

English as a Co-Language: Perspectives by the Foreign Language Learner

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Abstract

This research examines the language learning attitudes of English at three universities in one Japanese prefecture. All four universities have different requirements for the amount of English coursework necessary to earn an undergraduate degree. The purpose was to investigate whether attitudes about English might have changed today compared to a decade and a half ago, when then Prime Minister, Keizo Obuchi was objurgated for proposing that English be a second official language in Japan. Consequently, it compares the cross-disciplinary attitudes of 315 students and elicited questions about the role of English in Japan including whether or not English should become an official language. Based on percentage positive response ratings, the results showed that students believe English education would increase their chances of finding a good job. Students also favor making English compulsory in Japan. However, many of the respondents were dissatisfied with their level of English proficiency despite a desire to learn the language. Paradoxically, students disfavor changes to the foreign language curriculum, and the vast majority oppose adopting English as a co-language in Japan.

Keywords: English attitudes, English as official language, language policy, university students

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Introduction

For a country known for institutional rigidity and its reluctance to change, few could have predicted the late Prime Minister's 21st-century vision for Japan. In 1999, Keizo Obuchi recommended that English be adopted as a second official language as Japan transitions into the next 21st century.

That never developed, but Obuchi's vision resuscitated the debate about the role of English in his country. A parents' only option, at that time, was to send their child to an eikawa or a privately operated English conversation school. As a consequence, public schools began introducing English education. In 2002, Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) established Eigo ga tsukaeru Nihonjin (Japanese with English abilities), a strategy to improve oral communication ability of students. MEXT set goals for students to reach 550 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and for adults to score 730 on the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) (Wakita, 2013). With scores far below expectations, additional changes were to come in 2011. English would become compulsory beginning in grade five (Wakita, et al, 2013).

Despite students receiving eight years of English education after completing high school, TOEFL iBT scores still rank among the lowest compared to other Asian countries. According to ets.org, Japan only surpassed Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Laos in overall scores in 2014 (ets.org, 2014).

Fifteen years after the Prime Minister's goals for Japan, have attitudes remained unyielding about adopting English as a second official language? This research seeks to determine the learning attitudes of English from the perspective of students from four separate universities that offer undergraduate degrees in various disciplines to gather an accurate sampling of English attitudes across disciplines.

Literature Review

Teach the Japanese to read and speak English or face continued economic stagnation and be marginalized in this global economy. That was the conclusion made by the late Prime Minister of Japan, Keizo Obuchi in 1999. Others have warned without a solid perspicacity of English, Japanese citizens will lack the ability to digest the latest technological advances around the world nor will they be able to effectively communicate their advances.

Despite these dire prognostications, both the political and educational establishment have been largely unsuccessful in improving the oral proficiency skills of Japanese citizens, a goal established by MEXT in 2002. The government introduced Eigo ga tsukaeru Nihonjin (Japanese with English abilities) to improve the speaking skills of Japanese. However, it lacked the commitment, avoiding the teaching of English as a required subject in the elementary school curriculum. Japan was also unprepared to fund such a program with well-trained teachers (Wakita, 2013). Additional changes took place in 2011 when the Ministry of Education made English compulsory in the 5th grade with 35 teaching hours to be set aside per academic year (Wakita, et al, 2013).

The focus for all public fifth and sixth graders (10 and 11-year-olds) was on Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS), with Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) to be taught in Junior High School (JHS) and in Senior High School (SHS). In 2013, SHS saw additional revisions as English I & II and Oral Communication I & II were replaced by Communication English I-III, classes aimed at fostering CALP integrated language skills (Mondejar, Laurier, Valdivia, Mboutsiadis, Sanchez, 2012).

These changes have done little to meet the goals set by MEXT, a goal to have citizens with a “working knowledge” of English. It can be argued that one reason they have difficulty mastering English is due to the habitual use of the learning strategy known as yakudoku. With yakudoku, teachers explain the meaning of translations in Japanese. Students are then given translation options and correct their work. Parsing of sentences and reordering them into the Japanese language system may help in the development of reading. However, as a foreign language teaching concept, yakudoku is not a technique based in pedagogy (Richards & Rogers, 2011).

