

A Case Study of English Teaching at Japanese Elementary Schools

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The present classroom study was conducted to investigate current methods, materials and language use in the fourth to sixth grades in three elementary schools. Employing the observation scheme, Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT), differences were found among the schools in teaching objectives, methods, materials, amount of Japanese, and amount of input and output. No class was conducted entirely in the target language; the amount of Japanese (L1) used in class varied. The implications of the findings for instruction are that there is a need for improvement in such areas as teacher-training and team-teaching and, above all, a need for understanding how foreign languages (FL) are learned and taught in Japan. The status of classroom research within the community and society is briefly explored.

日本の小学校における英語教育のケース・スタディ

この授業研究は、3つの小学校の4年生から6年生の授業で現在使われている教授法、教材、言語について検証するために行われた。観察方法としてCOLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching) を用いた結果、学校によって教授目標、教授法、教材、使用される日本語の量、インプットとアウトプットの量が異なることが明らかになった。目標言語だけで授業をされているクラスは一つもないが、使われる日本語（第一言語）の量はさまざまである。ここで明らかになったことによる教育的な示唆としては、教師養成やティーム・ティーチングなどの改善の必要性、また日本において外国語がどのように学習され教えられているかについての理解の必要性である。社会とコミュニティの中での授業研究の位置づけについてもかんたんに言及されている。

In March 1992 the Japanese Ministry of Education reported that the future implementation of an English program at public elementary schools would be decided at the next meeting of the Curricular

Reform Council ("Implementation," 1992). This was in accordance with a suggestion made by the Special Policy Reform Committee in December 1991 that such a program might help learners to acquire communicative skill in foreign language speaking. Currently, pilot programs at two public schools are under study by the Ministry.

The suggestion was also favorably viewed by the Japanese Teachers' Union, whose president commented that the time had come to teach English education for "daily use" ("Implementation," 1992). Voices have long been raised for a need to teach communicative English at an earlier stage. Just how this can be done is not easy to determine, however, for no experimental data are available on such factors as how, what, and when to implement language instruction. Specifically, this study, conducted between July and October 1992 at three private elementary schools in the Kansai area, looks at the methods, materials and uses of both L1 and L2 in the English language classroom in order to assess the extent to which instruction in these programs involves genuine communicative English. The institutions, schools B, C and D, each of which promotes female pupils to affiliated middle and high schools, consider themselves to be in the educational vanguard. This explains why they offer English courses, and perhaps why they allowed observation by an independent outsider. Considering that the stated goals of early EFL education invariably involve the ability to communicate, the researcher sought to ascertain the extent to which the conception and execution of these programs involve genuine communication.

"Second-language classroom research, in studying the processes and circumstances of second-language development, aims to identify the phenomena that promote or hamper learning in the classroom" (Van Lier, 1988, p. 71). Long (1980) distinguishes two broad approaches: (a) interaction analysis, which entails observing and classifying the behavior of students and teachers according to a classification scheme (see also Richards, Platt and Weber, 1985), and (b) anthropological observation, which involves relatively unstructured observation of classrooms in the sense that what is to be observed is not predetermined by the researcher but rather depends on the observer's developing understanding of what is significant. Anthropological research is distinguished from interaction analysis not only in the manner in which observation is carried out but also by the use of verbal report data (Cohen, 1987). Among the advantages of anthropological research is that it helps to identify variables which have not been previously acknowledged (Gaies, 1983). The fact that ethnography holistically describes behavior in relation to the whole system of which that behavior is a part (Firth, 1961) makes it

an approach ideally suited to gaining insight into such micro-contexts as teacher variables—experience, training, proficiency in the learners' L1—as found in such macro-contexts as administrative goals and their articulation, implementation and follow-up.

The present study draws upon both approaches. If much that is observed can indeed fall into predetermined categories, and as such be captured by a reliable, systematic interaction-analysis instrument, then employing such an instrument can free the researcher to spend more time observing the less structured aspects of the situation. The flexibility of the anthropological approach allows the researcher to wait until all the data have been collected before making a final determination as to the relative weight of the structured instrument. However, this study by no means purports to fulfill all the criteria for full-scale ethnographic research. Rather, it follows the typical approach of L2 researchers in seeking to describe and analyze specific areas of interaction (Chaudron, 1988), focusing on the role of classroom organization in student access to types of language input or practice rather than on individual language learning problems (Watson-Gegeo, 1988).

