, then, probably provides a good starting point for language learning, as through teaching formulas a close link can be established between the teaching of linguistic form and language function, a link that is much, much more tenuous in the case of rules. Rules, of course, are needed to enable the learner to break down the formulas—"to adapt and adjust the lexis with whatever syntactic fittings are required" as Widdowson (p. 136) puts it. It is only when the learner has knowledge of rules that linguistic knowledge can be used creatively—to produce utterances like "My guinea pig died with its legs crossed" (O'Neill, 1977). The minimal approach I

have in mind, then, is one in which the focus is placed on teaching formulas and a "kit of rules" for adapting these to suit contextual requirements. This approach will lend itself to the teaching of information about what constitutes socially appropriate behavior in English, as this, too, is closely linked to the use of formulas.

Such a goal is, of course, a limited one, although still an extension of the goal of much current practice as this encompasses only linguistic form, understood largely as grammatical rules. An acceptance of this minimal goal would be tantamount to recognizing that the school graduate would be in many respects seriously incompetent as a speaker. She would probably not be able to hold even a moderately fluent conversation, for instance, although, with some opportunity to plan, she probably would be able to perform everyday speech acts, perhaps even in a socially appropriate way. This may prove unacceptable to many teachers, who may feel that the minimal goal I have set is far too humble and that much more can be achieved in the school and, certainly, in the college setting. It may well be that this is true—in cases where learners receive a reasonable number of English lessons each week and where there are teachers (native speakers or Japanese) who are fluent enough in English to provide instruction based on a more encompassing model—one that incorporates an ability to use knowledge and not just knowledge itself. The minimal model is only appropriate if such conditions cannot be met.

The position I have taken up is that communicative competence should be the goal of language instruction in Japan, but that in many cases it may be more practical to focus on *knowledge* rather than *control*, on the understanding that those learners who subsequently need to use English for purposes of communication can rapidly develop control once real opportunities for using English present themselves. I have also suggested what aspects of knowledge should be the focus of language instruction—linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge. I have suggested that this focus can best be achieved by emphasizing formulas and how to use these in socially appropriate ways, although not to the complete neglect of grammatical rules.

It is likely that teaching the kind of minimal communicative competence I have identified as the probable goal of language instruction in a school setting in Japan can be best achieved through problem-solving activities designed to raise learners' consciousness about linguistic and sociolinguistic features of English. The rationale for this follows from the arguments that have already been set out. If the goal is *knowledge* rather than *control*, then the need is for activities that emphasize intellectual understanding rather than automaticity of use. Conscious attention to sociolinguistic phenomena may, in fact, be necessary to ensure they are acquired, for as Schmidt (1990) argues:

> Simple exposure to sociolinguistically appropriate input is unlikely to be sufficient for second language acquisition of pragmatic and discoursal knowledge because the linguistic realizations of pragmatic functions are sometimes opaque to language learners and because the relevant contextual factors to be noticed . . . may be nonsalient to the learner. (p. 234)

Thus, learners who develop explicit knowledge of English "rules of speaking" may ultimately become more effective communicators than those who rely exclusively on implicit learning.

An example of the kind of consciousness-raising activity that might be used can be found in Appendix A. The targeted feature in this case is "refusals," which, as we have already seen, constitute a sociolinguistic problem for many Japanese learners. The aim of the activity is twofold: (a) to make the learners aware of what formulas are used in the performance of refusals in English, and (b) to make them aware of the sociolinguistic rules that apply to the use of these formulas. The materials do provide some opportunity for the learners to produce refusals, but there is no insistence on automatic production. The aim is to raise consciousness about the forms and their appropriate use, not to develop the ability to use the forms in actual communication.

This proposal for an approach based on consciousness-raising is in conflict with the recommendations made by Tanaka (1988). Tanaka considers that "the need to give students enough practice time is crucial

for the teaching of English in Japan" (p. 96). She argues that it is precisely because learners have little opportunity to use English outside the classroom, that opportunities for practice must be found in the classroom. But she goes on to point out that "the present situation of Japanese schools is not very favourable for the purpose," noting that in public junior high schools English is only taught three times a week, and that the large class size makes it difficult for individual students to obtain sufficient practice. It is precisely these practical considerations that have led me to propose a minimal model of communicative competence as the target of instruction in such settings by emphasizing *knowledge* at the expense of *control* and *consciousness-raising* rather than *practice*.

Of course, if English is used as the medium for carrying out consciousness-raising tasks of the kind illustrated in Appendix A, opportunities for communicating in English will also be made available. Learners will talk about language problems of various kinds. In this way, they can focus on the knowledge dimension of communicative competence, while engaging in the kind of language use that is required to develop the control dimension.

Rod Ellis is currently Professor of Applied Linguistics at Temple University Japan, where he teaches postgraduate courses in TESOL. He has published a number of ELT textbooks. He has also published widely in the fields of second language acquisition and teacher training, his most recent book being *Instructed Second Language Acquisition* (Blackwell).

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Appendix

The following activities have been designed to raise students' consciousness about how to refuse invitations in English. The activities are based on information provided in Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990).

A. What would you say in the following situations?

1. You work in an office of an American bank. One day your boss says, "I am having a party at my house this Saturday. Would you like to come?"

2. You receive a telephone call from a close friend. He says, "I've got some free tickets for a pop concert tonight. Do you want to come?"

B. Compare your answers in A to the ones below. How do they differ.

1. Thank you, it's really kind of you, but I'm sorry I won't be able to come because it's my mother's birthday that day.

2. I'd really like to go but I've already arranged to go for a meal with my friend Keiko. I guess I could cancel it, but I did that last time I arranged something with Keiko, so I think I'd better not. Thanks a lot though.

C. Make the refusals in these dialogues more polite.

1. English Teacher:	Hey, I'm arranging a picnic for some of my students Sunday. Why don't you come along?
Noriko:	Thank you, no. I am busy that day. If the picnic was on Saturday I could come.
English Teacher:	Sorry, I can't change the day now. Well, maybe next time.

2. John:	Hi, Takayo. It's good to see you. How are you doing?
Takayo:	I'm fine.
John:	Look, some friends of mine are going to the beach this weekend. It would be great if you could join us.
Takayo:	I have another engagement then.
John:	Oh, I see. Okay, then. Be seeing you.

D. Discuss with your teacher how to make a polite refusal in English.