Another reason Japan lags behind is because English is taught with "resistance" on the part of the public in devoting efforts to fund English education (Sakamoto, 2012). Japan lacks adequate teacher training programs and certification for English language teaching. Additionally, immersion programs are virtually non-existent in a homogenous country that requires an immersive bilingual teaching and learning environment (Sakamoto, et al, 2012).

Working conditions for teachers have also had a tremendous, negative impact on English education practices. As explained by O'Donnell (2005), teachers are burdened with extra-curricular workload and administrative duties limiting the time allotted for lesson planning and communicative methodologies in the classroom. There also exists a disproportionate ratio between teacher and student and lack of curricular time, resulting from the need to prepare students for their national entrance examinations known as *juken* (Cook, 2009). Many Japanese students study English only to pass this high-stakes examination (Butler & Iino, 2005). The result, teachers compromise their educational beliefs and conform to the accepted teaching approach that best prepares students for the success of this exam (Underwood, 2010).

Higher education is also attempting to adapt as schools are changing its education paradigm by teaching coursework in English. International Christian University (ICU) was recently mired in curricular reform leading to the change of its English program from ELP or English Language Program to ELA or English for Liberal Arts. ELA classes are taught in English in which about 18-percent come from overseas.

Akita International University (AIU) is the only higher education institute in Japan in which all degree-seeking coursework is taught in English. The school is modeled on an American liberal arts program, in which about half the faculty come from overseas. In an attempt to immerse Japanese students in an English-speaking environment, about 25-percent attend AIU on an exchange program. Degree-seeking students at AIU are also required to study one year abroad at one of its 174 partner universities all throughout the world.

Most recently, Yamanashi Gakuin University became the latest liberal arts school in Japan to gain approval from the Ministry of Education to teach coursework in English. It launched its liberal arts department in spring 2015. Degree-seeking students, much like AIU, must also study

one year abroad at one of its partner universities. Additionally, 85-percent of its faculty are non-Japanese, the highest foreign faculty ratio in Japan.

Changes are slowly taking place in the corporate sector as well. In the summer of 2010, Rakuten, an online shopping marketplace, and Fast Retailing (UNIQLO), a clothing retail company, have made English the company's official language (Iino, M., n.d.). Bridgestone, the Tokyo-based tire company, also adopted English as its official language in 2013 telling its employees English proficiency will be necessary if Bridgestone employees want to move up the corporate ladder (Japan Daily Press, Oct. 21, 2013).

In spite of these changes, TOEFL iBT scores remain abysmal as the country ranks near the bottom among Asian countries. In 2000, Japan and South Korea had the lowest overall TOEFL scores at 498 (ets.org, 2000). In 2014, scores in Japan ranked far below its neighboring countries of Taiwan, China, and South Korea (ets.org, 2014).

South Korea has subsequently emphasized the placing of native speakers of English in both primary and secondary schools (Seongja, 2008). It also rewards its citizens proficient at English as they play an important role in society. They also gain an economic advantage as one component to getting promoted in the workforce is determined by the employee's ability to speak English well (Seo, 2010). This "English Fever" mentality has helped South Korea since 2014 results show the country tied for sixth highest in TOEFL iBT scores. Among 35 Asian countries, Japan ranked 32nd out of 35 countries (ets.org, 2014).

It's no wonder why contentious debates remain about where English belongs in Japanese education. Japanese citizens understand English is the international language of commerce, travel, and education (Baskin & Shitai, 1996). Many of them attend jukus, yobikos, and eikaiwas, various types of supplementary and private language schools in Japan as they want to interact in this world. Japan also understands the development of English is necessary to strengthen the nation's economic competitiveness (Hirt, 2009).

Hence, fifteen years after Obuchi's educational vision for Japan, the country continues to berate itself as linguistic dunces. The purpose of this research is to examine the following attitudes of young adults: 1) Are they motivated to learn English; 2) Are they happy with the foreign language education received; 3) Do they believe English benefits their future goals 4) Are changes needed to improve the oral proficiency of Japanese citizens; 5) Do they believe, à la Obuchi, that English should become a second official language.

Participants

Students at four universities that offer undergraduate degrees in the Akita Prefecture were surveyed in spring 2015 as shown in Figure 1.