As at present there does not appear to be any reliable evaluative component for any of these settings, the study did not impose an "outcome" dimension but rather has concentrated upon "process," determining what actually goes on in the classrooms. A low-inference ethnographic approach was adopted, consisting of charting and coding classroom interaction by direct observation, as Rohlen did (1983), along with follow-up review of audio tapes of the observed classes and interviews of teachers and administrators. Further, as descriptive studies of classroom instruction do not seem to exist in the literature on Japanese elementary education, or even high school education (Rohlen, 1983), there is no tradition of allowing in an "outside" observer. It is hoped that the findings of the present study might serve as a baseline for further research.

While posing a number of explicit hypotheses, based on language acquisition theory and/or current classroom practice and verifiable by what is taken to be an objective observation and coding scheme, this study is largely guided by the implicit: the researcher's values, attitudes and assumptions pertaining to how well a social aim is translated into the social reality of the classroom through the agency of school administrators and classroom teachers. This focus harmonizes with the ethnographic perspective on language learning as one of language socialization rather than language acquisition (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). What performance objectives, if any, are there (Nunan, 1993)? Do these take into consideration the learners' backgrounds (age, level, L1)? It was hypothesized that:

1. The classes would be devoted entirely to listening and speaking. Understanding languages appears to be a necessary condition for acquiring language (Rost, 1990). For acquisition-oriented classrooms Ellis (1990) recommends large amounts of listening. It is widely assumed that the ability to communicate in a foreign language necessitates comprehending and speaking it, and that in natural acquisition speech precedes the ability to write. For the vast majority of Japanese pupils, initial exposure to spoken English comes in seventh grade, along with reading and writing. These elementary classes were perceived as providing pupils a "head start" with the spoken language, just as learners in natural settings have.
2. The curriculum would be devoted mainly to vocabulary plus greetings and other basic sociolinguistic formulae, reflecting the limited time available as well as the absolute-beginner level of the learners.
3. The material would be presented through immediate context. The learners are in a FL setting with virtually no opportunity to acquire L2 outside the classroom. This and the learners ages (9-12) indicated that contexts would have to be provided through readily accessible topics or objects.
4. The L1 would be used for classroom management. As absolute beginners, the learners would be unused to L2 as a means of communication and would possess near zero L2 vocabulary.
5. The interaction would be mainly whole class. Group work is an essential feature of elementary school education in Japan, at this level with 40 or more pupils per class. However, it is practically impossible to get L2 learners to stay in the target language when given group tasks.
6. Comprehension would be checked and output elicited through the use of display questions. As Long (1980) observed with typical English language instruction, it was expected that teacher questions designed to have only one acceptable answer would be common.
7. Games and other semi-pedagogic activities would be used at least half of class time in order to channel the learners' enthusiasm into motivation to use and thereby to acquire the target language.

Given the stated aim of fostering communication in the language, it was decided to use the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) scheme as the observation instrument, which, according to Allwright (1988), is a fully developed system dedicated to the communicative approach. Anticipating, however, that seldom, if ever, does communication attain "fully developed" status in a language classroom, the researcher made

certain modifications in the scheme in advance of the actual observation (see Appendix), and implemented others during the observation period.

Method

Subjects: The study was conducted with a total of 17 classes, from third grade to sixth, at the three different elementary schools. Each class contained about 40 pupils who were taught all subjects by their home room teacher, except for English which was provided once a week. This English instruction was offered voluntarily by the schools, as English is not compulsory until seventh grade. In accordance with Ministry of Education policy, there was a virtually even mix of girls and boys. The sixth-graders were also involved with preparations for competitive middle-school entrance examinations, which do not include English as a subject. Some characteristics of the schools and grades can be noted as follows:

School B: The program is for third to sixth grades. Each grade consisted of two classes of 41 students. School B's teaching objective was for students to acquire such communicative skills as greeting, requesting, apologizing, and responding. A test was administered at the end of each trimester. Team-teachers, a paired Japanese and native speaking teacher with licenses to teach English, were employed. The school has a language laboratory (LL) facility for its English program.