Akita Prefectural University	Prefectural University Akita City, Japan
Akita University	National University Akita City, Japan
Akita International University	Prefectural University Akita, Japan
Akita University of Art	Public University, Akita Japan

Figure 1

A cross-sectional survey was conducted in an attempt to get an accurate sampling as the research attempted to get results from students seeking degrees from a variety of disciplines as shown below:

- Akita International University (AIU) – Modeled on American liberal arts colleges, AIU is a public, prefectural university where all degree-seeking course is taught in English.
- Akita Prefectural University (APU) – APU is a prefectural university offering degrees in Systems Science and Technology and Biological and Environmental Science. Twelve credits of English courses out of 124 must be taken to earn an undergraduate degree.
- Akita University (AU) - AU is a national university initially offering degrees in Liberal Arts and Sciences when first established in 1949. The university has since established a Department of Education, a School of Medicine, and Engineering. Students are required to take an English course in the first three semesters at AU.
- Akita University of Art (AUA) – Once a two-year college, Akita University of Art became a four-year university in April 2013. Students are required to take one 3-credit English course at AUA.

Twelve quantitative questions were asked on a five-point scale (5-Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree) in an attempt to examine the learning attitudes and perceptions about English as shown in Appendix A. Mode average calculations were conducted. Even though this calculation is not capable of further mathematical treatment, it was considered for the purpose of the discrete frequency distribution.

All of the questions were written in both English and Japanese. Figure 2 shows the number of respondents from each university.

University:	Akita Prefectural University	Akita University	Akita International University	Akita University of Art
Total:	66	80	55	104

Figure 2

Results

As aforementioned, the questionnaire was given in spring 2015 to students from four universities with different educational disciplines in the Akita Prefecture in Japan. For the first question, the researcher sought to determine whether or not English should be a compulsory subject in Japan. An overwhelming majority of students at Akita Prefectural University believes English should be mandatory in schools as 52 of the 66 students surveyed either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with this question.

At Akita University, 45 out of 80 students surveyed “Agree” English should be compulsory. Twenty out of the 80 students responded they "Strongly Agree" with this question. Only seven percent of respondents either “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that English should be mandatory in schools.

Nearly half the students (47.27%) at Akita International University “Strongly Agree” English should be compulsory in Japan. This response was no surprise since all degree-seeking coursework is taught in English at AIU. Seventeen out of the 55 students (30.9%) surveyed “Agree” English should be compulsory. No student answered “Strongly Disagree” and only three percent “Disagree”.

Eighty-one percent of students at Akita University of Art (AUA) either “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” English should be compulsory in Japan. Only a fraction of students surveyed felt it should not be a required subject.

Table 1. English should be compulsory in Japan

APU	AU	AIU	AUA
SA: 37.87%	SA: 25%	SA: 47.27%	SA: 36.5%
A: 39.39%	A: 56.25%	A: 30.9%	A: 45.19
N: 16.66%	N: 15%	N: 21.8%	N: 15.3%
D: 4%	D: 3%	D: 0%	D: 3%
SD: 3%	SD: 0%	SD: 0%	SD: 0%

Table 2 shows the results of question number five, asking participants to answer if they need English for their future goals. At APU, 43.9-percent or 29 out of the 66 respondents "Agree" they need English for their future goals. This result is a bit surprising because students at APU seek degrees in the field of natural sciences like Machine Engineering and Systems Engineering.

At AU, 37 out of the 80 students also surveyed "Agree" English is necessary for their future. Nearly half of respondents at AU "Agree" English is necessary for their future. The second most popular response was "Neutral" as 31-percent of students did not have strong feelings about the role of English and how its impact on their future. All but three students at AU "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" English is necessary for their future.

At AIU, 63-percent "Strongly Agree" with this question while another 29-percent "Agree." Only seven percent of those surveyed answered "Neutral" while no one believed learning English would not be helpful for their future.

Nearly 40-percent of students at AUA seemed uncertain about whether English would impact their future. However, more than half believe it will have a positive effect as 33-percent answered they "Agree" and 19-percent "Strongly Agree."

Table 2. I need English for my future goals.