School C: The program at School C is for fourth to sixth grades. Each grade consisted of two classes of 42 students. The teaching objective was to accustom students to English sounds and the use of simple vocabulary, at least to the extent that they do not regard English speaking or an English speaker as a curiosity. There was no test. The teacher, who had an intermediate level of Japanese, was a native speaker with a teaching license.

School D: The program at School D is for third grade to fifth. The single class in each grade consisted of 42 students. The teaching objective was that students "get used to foreigners," and learn simple vocabulary and socially functional sentences. There was no test relating to the objectives. The teacher, sent by an outside agency, was a native speaker without a teaching license and with little Japanese language skill.

The Observation Instrument

As Malamah-Thomas (1988) points out, use of language is highly observable, whereas learning is not, and talking is often equated with teaching in the hundreds of existing classroom observation instruments,

all of which she states are essentially adaptations, extensions or simplifications of the Flanders (1970) categories of Teacher Talk, Pupil Talk, and Other (p. 20).

The observation system employed, COLT, was derived from a mode of communicative competence and a review of current issues in language teaching. Spada, Frohlich and Allen (1985) found reliability of the COLT observation scheme for capturing differences in the communicative orientation of programs investigated. The COLT scheme takes into account the nine considerations for interactional analysis set forth by Long (1980): recording procedure (by category/frequency), kind of items (high/low inference), number of categories, multiple coding (same event, multiple categories), real time, focus (e.g. pedagogic, discourse), source(s) of variables, unit of analysis, and purpose (teacher training, research, or both).

The COLT scheme, designed to elucidate certain moves—units of discourse, consists of two parts. Both parts were developed to analyze classroom interaction. Part A categories are derived primarily from pedagogical issues in the communicative language teaching literature, and describe classroom instruction in terms of the types of activities that take place. The five major parameters, Activity, Participant Organization, Content, Student Modality, and Materials, and their subsections, are designed to measure the extent to which an instructional treatment may be characterized as communicatively oriented; with the primary focus on speaking and listening. Part B reflects issues in first and second language acquisition research, and describes the verbal interactions which take place within activities. Because of factors affecting elementary learning environments in general, and the Japanese in particular, a number of adjustments were made to the observation instrument. Anticipating that, because of the students extremely limited ability, their immaturity, and the low-motivation EFL setting, the learners could hardly be expected to exert any control over topics, and that the teachers would present mainly vocabulary and short sentences, the researcher abandoned the categories of Topic Control and Other Topics in the area of Content in order to attend to Management (subsuming Procedure and Discipline) and Language (embracing Form, Function, Discourse, and Sociolinguistics). In Part A the Use of Materials category was dispensed with for similar reasons.

Numerous other adjustments were made during the course of the observations. The decision to omit almost all of Part B came when it became evident that there was virtually no pupil-to-pupil contribution to target language instruction. As there were almost no interactions be-

tween groups or individuals, inside or outside a group, the only usable category from Part B was the use of the L1. Therefore, only Part A and this sole category from Part B were employed.

Understandably Japanese was the language spoken for interactions between learners; procedural explanations by teachers were, as expected, in Japanese. Furthermore, at one school all were taught in a team-teaching setting; in the others, the homeroom teacher occasionally helped to maintain discipline while the native English speaker was teaching, but in general observed silently or was out of the room. These differences suggested need for additional categories, so the following were added: in the major category of Content-Teacher to Teacher Interaction in Activity; Procedure or Discipline by the Japanese teacher, Procedure in Japanese, and Discipline in Japanese by the native English speaking; in Student Modality-Learners' Interactions in Japanese (see Appendix).

Procedures

Observation for each class was conducted once for the entire 45-minute class period by the researcher, who sat in a corner in the back of the classroom. The researcher did not interact with the pupils or teacher at any time during the class, largely because of the possibility of both the Hawthorne effect, wherein the results of an investigation are more closely related to the pleasure subjects feel at being included, and the halo effect, which involves responding positively to a liked person (Brown, 1988). For each three seconds of real time, the researcher coded what was happening in the classroom into one or more categories contained in the modified observation instrument. The entire lesson was audio taped for later confirmation of the on-line coding. After each class, the researcher asked the teacher(s) for comments on points noted to inquire about, both for that class and previous classes observed.

In an ongoing effort to question and reevaluate the reliability (Nunan, 1992) of data which had been collected under the discipline of attending the three-second time frames, when necessary and possible the researcher checked the coded entries, drawing on the audio taped record and the teachers' recollections. Four educators active in ELT in Japan independently rated the coding scheme and categories employed as good.

Results and Discussion

Classroom Observation: The data were obtained by calculating the percentage of classroom time spent on activities and pertaining to the individual categories under each of the other four major headings. The primary category checked during an activity always received credit for the entire length of time that activity lasted. For example, during an activity in which the teacher and students were interacting meaningfully, the occasional choral repetition of a word or phrase would not be counted although it was coded. Thus, only those categories which marked primary features of an activity are presented in the following tables. The tables present the average percentage of observation time, coded for various categories, spent by school or by grade.

Participant Organization

Percentages were calculated for the following categories: Whole Class, Group Work, Individual Seat Work, and the combination of Group Work/Individual Work. Whole Class is further subdivided into teacher interacting with an individual student or with the entire class (T-S/C), students interacting with the class or with other individual students while one central activity is going on (S-S/C), and Choral Work. The mean percentage of interaction time is shown in Table 1, and the mean percentage of observed time by grade appears in Table 2.

A considerable amount of whole-class interaction, with the teacher addressing either the whole class or individual students, as well as a substantial amount of choral work, was expected. An additional as-

Table 1

Participant Organization — Whole Class
Mean Percentage of Observed Interaction Time by School

School	T-T	T-S/C	S-S/C	Choral	Group	Individual	Group/ Individual
B	4%	48%	2.2%	17.5%	5.8%	16%	6.8%
C	0%	51%	0%	26%	0.4%	23%	0%
D	0%	46%	0%	41%	0%	12%	0%

Note: T-T refers to interaction between teachers; T-S/C is between teacher or student/class; S-S/C is between students and class; Group/Individual is among group or combination of these.

Table 2

Participant Organization — Whole Class
Mean Percentage of Observed Interaction Time by Grade

Grade	T-T	T-S/C	S-S/C	Choral	Group	Individual	Group/ Individual
School B							
3	9%	57%	13%	27%	0%	0%	0%
4	0%	49%	28%	11%	18%	0%	20%
5	8%	35%	0%	15%	5%	29%	7%
6	4%	52%	0%	17%	0%	27%	0%
School C							
4	0%	39%	0%	34%	0%	27%	0%
5	0%	53%	0%	29%	0%	18%	0%
6	0%	62%	0%	15%	2%	22%	0%
School D							
3	0%	47%	0%	49%	0%	4%	0%
4	0%	46%	0%	39%	0%	15%	0%
5	0%	44%	0%	38%	0%	18%	0%

sumption was that instruction would center on vocabulary and a few structures, and to some extent employing realia.

The data supported these expectations to the extent that all the EFL programs were characterized by a considerable amount of whole-class interaction (see Tables 1 and 2). Briefly, the third grade at School B showed more whole-class interaction than other grades, with the fourth, fifth and sixth grades showing that some group, individual, or group/individual interaction was taking place during use of the Language Laboratory. At School C, all grades showed similar patterns, that is, input, oral practice, and reading or visual work. At School D, the pattern of interaction was clearer than at the other two schools, featuring mainly new input with some visual work and oral practice, primarily choral work, without any group activities.