APU	AU	AIU	AUA
SA: 24.24%	SA: 15%	SA: 63.63%	SA: 19.2%
A: 43.9%	A: 46.25%	A: 29%	A: 32.69%
N: 28.78%	N: 31.25%	N: 7%	N: 39.4
D: 3%	D: 6%	D: 0%	D: 8%
SD: 1%	SD: 1%	SD: 0%	SD: 1%

Table 3 sought to find out if learning to speak English would help them find a better job. Nearly 58-percent of students "Strongly Agree" with this question while nearly 40-percent of students "Agree." No one answered "Strongly Disagree" and only a small fraction chose either "Neutral" or "Disagree."

Almost 44-percent of students at AU "Agree" learning English will help their chances of finding a good job once they graduate from college. The second most popular response was "Strongly Agree" as 27 out of the 80 students (33.75%) chose this answer. No one surveyed strongly disagreed, and only two out of the 80 respondents believe English will not help them find a better job.

At AIU, about three out of every four students either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" English will help them obtain a better job. Twenty-two percent answered "Neutral" while only one student strongly disagrees learning English will be helpful for that individual.

An equal number of students at AUA answered they “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” English will help them find a better job as shown in Table 3. Only three students out of the 104 surveyed believe English would not be helpful in obtaining a better career

Table 3. If I learn to speak English, it will help me get a good job

APU	AU	AIU	AUA
SA: 57.57%	SA: 33.75%	SA: 38.18%	SA: 40.3
A: 39.39%	A: 43.75%	A: 38.18%	A: 40.3
N: 1%	N: 18.75%	N: 21.8%	N: 16.3%
D: 3%	D: 3%	D: 0%	D: 3%
SD: 0%	SD: 0%	SD: 1%	SD: 0%

Question 8 attempted to determine respondents' attitudes about their motivation to learn English as shown in Table 4. In Japan, study after study usually confirms apathy among students about learning a foreign language. As a faculty member at the university level in Japan, this researcher has had his share of visits to Japanese high schools as a guest lecturer. Disinterest permeates the classroom amid complaints ranging from the difficulty in learning a new language to being given few opportunities to practice speaking since classes are often teacher-fronted. Despite these frequent complaints, the results were relatively positive. Many APU students admit to having a desire to learn English. About 12-percent “Strongly Agree” and nearly 43-percent “Agree.” Seven percent feel strong they are not motivated to learn English while about 14-percent “Disagree.”

The numbers were much higher at AIU. Sixty-percent “Strongly Agree” they are motivated to learn English and nearly 35-percent “Agree.” These results are not surprising since it was previously mentioned that AIU teaches all coursework in English. No student admitted they were not motivated to learn.

At AU, only a small fraction (6%) of students appear to have a strong desire to learn English. However, almost one-third of students (30%) admits they have a desire to learn. Nearly 39-percent felt indifferent about learning English while 18 students out of 80 (22.5%) agree they are not motivated to learn.

AUA students also responded favorably about their motivation to learn English. Forty-percent either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with this question. However, 37.5-percent seemed indifferent about learning the language while 19-percent answered they were not motivated to learn. One student felt strong disinterest to learn English.

Table 4. I am motivated to learn English

APU	AU	AIU	AUA
SA: 12.12%	SA: 6%	SA: 60%	SA: 10%
A: 42.8%	A: 30%	A: 34.54%	A: 29.8%
N: 27.27%	N: 38.75%	N: 5%	N: 37.5%
D: 13.6%	D: 22.5%	D: 0%	D: 19.2%
SD: 7%	SD: 3%	SD: 0%	SD: 1%

Despite receiving eight years of English after finishing high school, there appears to be dissatisfaction about their English competency. Table 5 explores this question.

Table 5. I am satisfied with my level of English proficiency with the education I received

APU	AU	AIU	AUA
SA: 3%	SA: 0%	SA: 0%	SA: 1%
A: 4%	A: 7%	A: 9%	A: 11.5%
N: 30.03%	N: 36.25%	N: 23.6%	N: 23%
D: 43.9%	D: 42.5%	D: 38.18%	D: 47.11
SD: 18.1%	SD: 13.75%	SD: 29%	SD: 17.3%

Almost 44% of APU students are not satisfied with the education they received in English. Additionally, 18-percent feel strong about their displeasure in how English is taught in Japan. The numbers are similar at AU as 42.5% “Disagree” with how English is taught in Japan. Thirty-eight percent feel the same at AIU and 29-percent of those surveyed also “Strongly Disagree” (29%) with how English is taught in Japan. What might be most alarming is the fact that not a single student felt strongly that English is taught well in Japan from respondents at Akita University and Akita International University, and only a fraction responded positively from APU. Also, only 11 out of the 201 students surveyed “Agree” they are satisfied with how English is taught in Japan. At AUA, the numbers were similar. Sixty-five percent of students were not happy with their level of English proficiency. Only about 12-percent answered positively about their English ability.