Content: The Content parameter describes the subject matter of the activities, that is, what was being talked about, read, written about or listened to. These are as follows:

<i>Management</i>	<i>Other Topics</i>
Classroom procedures	Narrow range of reference
Disciplinary routines	Limited range of reference
	Broad range of reference
<i>Explicit Focus on Language</i>	<i>Topic Control</i>
Form	Control by teacher
Function	Control shared by teacher & student(s)
Discourse	Control by student
Sociolinguistics	

As expected, the range of Other Topics was narrow, and Topic Control was by the teacher. Percentages were calculated for amount of time spent on Management and Language by school (see Table 3). At schools B and D, English was primarily spoken for Procedure and Discipline; however, at School C primarily Japanese was spoken for these two subcategories.

Table 3

Percentage of Management Time & Language

<i>Table 3a: Percentage of Management</i>					
School	Procedure-E	Procedure-J	J-Teacher	Discipline-E	Discipline-J
B	48%	4%	0%	48%	0%
C	10%	24%	1%	6.5%	58%
D	48%	0%	4%	48%	0%

Note: E is English; J is Japanese.

<i>Table 3b: Percentage of Language</i>				
School	Form	Function	Discourse	Sociolinguistics
B	76%	19%	3%	2%
C	95%	5%	0%	0%
D	93%	7%	0%	0%

The subcategory Language shows that schools C and D focused primarily on form, consisting entirely of vocabulary with no grammar taught, and functions used in greetings as authentic interaction between the teachers and students. In School B substantial amounts of activities for form were seen, not only for vocabulary but also for such grammatical forms as third-person-singular -s. In addition, functions such as apologies and requests were practiced through classroom interaction and in

the language laboratory. The content of these activities was sometimes discourse or sociolinguistic features, or form with discourse and sociolinguistics. At School C, 58% of class time was devoted to management, Discipline in Japanese, and a further 24% in Japanese for Procedure, all by the native speaker of English. Schools B and D, however, were each able to limit the use of L1 in Management to 4%.

Student Modality: Student modality is defined by Spada et. al. (1985) as the particular skill or combination of skills involved in a classroom activity. The categories afford useful information about the amount of time devoted to the four skills; however, they provide no insight into how these skills are being developed or processed during the observation (Spada et al., 1985). As reported, the subcategory L1 was added as another parameter, in the hope of providing some insight into how students could followed the teachers and be remained involved without private talk with peers.

Table 4

Student Modality with L1

School	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Others	L1
B	45%	33%	0%	0%	13%	9%
C	32%	30%	7%	3%	11%	26%
D	37%	35%	0%	0%	6%	22%

As the data show, the more the teacher spoke L1, the more the students used L1. School C and D, 26% and 22% respectively, showed a much greater amount of student time in L1 than School B (9%). This may be attributed to the absence of testing in those two schools, the teacher's predominant use of L1 in School C, and the teacher's inability to keep the pupils from talking to one another at School D.

Materials and Source: In the final categories, differences among the schools in Type and Source of Materials are presented. Materials were classified as Text, Audio, or Visual. As students were taught mainly vocabulary and short sentences, Text use was minimal, and therefore the subdivision Text was not considered.

The second category in Materials refers to the origin and purpose of the teaching materials used. Pedagogic materials are those designed for

L2/FL teaching and learning. Non-Pedagogic are those originally developed for some other use and presented as is. Semi-Pedagogic refers to non-pedagogic or authentic materials adapted for instructional purposes.

Table 5

Type of Materials

School	Audio	Visual	Pedagogic	Semi-Pedagogic	Non-Pedagogic
B	11%	20%	12.5%	88%	19%
C	0%	36%	55%	1.3%	1.3%
D	0%	47%	45%	8%	0%

Table 5 shows the mean percentage of Type of Materials and source of Materials by school. C and D schools used text materials but School B did not; in all schools visual materials predominate. However, an even more telling difference was found among the schools. Rather than use a textbook, the teachers at School B made their own original materials, drawing upon such authentic sources as "Sesame Street," realia, large flash cards, VTR, and utilizing a language laboratory. The ratio of audio to visual materials at School B was 35/65; at School C and D all materials were visual.

Table 6

Source of Materials

School	Pedagogic	Semi-Pedagogic	Non-Pedagogic
B	18%	55%	27%
C	85%	13%	2%
D	85%	15%	0%

The second category in Materials, Source, refers to the origin and purpose of the teaching materials. The data in Table 6 show that again there is a difference among the schools. Schools C and D used primarily pedagogic materials; published textbooks with pictures of vocabulary words for students to color. The semi-pedagogic materials at School B included a hand-made phonics board with eye-catching pictures, flash-cards for SVO structure, color cards for abstract vocabulary, VTR mate-

rials, and hand-made dolls. Schools C and D used ordinary published textbooks which show pictures to illustrate vocabulary words; the students were to color these.

Allocation of Time: The teachers at School B spent an average of 5.7 minutes on each activity and provided an average of 6.6 activities per lesson. At School C, the teacher averaged 7 minutes for each activity, with an average of 6 per lesson. At School D, the teacher spent 6.8 minutes on each activity, also averaging 6 per lesson. The teacher at C school used the least time for introduction, explanation or other actions unrelated to lessons, spending 42 minutes on actual activities during each 45-minute lesson. The teacher at School D spent 40.8 minutes on activities, although the number of the activities was the same as at School C. The teachers at School B spent 37.6 minutes on activities, allowing more than 7 minutes for greetings, introductions and explanations.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with each principal and classroom teacher. Unlike the post-class coding confirmation sessions mentioned above, these focused on the overall rationale and objectives of the ELT program.

School B: The native speaker teacher insisted that she wanted the students to be comfortable within an English environment and enjoy learning English; the main emphasis would be, therefore, on listening to and understanding English while helping broaden their schematic knowledge; she also hoped that students would be able to use appropriate English in context. The Japanese teacher of English said that the primary objective for teaching English was to enable students to use and function in English, and that to evaluate how well this objective is being fulfilled, tests were conducted. "Grade-school kids are more quick to learn English than older pupils. Somehow, unlike, say, high school students I have taught, they do not adopt a negative attitude if they don't catch on right away." The principal, while expressing satisfaction with the program, voiced the need to keep improving it, and to expand to the lower grades. Out of an enrollment of approximately 480, there are about 100 students who are returnees; the Japanese teacher believes that their performance helps motivate their classmates, and reported that students have become more motivated since the arrival of the native speaking teacher.

School C: The native speaking teacher is apparently unsatisfied since her comments were mostly negative: she said she did not have enough

time to teach because the classes were often canceled; the school requires use of a textbook, although she does not like to use one; the school does not assess the English classes; there are perceptible differences in attitude and motivation, which she attributes to differences in class management by individual Japanese teachers; the Japanese teachers are often "not cooperative." (While the observation was being carried out, some Japanese teachers, mostly male, cooperated by helping to keep order by giving hand signals and offering verbal support, but others did not. They sat marking papers or left the room.)

The principal commented, "The English class itself is an extra class for students and the school provides the class for them to broaden their interest; therefore, a test is not necessary. Just as anywhere else in Japan, the higher the school grade, the less motivation for learning English students have because English is not a target subject for entrance examinations for junior high school." However, the principal voiced the belief that to learn English from a native speaking teacher would be helpful for enabling students to gain an "internationalized sense and understanding." (When asked, he did not explain what he meant by internationalization.) Only two returnees are accepted for each grade.

School D. The native speaking teacher reported that she had recently arrived in Japan and was contracted out to the school by an agency which told her that the teaching objective was to cover the textbook. The agency supplied a teacher's manual for her to follow. She stated that this was all she felt capable of doing. This teacher had learners repeat mechanically, and often seemed like a "shouting machine" when the room was noisy. The principal commented that the board of trustees had recommended English classes be offered in order for students to "have an internationalized mind and sense."

Conclusions

Although L2 listening and speaking combined took up 62% and 72% of class time at schools C and D respectively (See table 4, Student Modality), such activities as coloring and drawing seemed unchallenging; L2-unrelated pupil-pupil talk led in turn to the teacher's procedural or disciplinary use of the L1, all of which seemed to interfere with rather than to focus on the communicative use of the target language. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was not supported. Neither, at schools C or D, was hypothesis 7. Considering all the aural-oral activity going on, surprisingly little time was devoted to games or other semi-pedagogic activities. However, at School B almost all the class time was spent on both games and non-pedagogic

activities. The teachers at schools C and D, instead of giving pupils activities, introduced words and sentences in a lecture style. Then, they asked the pupils to repeat this new input, and went on to drill. It seems clear from this procedure that pupils were not given a chance to implement and explore learning strategies. They were expected to repeat what they were hearing or color what they were looking at.