Students appear to be rigid about significant changes to its language policy even though many are unhappy about their competency. Table 6 asked the respondents’ level of satisfaction when it comes to language policies in Japan.

Only nine percent of students strongly agreed at APU, five-percent of students concurred at AU, and no student at AIU strongly agreed they were satisfied with the language policies of English education in Japan. However, 21-percent surveyed at APU “Agree” with the policies in Japan while about one-third of respondents from AU “Agree”. Still, not one respondent from AIU agrees with the language policies outlined in Japan. In fact, more than one-third (34.54%) “Strongly Disagree” with the education policies of English in Japan while 56-percent responded they “Disagree.” Only about 21-percent of those surveyed at AUA were happy with the foreign language policies in Japan. About 43-percent of students felt negative about how English is taught while 37.5-percent appeared neutral.

Table 6. I am satisfied with the language policies of English education in Japan

APU	AU	AIU	AUA
SA: 9%	SA: 5%	SA: 0%	SA: 5%
A: 21.21%	A: 33.75%	A: 0%	A: 16.3%
N: 42.42%	N: 46.25%	N: 9%	N: 37.5%
D: 24.24%	D: 18.75%	D: 56.36%	D: 34.6%
SD: 7%5	SD: 1%	SD: 34.54%	SD: 8%

Table 7. Changes should be made in education to make Japanese fluent in English

APU	AU	AIU	AUA
SA: 15.15%	SA: 6%	SA: 18.18%	SA: 16.19%
A: 30.3%	A: 20%	A: 12.7%	A: 26.66%
N: 42.42%	N: 46.25%	N: 29.09%	N: 41.19%
D: 10.66%	D: 21.25%	D: 30.9%	D: 13.33%
SD: 3%	SD: 6%	SD: 7%	SD: 1.9%

Because 64.1% either “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” about being satisfied with their English ability and because only 22.9% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the foreign language policies in Japan, Question 10 sought to find out if education policies need to be changed in order to make Japanese fluent in English.

Three out of the four schools chose “neutral” as the most popular answer (APU: 42.42%; AU: 46.25%; AIU: 29.09%; AUA 41.19%) as shown in Table 7. AIU was the only school at 29.09% that did not choose “neutral” as the most popular answer. Instead, “Disagree” was the most popular response at 30.9%. More students favored changes than those who oppose it. Out of everyone surveyed 103 either answered they “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with changes to make Japanese students bilingual versus 69 students who chose either “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” to changes in education in an attempt to make Japanese bilingual.

Table 8. English should become an official language in Japan

APU	AU	AIU	AUA
SA: 6%	SA: 2.5%	SA: 3%	SA: 2%
A: 12.12%	A: 7.5%	A: 0%	A: 1%
N: 31.3%	N: 20%	N: 7%	N: 25%
D: 16.66%	D: 37.5	D: 25.45%	D: 25%
SD: 34.33%	SD: 32.5%	SD: 63.63%	SD: 48.2%

Because a high percentage of Japanese students in the Akita Prefecture are unhappy about their level of English proficiency, this research also hoped to determine if they felt changes were needed on a national scale by asking the question if it was time for English to become an official language in Japan as seen above in Table 8.

Overwhelmingly, each school did not “Strongly Agree” as only six-percent marked “SA” from APU, 2.5-percent from AU, and three-percent from AIU. Many APU students appeared indifferent about this question as 31-percent chose "Neutral" but 34-percent "Strongly Disagree" about making English an official language. Many AU students also felt strong (32.5%) that

English should not be an official language in Japan. However, most of the students surveyed at AU "Disagree" (37.5%) that English does not belong to Japan as an official language.

The numbers were even higher at AIU. Sixty-three percent of students surveyed believed that adopting English as a co-language in Japan was a terrible idea while 25-percent also disagreed.

Nearly three out of four either "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" about making English a co-language in Japan among those surveyed at AUA. Only three percent of students favored adopting English as an official language.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine the perspective of the foreign language learner about English and its role in Japan. It also sought to find out if their attitudes aligned with the vision envisioned by their late Prime Minister, Keizo Obuchi from a decade and a half ago when he proposed making English a second official language.

To summarize, 83-percent of those surveyed "agree" or "strongly agree" that English should be compulsory in Japan. Eight-five percent "agree" or "strongly agree" English proficiency would help them find a better job. Sixty-two percent answered they "agree" or "strongly agree" English is important in their life. Additionally, more than half say they are motivated or strongly motivated (53.4%) to learn English.

In contrast, 64-percent "disagree" or "strongly disagree" about the happiness of their level of English proficiency. Also, only 23-percent "agree" or "strongly agree" with the foreign language policies in Japan. Despite this, only 22.5 percent of participants answered they "agree" or "strongly agree" with curricular reform. This paradox is an example of educational incongruence taking place in Japan. In other words, Japanese education is disconnected to the learning of students as it is failing to meet the personal and societal needs of its country.

Non-native language teachers known as Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) feel anxiety teaching the target language due to insecurities about their English ability. One study shows that 77-percent of Japanese teachers of English self-admitted they were anxious about their level of English proficiency. Ninety-percent of those surveyed answered they lacked the confidence to teach English in English (Machida, 2011). It results in teachers avoiding the use of the target language, many of whom lack the formal classroom teaching experience. Teachers end up teaching to their comfort by emphasizing reading and writing while avoiding the other two learning domains.

Krashen (1987) argues effective teachers develop students' self-efficacy, decrease their anxiety, and promote motivation-enhancing attributions. In contrast, ESL teachers with high stress cause more problems in learning such as a student's self-confidence, motivation, self-esteem, and risk-taking ability.

In conclusion, Japanese students understand what's good for them. They know that speaking and listening should be emphasized in the classroom. Their irresolute attitude about education

reform stems from the teacher failing to take action research since they lack the confidence and the know-how in creating a speaking environment in the classroom. Because the teacher is unwilling to take on this challenge, the student lacks the desire as well.

As for the last question about adopting English as a co-language, there was strong opposition to this idea as only eight-percent “agree” or “strongly agree” to a co-language while 71-percent answered they “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with this idea.

Perhaps a rebirth of nationalism is taking shape in Japan. Not the kind that should be a threat or feared like during World War II. The type of postwar nationalism gripping Japan is “sociocultural”, the sharing of similar social values and behavioral norms, and especially the ability to communicate (Ishibashi, 1997). The political climate is nationalistic as outside forces are always reminding Japan what it’s doing wrong. Consequently, there appears to be an urgent need for Japan to redefine itself. In fact, opponents argue for the protection of Japan's national identity. Williams and Burden (1997) claim learning a language is comparable to slipping into someone else's shoes implying that language learners adopt more than language skills, but they also adopt new social and cultural behaviors as well.

Bourdieu (1979) has long theorized that education is one mechanism that serves to maintain social inequality. Schools not only provide the skills but Bourdieu (1977) argues they also perform the functions of conserving, inculcating, and consecrating a cultural heritage. In essence, Japanese will never be able to play on a level playing field as a native speaker of English. As a result, the invasion of English into a local cultural space has led to some countries legislating to restrict the use of English in some key domains like education, scientific writing, and media (Kirkpatrick, 2002).

Recommendation

The top four Asian countries in TOEFL iBT scores in 2014 can be seen in Table 7 below. One commonality among all four countries is that English is an official language. Singapore has four official languages: Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, and English. India has 24 official languages in its 28 states and seven union territories including English (Patke, 1986). Pakistan has two official languages. Its national language is Urdu while English is the country’s language of education. Lastly, the Philippines also has two official languages, Tagalog and English. All but one subject (Tagalog) are taught in English in schools.

For better or for worse, all four countries have adopted English officially resulting in English fluency by the vast majority of their citizens.