Moreover, individuals, even where given a chance to answer the teacher, invariably chose to consult with their peers—in L1. Therefore, the pupils at schools C and D were not afforded opportunities to build intentionally and sequentially, through trial and error, learning strategies, metacognition, cognition or social elements (Bruner and Haste, 1987).

The findings consistently supported hypothesis 2: what was presented was mainly vocabulary and formulae. As question forms were not taught, the interaction was one-way, from teachers; the focus was on the forms alone rather than on form and meaning, so the process by which learners derive meaning and make it their own (Prabhu, 1987) was neglected.

The remaining hypotheses were also supported, with School B generally providing an exception. The context in all settings observed was immediate, but at School B hand-made props and realia were employed, enriching the context. Only a textbook and some handouts were used at schools C and D. The difference in materials prepared was immense; learners seemed to feel closer to the hand-made ones, which could be expected to result not only in their paying more attention in class (Prabhu, 1987), but also in easier internalization of input. Morgan (1993) suggests that "Where a message is too pre-packaged and securely and expertly delivered, perhaps it is too easily heard and dismissed rather than being internalized" (p. 73).

In support of hypothesis 4, it was found that L1 was used for classroom management, but the quantity and quality, when and what for and by whom, of L1 use varied. The use of L1 for Discipline not only means less input or listening practice in the target language, but also serves to encourage less attention to content, which would relate to less motivation (Ellis, 1990). Some students, the high input generators, are actively involved and, like a child, cause input to be directed at them by calling out or answering out of turn. Still other students, the low input generators, sit quietly but rarely and in some extreme cases never participate unless specifically asked to do so (Seliger, 1977, p. 26-7).

Hypothesis 5 was supported. More than half of the interaction was between teacher and whole class, strictly speaking between those pupils who were paying attention to the teacher or to classmates respond-

ing to one another rather than privately. This consisted of either the teacher addressing the pupils or the pupils answering in chorus—except at School B. Voluntary participation in class, related positively with pupils' motivation (Chaudron, 1988), was seen only at School B. The team teaching at School B gave examples of input through teacher-to-teacher interaction. Explanations in L1 by the Japanese teacher came only after pre-class discussion when he judged that the input to be given by the native speaking teacher was potentially incomprehensible. This helped pupils to become input generators, in accordance with the school's teaching policy. At schools C and D there appeared to be no notion of the value of getting learners to generate input.

Hypothesis 6 was consistently supported. At School B the teachers used a lot of horizontal repetitions in display forms of sentences and questions in order to elicit certain words/sentences from pupils:

Teacher: This is a yellow circle. That is [.....]?

Pupil : That is [a blue circle].

At School C the teacher checked learners' comprehension through display questions, as well as having them color the target words. Although display questions tend to produce only short answers which may result in less sense of communicative purpose and less motivational drive for using the target language (Chaudron, 1988), they were used primarily in drills to check comprehension and output. At all the schools, teachers copiously used display questions themselves, yet none taught the question forms to enable learners to ascertain the meaning.

Based on the desiderata set forth by Ellis (1985) the teachers at School B can be considered to be practitioners of the "learning to use English" version of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as they provided activities which simulated spoken language use. Their counterparts at schools C and D appeared to be attempting the "use English to learn it" version. However, having pupils repeat variants of "this is a triangle" hardly appears communicative, and arguably violates the "use English to learn it" principle that input needs to model language that the learners are to acquire.

The withholding of reading and writing, along with the sparseness of the language data (vocabulary, formulae) presented, was in accordance with the minimize-input, maximize-practice principle (Paul, 1992) advocated for the early stages of communicative learning. However, this is not like the way one learns L1, going through errors, trials, and strat-

egy building in stages which are intentional and sequential (Bruner and Haste, 1987). To unnecessarily shield young learners from such trials—which to them need not be tribulations—is not only to handicap them but is also a waste of the opportunities afforded by the critical period (Lenneberg, 1967), during which it is believed that learning an L2 with L1 methods may enable one to achieve native-like competence. Withholding reading and writing may well be cast in a negative light by empirical research showing that, contrary to the usual oral-skills-first dictum in L2 learning, students from the kanji countries (i.e., where Chinese characters are employed in the L1) tend to learn more quickly by writing (Ellis, 1990).

Further, and by no means least, contributing to the impoverishment of the input was the use of the L1 for class management at schools C and D. To varying degrees, the classroom teachers, whether aware of it or not, seem to be following a product-oriented syllabus, although at School B pupils seem to be making progressive gains in skills for handling information and strategies for going through interactions and procedures which are characteristic of a process-oriented syllabus (Nunan, 1988).

What was observed at all three schools reflects planned Ministry of Education reforms, which, according to Juppe (1993), have been delivered nationwide and are up to individual private schools to implement. Given the youth of the learners and the still evolving conception of what using a foreign language is all about, the instruction, of necessity, fell far short of the “strong” version of communicative language teaching: 100 percent of class in the L2.

The statements of aims by the principals, together with the respective criteria for teacher selection, training and assignment, reveal naive beliefs about communication. These appear to include the uncritical perception of (L2) native speakers as founts of communicative competence and of dedicated team-teacher pairs as formulators of valid, attainable goals, such as those found at School B. While Smith (1993) finds potential value in contextualized explorations being made by teams such as that observed at School B, the elementary schools observed have no evident feedback mechanism for the modification of goals and strategies.

Where goals are not clear, teaching (including methods and testing), choosing materials, and teacher training are all less effective. Individual teachers, no matter how well educated, experienced, and personable, suffer in the absence of clear goals. Some may impose their own, which may not necessarily harmonize with their learners’ best interests; others may tolerate working with ad hoc day-to-day or even moment-to-moment goals. In either case the learners may well be wondering where it will all lead to.

The inconsistency of teaching goals, even of such broadly based objectives as those outlined above, may well betray an uneasiness as to the extent to which the tenets of CLT are valid for Japanese learners. Too often teaching appears only to serve the needs of teachers and institutions, as borne out by the frequent scene of learners talking in the L1, with the teacher switching from the L2 to the L1 to maintain discipline—as is abundantly evident in the present study. Further, the lockstep context maintained, especially at schools C and D, seems to indicate that the parties involved are indiscriminately using L2 and L1. What is needed for improvement is new perceptions of L2 teaching and learning, perceptions that arise out of a firmer grounding in L2 acquisition, particularly as undertaken by Japanese-L1 learners.

The present study is a private, not an institutional, undertaking. The researcher's access to the settings and persons involved "was entirely dependent on the goodwill and hospitality of teachers and administrators" (Rohlen, 1983, p. x). Unlike much of the Western world, involvement of the community in instruction is almost non-existent in Japan. Even in grade school, pupils are preoccupied with advancing up the ladder to "better" schools and have no call to empathize with the presence, let alone the needs, of anyone outside their circle of family, teachers, and peers. The host schools trusted the researcher, after (a) having been appropriately introduced, to enter their premises, and (b) to complete the on-site labors as independently and unobtrusively as possible. None of the schools were a direct "stakeholder" in the research findings. This is not to say that the researcher was operating in a vacuum of detached unconcern. The study was conducted to gather observations for use in the training of future teachers, as well as data to serve as a base for further research.

As private institutions which, over years and even decades, have voluntarily offered English, the elementary schools investigated in the present study can not be taken as typical. However, unless such basics as curriculum, class size, teacher qualifications and behavior, and age of initial L2 instruction undergo substantial change, it is expected that replication of the study will yield similar findings. Future researchers might consider making "stakeholders" out of the school personnel and even the pupils by drawing their attention to such variables as how much of the L2 is being taught and learned, how often both teachers and pupils are uttering the L2 communicatively and more.

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