Table 7

Country:	Rank:	Score:
Singapore	1	98
India	2	91
Pakistan	3	90
Philippines	4	89

Japanese are no worse off than anyone else in acquiring a foreign language. Experts have said English is taught a decade too late (in middle school) in Japan and by teachers who can't speak it well. Consequently, Japan is fretting over the fact that, in this age of information, they have not achieved fluency in the indispensable language of technology which is resulting in a growing competitive handicap. The Ministry of Education will finally make English learning mandatory in grade three in public schools in 2020. However, many educators don't believe enough teachers can be trained to take on this endeavor in such a short span of time. Also, the fact that students in this survey feel strong that English would help with their future goals, and yet they want to see very little change in the country's language policies is symbolic of how slowly Japan moves even after years of debate about the role of English in Japan. This is perhaps exemplary of Japan's reputation for institutional rigidity and its reluctance to change.

For Japan to raise its international profile, there are some pressing issues it will have to confront. The country still lacks an immersive teaching and learning environment that can sustain English (Sakamoto, 2012). There also remains resistance on the part of the public in devoting efforts to fund the language (Sakamoto, et al, 2012). Other issues include substandard teacher training programs and certification for English language teaching. Instructors also continue to teach in the grammar and translation-based approach which does little to improve communicative skills. Perhaps it can be concluded that the students' motivation to learn English is not matched by the foreign language policies of Japan. Therefore, if students are to achieve English fluency, it might take more than hard work alone.

As a guest of Japan, it is not my place to recommend what's best for the country. The question is whether Japan is ready for a paradigm shift at the cost of language imperialism. Pedagogically, we have seen that today's approach does not work. In the end, students graduate high school with little to no ability to speak English, which seems to be a complete waste of time for students and a waste of money for the country. It's not that Japan lacks vision. Japan will need to decide if it wants to embrace English knowing it will come with uncertainty and darkness.

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Survey

CONFIDENTIALITY: A faculty member at Akita International University thanks you for taking a few minutes to fill-out this survey. It should take approximately 5 minutes of your time. You will not be asked to attach your name to your survey responses. Individual responses will be used for research purposes only and will be strictly confidential.

学生の皆さま アンケート調査にご協力いただき、誠にありがとうございます。このアンケートの所要時間は 5 分程度です。また、回答にあたって氏名の記入は必要ありません。いただいたご意見につきましては、研究目的のために使用し、厳重に保管いたします。

Demographic Information:

• Age 年齢	
• Gender (Circle the answer that applies to you) 性別 (どちらかに○をしてください)	1) Male 2) Female
• Grade Level (Circle the answer that applies to you) 学年 (当てはまるものに○をしてください)	1) Year 1 2) Year 2 3) Year 3 4) Year 4 5) Other
• Major 専攻	
• Hometown (City and Prefecture) 出身 (都道府県および市町村)	
• Nationality (Circle the answer that applies to you) 国籍 (どちらかに○をしてください)	1) Japanese 2) Other

Please check the answer that best applies to you. 最も当てはまるものに○をしてください	Strongly Agree 強く同意	Agree 同意	Neutral どちらとも言えない	Disagree 反対	Strongly Disagree 強く反対
1. English should be compulsory in Japan. 日本で英語教育は義務教育であるべきだ。					
2. English should only be an elective course for Japanese students who want to learn the language. 英語は選択科目で、その言語を学びたいと思う人のみが学ぶべきだ。					
Please check the answer that best applies to you.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3. I am satisfied with the language policies of English education in Japan. 私は日本の英語教育制度に満足している。					
4. I am satisfied with my level of English proficiency with the education I received. 私は、現行の教育制度において習得した英語力に満足している。					
5. I need English for my future goals. 私は自分の将来目標のために英語が必要だ。					
6. If I learn to speak English well, it will help me get a good job. もし英語をうまく話せたら、将来良い職に就くための助けになるだろう。					
7. English is important in my life. 私の人生において英語は重要だ。					
8. I am motivated to learn English. 私は英語を学習することに意欲を感じている。					
9. I prefer to learn English by native speakers of English					

rather than Japanese nationals. 日本人よりも英語が母国語の人から英語を教えてもらうほうが良い。					
10. Changes should be made in education to make all Japanese citizens fluent in English. 日本国民全員が英語を流暢に話せるようになるために教育制度が変わるべきだ。					
Please check the answer that best applies to you.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11. Japanese companies should require workers to be proficient in English for employment. 日本の企業は従業員に英語を流暢に話せることを求めるべきだ。					
12. English should become an official language in Japan. 英語は日本で公用語になるべきだ。					